



Athens and Jerusalem - Reason and Revelation



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Athens and Jerusalem - Reason and Revelation

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Contents:

- 1) Questions
Genesis 1-3 and Leo Strauss -
On the Interpretation of Genesis
- 2) Questions
Plato, Euthyphro
- 3) Questions
Papal Encyclical - Fides et Ratio and
Thomas Aquinas on natural law
- 4) Questions
Maimonides - Guide for the Perplexed,
Creation and the Eternity of the Universe
- 5) Questions
Al Ghazali - The Incoherence of the Philosophers -
Discussion 3 and Averroes - Decisive Treatise
- 6) Questions
Leo Strauss - Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy

Questions for May 9: Initial Session on the Athens and Jerusalem series:

Genesis 1-3; Leo Strauss, "On the Interpretation of Genesis"

If we read the **Genesis** accounts of creation, including human creation, as having a moral teaching, what is it? E.g.: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh." **Gen. 2:24**

Since, as given in **Gen. 1:26**, man and woman, male/female are made in God's image, can we conclude that they reflect in some decisive way(s) divinity, in a way not reflected in other parts of creation? If so, what are those ways?

In Strauss's account (p. 11, 22-30) of **Genesis**, there is a remarkable silence on the role of the serpent in the Fall: "It is even hard to say that man desired to transgress the divine command. It comes about rather accidentally." What should we make of this, especially in light of the serpent's being the most subtle, crafty, of all the brutes of the earth who is blamed for deceiving the woman?

Given the numerous Hebrew terms that Strauss translates for us, it may be important to add this observation that he makes in another place: "The idea of natural right must be unknown as long as the idea of nature is unknown. The discovery of nature is the work of philosophy. Where there is no philosophy, there is no knowledge of natural right as such. The Old Testament, whose basic premise may be said to be the implicit rejection of philosophy, does not know 'nature': the Hebrew term for "nature" is unknown to the Hebrew Bible. It goes without saying that 'heaven and earth,' for example, is not the same thing as 'nature.'" (**Natural Right and History**, p.81)

Since we live in a "natural rights" regime founded on the basis of "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God," is it possible that we can conceive of human life, even our lives as citizens, without our having common access to the knowledge of good and evil?



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On the Interpretation of Genesis

by Leo Strauss

1 I want to begin with the remark that I am not a biblical scholar; I am a political scientist specializing in political theory. Political theory is frequently said to be concerned with the values of the Western world. These values, as is well-known, are partly of biblical and partly of Greek origin. The political theorist must, therefore, have an inkling of the agreement as well as the disagreement between the biblical and the Greek

5 heritage. Everyone working in my field has to rely most of the time on what biblical scholars or classical scholars tell him about the Bible on the one hand and Greek thought on the other. Still I thought it would be defensible if I were to try to see whether I could not understand something of the Bible without relying entirely on what the authorities both contemporary and traditional tell me. I began with the beginning because this choice seems to me to be least arbitrary. I have been asked to speak here about Genesis — or

10 rather about the beginning of Genesis. The context of a series of lectures on the “Works of the Mind” raises immediately a very grave question. Works of the mind are works of the human mind. Is the Bible a work of the human mind? Is it not the work of God? The work of God, of the divine mind? The latter view was generally accepted in former ages. We have to reflect on this alternative approach to the Bible because this alternative is decisive as to the way in which we will read the Bible. If the Bible is a work of the human

15 mind, it has to be read like any other book — like Homer, like Plato, like Shakespeare — with respect but also with willingness to argue with the author, to disagree with him, to criticize him. If the Bible is the work of God, it has to be read in an entirely different spirit than the way in which we must read the human books. The Bible has to be read in a spirit of pious submission, of reverent hearing. According to this view only a believing and pious man can understand the Bible — the substance of the Bible. According to the

20 view which prevails today, the unbeliever, provided he is a man of the necessary experience or sensitivity, can understand the Bible as well as the believer. This difference between the two approaches can be described as follows. In the past the Bible was universally read as the document of revelation. Today it is frequently read as one great document of the human mind among many such documents. Revelation is a miracle. This means, therefore, that before we even open the Bible we must have made up our minds as to whether we

25 believe in the possibility of miracles. Obviously we read the account of the burning bush or the Red Sea deliverance in an entirely different way in correspondence with the way in which we have decided previously regarding the possibility of miracles. Either we regard miracles as impossible or we regard them as possible or else we do not know whether miracles are possible or not. The last view at first glance recommends itself as the one most agreeable to our ignorance or, which is the same thing, as most open-minded.

1 I must explain this briefly. The question as to whether miracles are possible or not depends on the previous question as to whether God as an omnipotent being exists. Many of our contemporaries assume tacitly or even explicitly that we know that God as an omnipotent being does not exist. I believe that they are wrong; for how could we know that God as an omnipotent being does not exist? Not from experience.

5 Experience cannot show more than that the conclusion from the world, from its manifest order and from its manifest rhythm, to an omnipotent creator is not valid. Experience can show at most that the contention of biblical faith is improbable; but the improbable character of biblical belief is admitted and even proclaimed by the biblical faith itself. The faith could not be meritorious if it were not faith against heavy odds. The next step of a criticism of the biblical faith would be guided by the principle of contradiction alone. For example,

10 people would say that divine omniscience — and there is no omnipotence without omniscience — is incompatible with human freedom. They contradict each other. But all criticism of this kind presupposes that it is at all possible to speak about God without making contradictory statements. If God is incomprehensible and yet not unknown, and this is implied in the idea of God's omnipotence, it is impossible to speak about God without making contradictory statements about him. The comprehensible God, the God about whom we

15 can speak without making contradictions, we can say is the God of Aristotle and not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is then only one way in which the belief in an omnipotent God can be refuted, by showing that there is no mystery whatever, that we have clear and distinct knowledge, or scientific knowledge, in principle of everything, that we can give an adequate and clear account of everything, that all fundamental questions have been answered in a perfectly satisfactory way, in other words that there exists what

20 we may call the absolute and final philosophic system. According to that system (there was such a system; its author was Hegel) the previously hidden God, the previously incomprehensible God, has now become perfectly revealed, perfectly comprehensible. I regard the existence of such a system as at least as improbable as the truth of the Bible. But, obviously, the improbability of the truth of the Bible is a contention of the Bible whereas the improbability of the truth of the perfect philosophic system creates a serious difficulty for that

25 system. If it is true then that human reason cannot prove the non-existence of God as an omnipotent being, it is, I believe, equally true that human reason cannot establish the existence of God as an omnipotent being. From this it follows that in our capacity as scholars or scientists we are reduced to a state of doubt in regard to the most important question. We have no choice but to approach the Bible in this state of doubt as long as we claim to be scholars or men of science. Yet that is possible only against a background of knowledge.

30

What then do we know? I disregard the innumerable facts which we know, for knowledge of mere facts is not knowledge, not true knowledge. I also disregard our knowledge of scientific laws for these laws are admittedly open to future revision. We might say, what we truly know are not any answers to comprehensive questions but only these questions, questions imposed upon us as human beings by our situation as human

35 beings. This presupposes that there is a fundamental situation of man as man which is not affected by any change, any so-called historical change in particular. It is man's fundamental situation within the whole — within a whole that is so little subject to historical change that it is a condition of every possible historical

1 change. But how do we know that there is this whole? If we know this, we can know it only by starting from
 what we may call the phenomenal world, the given whole, the whole which is permanently given, as per-
 manently as are human beings, the whole which is held together and constituted by the vault of heaven and
 comprising heaven and earth and everything that is within heaven and on earth and between heaven and
 5 earth. All human thought, even all thought human or divine, which is meant to be understood by human
 beings willy nilly begins with this whole, the permanently given whole which we all know and which men
 always know. The Bible begins with an articulation of the permanently given whole; this is one articulation
 of the permanently given whole among many such articulations. Let us see whether we can understand that
 biblical articulation of the given whole.

10
 The Bible begins at the beginning. It says something about the beginning. Who says that in the beginning
 God created heaven and earth? Who says it we are not told; hence we do not know. Is this silence about
 the speaker at the beginning of the Bible due to the fact that it does not make a difference who says it? This
 would be a philosopher's reason. Is it also the biblical reason? We are not told; hence we do not know. The
 15 traditional view is that God said it. Yet the Bible introduces God's speeches by "and God said" and this is
 not said at the beginning. We may, therefore, believe the first chapter of Genesis is said by a nameless man.
 Yet he cannot have been an eye-witness of what he tells. No man can have been an eye-witness of the cre-
 ation; the only eye-witness was God. Must not, therefore, the account be ascribed to God as was traditionally
 done? But we have no right to assert this as definite. The beginning of the Bible is not readily intelligible. It
 20 is strange. But the same applies to the content of the account. "In the beginning God created heaven and
 earth; and the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit
 of God moved upon the face of the waters." It would appear, if we take this literally, that the earth in its pri-
 meval form, without form and void, was not created, the creation was formation rather than creation out of
 nothing. And what does it mean that the spirit was moving upon the face of the waters? And what does "the
 25 deep", which is perhaps a residue of certain Babylonian stories, mean? Furthermore, if in the beginning God
 created heaven and earth and all the other things in six days, the days cannot be days in the ordinary sense,
 for days in the ordinary sense are determined by the movements of the sun. Yet the sun was created only on
 the fourth creation day. In brief all these difficulties, and we could add to them, create the impression, which
 is shared by many people today, that this is a so-called mythical account. This means in fact, as most people
 30 understand it, that we abandon the attempt to understand.

I believe we must take a somewhat different approach. Fortunately, not everything is strange in this
 account. Some of the things mentioned in it are known to us. Perhaps we may begin with that part of the
 first chapter of Genesis which we can understand. The Hebrew word for creation used there is applied in
 35 the Bible only to God. Yet this term, *bara*, is used synonymously, at least apparently, with the Hebrew word
 for doing or making, *asah*. In one case, and twice in this special case, doing or making is used of something
 other than God: the fruit tree making the fruit, to translate literally. So here we have another case of creation.

1 The word *bara* is applied only to God. What this means is not explained in the Bible. But there is a synon-
 ymous term (*asah*) for creating — making — which is applied also to other beings, to trees for example,
 to say nothing of human beings. Let us therefore see what this word *making* means in the cases in which it
 5 is originated almost entirely by the tree and, as it were, within the tree. Secondly, the fruit does not have the
 looks of a tree. Thirdly, the fruit is a complete and finished product. And last, the fruit can be separated from
 the tree. Perhaps creation has a certain kinship with this kind of making as distinguished from the following
 kinds of making: First, the making of something which does not originate almost entirely in the maker, arti-
 facts, which require clay and so on in addition to the maker; secondly, the making of something which looks
 10 like the maker, the generation of animals; third, the making of something which is not complete but needs
 additional making or doing, the eggs; and finally, the making of something which cannot be separated from
 the maker: for example, deeds, human deeds, cannot be separated from the man who does them (deeds and
 makings would be the same word in Hebrew, *ma'asim*) . We keep only one thing in mind: creation seems to
 be the making of separable things, just as fruits are separable from trees; creation seems to have something
 15 to do with separation. The first chapter of the Bible mentions separation quite often— I mean the term; five
 times it is explicitly mentioned and ten times implicitly in expressions like “after its kind” which means, of
 course, the distinction or separation of one kind from the other. Creation is the making of separated things,
 of species of plants, animals and so on; and creation means even the making of separating things — -heaven
 separates water from water, the heavenly bodies separate day from night.

20

Let us consider now the most glaring difficulty, namely the difficulty created by the fact that the Bible
 speaks of days prior to the creation of the sun. The sun was created only on the fourth creation day. We have
 no difficulty in admitting that the sun came into being so late; every natural scientist would say this today;
 but the Bible tells us that the sun was created after the plants and trees, the vegetative world, was created.
 25 The vegetative world was created on the third day and the sun on the fourth day. That is the most massive
 difficulty of the account given in the first chapter of the Bible. From what point of view is it intelligible that
 the vegetative world should precede the sun? How are the vegetative world, on the one hand, and the sun, on
 the other, understood so that it makes sense to say the vegetative world precedes the sun? The creation of the
 vegetative world takes place on the third day, on the same day on which the earth and the sea were created
 30 first. The vegetative world is explicitly said to have been brought forth by the earth. The vegetative world
 belongs to the earth. Hence the Bible does not mention any divine making in the creation of the vegetative
 world. The earth is told by God to bring forth the plants, and the earth brings them forth, whereas God
 made the world of heaven and sun and moon and stars, and above all God commands the earth to bring
 forth the animals and God made the animals. The earth does not bring them forth. The vegetative world
 35 belongs to the earth. It is, we may say, the covering of the earth, as it were, the skin of the earth, if it could
 produce skin. It is not separable from the earth. The vegetative world is created on the same day on which
 the earth and the seas are created; the third day is the day of the double creation. In most of the six cases,

1 one thing or a set of things is created. Only on the third day and the sixth day are there double creations. On the sixth day the terrestrial brutes and man are created. There seems to be here a kind of parallelism in the biblical account. There are two series of creation, each of three days. The first begins with the creation of light, the second with that of the sun. Both series end with a double creation. The first half ends with the
 5 vegetative world, the second half ends with man. The vegetative world is characterized by the fact that it is not separable from the earth. Could the distinction between the non-separable and the separable be the principle underlying the division? This is not sufficient. The kinds of plants are separable from each other, although they are not separable from the earth; and creation altogether is a kind of separation. Creation is the making of separated things, of things or groups of things which are separated from each other, which
 10 are distinguished from each other, which are distinguishable, which are discernible. But that which makes possible distinguishing and discerning is light. The first thing created is, therefore, light. Light is the beginning, the principle of distinction or separation. Light is the work of the first day. We know light primarily as the light of the sun. The sun is the most important source of light for us. The sun belongs to the work of the fourth day. There is a particularly close kinship between light and the sun. This kinship is expressed by the
 15 fact that the light is the beginning of the first half of the creation and the sun is the beginning of the second half of creation.

If this is so we are compelled to raise this question: could the second half of creation have a principle of its own, a principle different from light or separation or distinction? This must be rightly understood.
 20 Separations or distinctions are obviously preserved in the second half. Men are distinguished from brutes, for example. Hence, a principle different from light or separation or distinction would have to be one which is based on, or which presupposes, separation or distinction but which is not reducible to separation or distinction. The sun presupposes light but is not light. Now let us look at the creations of the fourth to sixth days — on the fourth day, sun, moon and stars; on the fifth day, the water animals and birds; on the sixth day,
 25 land animals and man. Now what is common to all creations of the second half? I would say local motion. I shall therefore suggest that the principle of the first half is separation or distinction simply. The principle of the second half, the fourth to sixth day, is local motion. It is for this reason and for this very important reason that the vegetative world precedes the sun; the vegetative world lacks local motion. The sun is what it is by rising and setting, by coming and going, by local motion. The difficulty from which I started is solved
 30 or almost solved once one realizes that the account of creation consists of two main parts which are parallel. The first part begins with light, the second part begins with the sun. Similarly there is a parallelism of the end of the two parts. Only on the third and sixth days were there two acts of creation. To repeat, on the third day, earth and seas and the vegetative world; on the sixth day, the land animals and man. I have said that the principle of the first half of creation is separation or distinction and that of the second half of the
 35 creation is local motion, but in such a way that separation or distinction is preserved in the idea underlying the second part, namely local motion. Local motion must be understood, in other words, as a higher form of separation. Local motion is separation of a higher order, because local motion means not merely for a thing

1 to be separated from other things; an oak tree is separated or distinguished from an apple tree. Local motion
 is separation of a higher order because it means not merely for a thing to be separated from other things but
 to be able to separate itself from its place, to be able to be set off against a background which appears as a
 background by virtue of the thing's moving. The creation of the heavenly bodies on the fourth day is im-
 5 mediately followed by the creation of the water animals and the birds. These animals are the first creatures
 which are blessed by God and he blesses them by addressing them: "Be fruitful and multiply." They are the
 first creatures which are addressed, addressed in the second person — not like the earth: "the earth should
 bring forth"; whereas the earth and water are addressed, they are not addressed in the second person. Wa-
 ter animals and birds belong to the class, or the genus, of living beings. (I try to translate the Hebrew term
 10 *nefesh haya*.) What does it mean that on the fourth day we have the first beings capable of local motion, the
 heavenly bodies, and that on the fifth day we have animals? Local motion is followed by life. Life too must
 be understood as a form of separation. In the first place life is here characterized by the capacity of being
 addressed, of hearing, of sense- perception. It is of the greatest importance that the Bible singles out hearing
 and not seeing or touch as characteristic of the living being. But for our present purpose it is more import-
 15 ant to note that animal life appears in the context of the whole chapter as representing a still higher degree
 of separation than do the heavenly bodies. Animals can change not only their place; but also their courses.
 The sun and moon and stars cannot change their courses, except miraculously; but, as you see from every
 dog for example when he's running along, he can change his course; as a matter of fact, he doesn't have such
 a course. Animals are not limited to changing their places. From this it follows that the being created last,
 20 namely man, is characterized by the fact that he is a creature which is separated in the highest degree; man is
 the only being created in the image of God. If we consider the parallelism of man and plants and that plants
 are the only creatures to which the term *making* is explicitly ascribed, we may also recognize that man is
 capable of doing, making deeds, to the highest degree of all creatures.

25 It seems then that the sequence of creation in the first chapter of the Bible can be stated as follows: from
 the principle of separation, light; via something which separates, heaven; to something which is separated,
 earth and sea; to things which are productive of separated things, trees, for example; then things which can
 separate themselves from their places, heavenly bodies; then things which can separate themselves from their
 courses, brutes; and finally a being which can separate itself from its way, the right way. I repeat, the clue to
 30 the first chapter seems to be the fact that the account of creation consists of two main parts. This implies
 that the created world is conceived to be characterized by a fundamental dualism: things which are different
 from each other without having the capacity of local motion and things which in addition to being different
 from each other do have the capacity of local motion. This means the first chapter seems to be based on the
 assumption that the fundamental dualism is that of distinctness, otherness, as Plato would say, and of local
 35 motion. To understand the character of this dualism, otherness, and local motion, let us confront it with the
 only other fundamental dualism referred to in the chapter. I quote the twenty-sixth verse : "and God creat-
 ed man in his image, in his image, in the image of God, did God create him, male and female did he create

1 them". That is a very difficult sentence. The dualism of the male and female could well be used for the funda-
 mental articulation of the world and it was used in this way in many cosmogonies — the male and female
 gender of nouns seems to correspond to the male and female gender of all things and this could lead to the
 assumption of two principles, a male and a female, a highest god and a highest goddess. The Bible disposes
 5 of this possibility by ascribing the dualism of male and female, as it were, to God himself by locating, as it
 were, the root of their dualism within God. God created man in his image and, therefore, he created him
 male and female. And also the Bible mentions the distinction of male and female only in the case of man,
 hence saying, as it were, that male and female are not universal characters. There are many things that are
 neither male nor female but all things are what they are by being distinguished from each other; and all
 10 things are either fixed to a place or capable of local motion. Therefore, the fundamental dualism, male and
 female, is replaced by the fundamental dualism, distinctness, or otherness, and local motion. This latter du-
 alism, distinctness-local motion, does not lend itself to the assumption of two gods, a distinguishing god and
 a moving god, as it were. Furthermore, it excludes the possibility of conceiving of the coming into being of
 the world as an act of generation, the parents being two gods, a male and a female god; or, it disposes of the
 15 possibility of conceiving of the coming into being of the world itself, as a progeny of a male and of a female
 god. The dualism chosen by the Bible, the dualism as distinguished from the dualism of male and female,
 is not sensual but intellectual, noetic, and this may help to explain the paradox that plants precede the sun.
 Another point which I mentioned of which I will have to make use: all created beings mentioned in the Bi-
 ble are non-mythical beings in the vulgar sense of the word; I mean they are all beings which we know from
 20 daily sense-perception. Having reached this point, we reconsider the order of creation: the first thing created
 is light, something which does not have a place. All later creatures have a place. The things which have a
 place either do not consist of heterogeneous parts — heaven, earth, seas; or they do consist of heterogeneous
 parts, namely, of species or individuals. Or as we might prefer to say, the things which have a place either do
 not have a definite place but rather fill a whole region, or something to be filled — heaven, earth, seas; or
 25 else they do consist of heterogeneous parts, of species and individuals or they do not fill a whole region but
 a place within a region, within the sea, within heaven, on earth. The things which fill a place within a region
 either lack local motion — the plants; or they possess local motion. Those which possess local motion either
 lack life, the heavenly bodies; or they possess life. The living beings are either non-terrestrial, water animals
 and birds; or they are terrestrial. The terrestrial living beings are either not created in the image of God,
 30 brutes; or in the image of God — man. In brief, the first chapter of Genesis is based on a division by two, or
 what Plato calls *diairesis* (division by two).

These considerations show, it seems to me, how unreasonable it is to speak of the mythical or pre-logical
 character of biblical thought as such. The account of the world given in the first chapter of the Bible is not
 35 fundamentally different from philosophic accounts; that account is based on evident distinctions which are
 as accessible to us as they were to the biblical author. Hence we can understand that account; these distinc-
 tions are accessible to man as man. We can readily understand why we should find something of this kind in

1 the Bible. An account of the creation of the world, or more generally stated, a cosmogony, necessarily pre-
 supposes an articulation of the world, of the completed world, of the cosmos, that is to say, a cosmology. The
 biblical account of creation is based on a cosmology. All the created things mentioned in the Bible are acces-
 sible to man as man regardless of differences of climate, origin, religion, or anything else. Someone might
 5 say, that is very well, we all know what sun, moon, and stars, fruits and plants are, but what about the light
 as distinguished from the sun? Who knows it? But do we not all know a light which is not derivative from
 the sun, empirically, ordinarily? I say yes, lightning. And perhaps there is a connection between what the
 Bible says about the light and the biblical understanding of lightning. The Bible starts then from the world
 as we know it and as men always knew it and will know it, prior to any explanation, mythical or scientific. I
 10 make only this remark about the word "world". The word "world" does not occur in the Bible. The Hebrew
 Bible says "heaven and earth" where we would ordinarily say "world". The Hebrew word which is mostly
 translated by "world" *olam* means something different; it means, in the first place, the remote past, "once" in
 the sense of "then", the early time or since early time. It means secondly "once" or "then" in the future. And
 it means finally, "once and for all", for all times, never ceasing, permanent. It means, therefore, that which
 15 is permanent. The Hebrew word for world in other words means, therefore, primarily something connected
 with time, a character of time rather than something which we see. If there are other beings mentioned in
 other cosmogonies where all kinds of so-called mythical beings are mentioned, for example, in Babylonian
 stories, we must go back behind these dragons or what-not, at least, by wondering whether these beings ex-
 ist. And we must go back to those things mentioned in the first chapter of the Bible and familiar to all of us
 20 now and familiar to all men at all times. The Bible really begins, in this sense also, with the beginning.

But you will say, and quite rightly, that what I have discussed is the least important part or aspect of the
 first chapter. The cosmology used by the biblical author is not the theme of the biblical author. That cos-
 mology, that articulation of the visible universe is the unthematic presupposition of the biblical author. His
 25 theme is that the world has been created by God in these and these stages. We prepare our reflection on this
 theme by considering another feature of the account which we have disregarded hitherto. The Bible in this
 first chapter makes a distinction between things which are named by God and things which are not named
 by God and a distinction between things which are called good by God and things which are not called good
 by God. The things named by God are day, as the name of light, and night, as the name of darkness, and
 30 furthermore, heaven, earth, and seas. All other things are not named by God; only these general things, only
 the things which lack particularization, which do not have a place, properly speaking, are named by God.
 The rest is left to be named by man. Almost all things are called good by God; the only ones excepted are
 heaven and man. But one can say that it was not necessary to call man good, explicitly, because man is the
 only being created in the image of God and because man is blessed by God. However this may be, certainly
 35 the only thing which is not called good without being redeemed, as it were, by being blessed by God or by
 being said to be created in the image of God, is heaven. We may say that the concern of the author of this
 chapter is a depreciation or a demotion of heaven; in accordance with this, creation appears to be preceded

1 by a kind of rudimentary earth, “in the beginning God created heaven and earth, and the earth. . .”. There is no kind of rudimentary heaven, and the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars are, according to the first chapter, nothing but tools, instruments for giving light to the earth; and, most important, these heavenly bodies are lifeless; they are not gods. Heaven is depreciated in favor of the earth, life on earth, man. What
 5 does this mean? For cosmology, strictly understood, Greek cosmology, heaven is a more important theme than earth, than life on earth. Heaven means for the Greek thinkers the same as the world, the cosmos. Heaven means a whole, the vault which comprises everything else. Life on earth needs heaven, rain, and not vice versa. And if the more sophisticated Greek cosmologists realized that one cannot leave it at the primacy of heaven, they went beyond heaven, as Plato says, to a super-heavenly place. The human thing is a word of
 10 depreciation in Greek philosophy.

There is then a deep opposition between the Bible and cosmology proper, and since all philosophy is cosmology ultimately, between the Bible and philosophy. The Bible proclaims cosmology is a non-thematic implication of the story of creation. It is necessary to articulate the visible universe and understand its
 15 character only for the sake of saying that the visible universe, the world, was created by God. The Bible is distinguished from all philosophy because it simply asserts that the world is created by God. There is not a trace of an argument in support of this assertion. How do we know that the world was created? The Bible declared it so. We know it by virtue of declaration, pure and simple, by divine utterance ultimately. Therefore, all knowledge of the createdness of the world has an entirely different character than our knowledge of
 20 the structure or articulation of the world. The articulation of the world, the essential distinction between the plants, brutes, and so on, is accessible to man as man; but our knowledge of the createdness of the world is not evident knowledge. I will read you a few verses from Deuteronomy, chapter 4, verses 15 to 19, “Take ye, therefore, good heed unto yourselves for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness
 25 of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth; and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven”, which
 30 means which the Lord thy God has assigned, attributed to all nations under the whole heaven. All nations, all men as men cannot help but be led to this cosmic religion, if they do not go beyond the created things. “But the Lord has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace out of Egypt, to be under Him a people of inheritance as you are this day.” In other words, the fact that the world has a certain structure is known to man as man. That the world is created is known by the fact that God speaks to Israel on the
 35 Horeb; that is the reason why Israel knows that sun and moon and stars do not deserve worship, that heaven must be depreciated in favor of human life on earth, and ultimately, that the origin of the world is divine creation. There is no argument in favor of creation except God speaking to Israel. He who has not heard that

1 speech either directly or by tradition will worship the heavenly bodies, will remain, in other words, within the horizon of cosmology.

I would like to say a very few words about the second chapter, because one great difficulty of the begin-
 5 ning of the Bible is that there is a two-fold account of creation, one in chapter one and another in chapters two to three. The first chapter of the Bible contains a cosmology which is overarched by an account of the creation of the world, a cosmology which is integrated into an account of the creation of the world. This integration of cosmology into an account of creation implies the depreciation of heaven. Heaven is not divine; heaven is subordinate in rank to earth, to life on earth. But this cosmology used by the Bible, as
 10 distinguished from the assertion regarding creation, I mean the articulation of the visible world, this cosmology is based on evidence accessible to man as man, whereas the assertion of the createdness of the world is not based on such evidence. Hence the question arises: with what right is the horizon of cosmology, of the things we see, describe and understand, transcended, or, in other words, what's wrong with cosmology? What is wrong with man's effort to find his bearing in the light of what is evident to man as man? What is
 15 the true character of human life? What is the right life of man? This question is the starting point of the second account of creation in the second chapter. The first account ends with man; the second account begins with man. It seems that an account which ends with man is not sufficient. Why? In the first account, man is created on the same day as the terrestrial animals, he is seen as part of the whole, — if as its most exalted part. In this perspective, the absolute difference between man and all other creatures is not adequately seen.
 20 It appears from the first account that man is separated to the highest degree, that he can move or change his place, in a very metaphorical sense even, to the highest degree. But this privilege, this liberty, freedom, is also a great danger. Man is the most ambiguous creature; hence man is not called good, just as heaven is not called good. There is a connection between the ambiguity of man, the danger to which man is essentially exposed, and heaven, with what heaven stands for, the attempt to find one's bearing in the light of what
 25 is evident to man as man, the attempt to possess knowledge of good and evil like the gods. Now if man is the most ambiguous creature, in fact the only ambiguous creature, we need a supplement to that account in which man appears also as part of the whole. We need an account which focuses on man alone; more precisely, since ambiguity means ambiguity in regard to good and evil, we need an additional account in which man's place is defined, not only as it was in the first account by a command "Be fruitful and multiply" in
 30 general, but by a negative command, a prohibition. For a prohibition sets forth explicitly the limitations of man — up to this point and not beyond! — the limit separating the good from the evil. The second chapter of the Bible answers the question not about how the world has come into being but how human life, human life as we know it, has come into being. Just as the answer to the question regarding the world as a whole, requires an articulation of the world, the answer to the question regarding human life requires an articulation
 35 of human life. Human life, the life of most men, is the life of tillers of the soil or is at least based on that life. If you do not believe the Bible, you may believe Aristotle's *Politics*. Human life is, therefore, characterized most obviously by need for rain and need for hard work. Now, this cannot have been the character of human

1 life at the beginning; for if man was needy from the very beginning, and essentially, he is compelled or at least seriously tempted to be harsh, uncharitable, unjust; he is not fully responsible for his lack of charity or justice because of his neediness. But somehow we know that man is responsible for his lack of charity and justice; therefore, his original state must have been one in which he was not forced or seriously tempted to
5 be uncharitable or unjust. Man's original condition was, therefore, a garden, surrounded by rivers; originally man did not need rain nor hard work; there was a state of affluence and of ease. The present state of man is due to man's fault, to his transgression of a prohibition with which he could easily have complied. But man was created in the image of God, in a way like God. Was he not, therefore, congenitally tempted to transgress any prohibitions, any limitations? Was this likeness to God not a constant temptation to be literally
10 like Him? To dispose of this difficulty the second account of creation distributes accents differently than the first account had done. Man is now said to be, not created in the image of God, but dust from the earth. Furthermore, in the first account man is created as the ruler of the beasts. In the second account the beasts come to sight rather as helpers or companions of man. Man is created in lowliness; he was not tempted therefore to disobey either by need or by his high estate. Furthermore, in the first account man and woman
15 were created in one act. In the second account, man is created first, thereafter the brutes, and finally only the woman out of the rib of man. Woman, that is the presupposition, is lower than man. And this low creature, I apologize, woman, lower still than man, begins the transgression. Disobedience is shockingly ill founded. Note, furthermore, that in spite of these differences, the second account fundamentally continues the tendency of the first account in two points. First, there was no need for rain at the beginning, which again
20 means a depreciation of heaven, the source of rain. And secondly, the derivative character of woman implies a further depreciation of the dualism male /female which plays such a role in the first part. Only one more word about this second chapter. Man's original sin, original transgression, consisted in eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We have no reason to suppose on the basis of the biblical account, as distinguished from later explanations, that man was guided by desire for knowledge of good and evil for he
25 would have had to have some knowledge of good and evil in order to have such desire. It is even hard to say that man desired to transgress the divine command. It comes out rather accidentally. Man's transgression is a mystery, but he did transgress and he knew that he did. Man certainly chose to disobey. He chose therewith the principle of disobedience. This principle is called knowledge of good and evil. We may say that disobedience means autonomous knowledge of good and evil, a knowledge which man possesses by himself, the
30 implication being that the true knowledge is not autonomous; and, in the light of later theological developments, one could say the true knowledge of good and evil is supplied only by revelation.

What I am suggesting then is this: the crucial thesis of the first chapter, if we approach it from the point of view of Western thought in general, is the depreciation of heaven. Heaven is a primary theme of cosmology
35 and of philosophy. The second chapter contains this explicit depreciation of the knowledge of good and evil, which is only another aspect of the thought expressed in the first chapter. For what does forbidden knowledge of good and evil mean? It means ultimately such knowledge of good and evil as is based on the

1 understanding of the nature of things, as philosophers would say; but that means, somewhat more simply
 expressed, knowledge of good and evil which is based on the contemplation of heaven. The first chapter, in
 other words, questions the primary theme of philosophy; and the second chapter questions the intention
 of philosophy. The biblical authors, as far as we know, did not know anything of philosophy, strictly so-
 5 called. But we must not forget that they were probably familiar, and certainly familiar with certain things, in
 Babylon for example, which are primitive forms of philosophy, contemplation of heaven and becoming wise
 in human conduct through the contemplation of heaven. The fundamental idea is the same as that of phi-
 losophy in the original sense. Chapters two and three of Genesis are animated by the same spirit as the first
 chapter; what the Bible presents is the alternative to the temptation and this temptation we can call, in the
 10 light of certain things we happen to know, philosophy. The Bible, therefore, confronts us more clearly than
 any other book with this fundamental alternative: life in obedience to revelation, life in obedience, or life
 in human freedom, the latter being represented by the Greek philosophers. This alternative has never been
 disposed of, although there are many people who believe that there can be a happy synthesis which is superi-
 or to the isolated elements: Bible on the one hand and philosophy on the other. This is impossible. Syntheses
 15 always sacrifice the decisive claim of one of the two elements. And I shall be glad if we can take up this point
 in the discussion.

I would like to make only one concluding remark because I understand that in this group you are particu-
 larly interested in books. And therefore I would like to say something about the problem of books in so far as
 20 it affects the Bible on the one hand and philosophy on the other. The Greek philosophic view has as its pri-
 mary basis the simple notion, that contemplation of heaven, an understanding of heaven, is the ground by
 which we are led to the right conduct. True knowledge, the Greek philosophers said, is knowledge of what
 is always. Knowledge of the things which are not always, and especially knowledge of what happened in the
 past, is knowledge of an entirely inferior character. As regards knowledge of the remote past, in particular, it
 25 comes to be regarded as particularly uncertain. When Herodotus speaks of the first inventor of the various
 arts he does not say, as the Bible does, that X was the first inventor of this or that art. Herodotus says he was
 the first inventor as far as we know. Now this kind of thought, which underlies all Greek thought, creates
 as its vehicle the book, in the strict sense of the term, the book as a work of art. The book in this sense is a
 conscious imitation of living beings. There is no part of it, however small and seemingly insignificant, which
 30 is not necessary so that the whole can fulfill well its function. When the artisan or artist is absent or even
 dead, the book is living in a sense. Its function is to arouse to thinking, to independent thinking, those who
 are capable of it; the author of the book, in this highest sense, is sovereign. He determines what ought to be
 the beginning and the end and the center. He refuses admission to every thought, to every image, to every
 feeling which is not evidently necessary for the purpose or the function of the book. Aptness and graces
 35 are nothing except handmaids of wisdom. The perfect book is an image or an imitation of that all-compre-
 hensiveness and perfect evidence of knowledge which is aspired to but not reached. The perfect book acts,
 therefore, as a countercharm to the charm of despair which the never satisfied quest for perfect knowledge

1 necessarily engenders. It is for this reason that Greek philosophy is inseparable from Greek poetry. Now
let us look, on the other hand, at the Bible. The Bible rejects the principle of autonomous knowledge and
everything that goes with it. The mysterious God is the last theme and highest theme of the Bible. Given the
biblical premise, there cannot be a book in the Greek sense, for there cannot be human authors who decide
5 in the sovereign fashion what is to be the beginning and the end and who refuse admission to everything
that is not evidently necessary for the purpose of the book. In other words, the purpose of the Bible, as a
book, partakes of the mysterious character of the divine purpose. Man is not master of how to begin; before
he begins to write he is already confronted with writings, with the holy writings, which impose their law on
him. He may modify these holy writings, compile these holy writings, so as to make out of them a single
10 writing as the compilers of the Old Testament probably did, but he can do this only in a spirit of humility
and reverence. His very piety may compel him to alter the texts of the holy writings which came down to
him. He may do this for reasons of piety because certain passages in an older source may lend themselves to
misunderstanding, which is grave. He may change, therefore, but his principle will always be to change as lit-
tle as possible. He will exclude not everything that is not evidently necessary for an evident purpose but only
15 what is evidently incompatible with a purpose whose ground is hidden. The sacred book, the Bible, may
then abound in contradictions and in repetitions which are not intended; whereas a Greek book, the greatest
example being the Platonic dialogue, reflects the perfect evidence to which the philosopher aspires; there is
nothing which does not have a knowable ground because Plato had a ground. The Bible reflects in its literary
form the inscrutable mystery of the ways of God which it would be impious even to attempt to comprehend.

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Euthyphro Questions:

1. What is the significance of the dialogue's setting and timing that enhances the urgency of the conversation between Socrates and Euthyphro?
2. Given what Socrates says about the charges being brought against him by Meletus, is there evidence in the text that could have been used by Socrates' accusers to demonstrate his guilt?
3. Euthyphro considers himself to be an expert in the divine and is sympathetic to Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue. In light of what transpires in their discussion of the connection between piety and justice in the prosecution of his father, does his faith in his own rectitude appear to be shaken?
4. In the dialogue the word "pious" is frequently cited as the subject under discussion; on a couple of occasions "pious" and "holy" are used in the same context (5C, 12E). In the original Greek, these are two distinct terms: pious = *eusebia*; holy = *hosia*. Should we treat them as the same or do we see them as different? Would it matter to us, for instance, if the title of the **Euthyphro** were "On Holiness"?
5. If the pious (or holy) is loved by the gods, what makes it lovable? And the same question about justice, but applied to us: is justice/the just lovable for its own sake or is justice lovable simply because we say so, e.g., what the majority (or those in power) says it is (9E)?
6. As we follow the "argument and the action" in the dialogue, does Plato want us to see Socrates more as a teacher of moral virtue or as a philosopher who wants us to think for ourselves?

EUTHYPHRO

ΕΥΘΥΦΡΩΝ

PLATO

ΠΛΑΤΩΝ

EUTHYPHRO

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ΠΛΑΤΩΝ

Translated by Cathal Woods and Ryan Pack



2007

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2a Euthyphro (Euth): What new thing has happened, Socrates, that you have abandoned your stomping grounds in the Lyceum* and are now spending your time here, around the porch of the king*? For surely you too are not involved in some suit before the king*, as I am.

Socrates (So): The Athenians don't just call it a suit, Euthyphro, but a public indictment.*

b Euth: What do you mean? Someone has indicted you, I suppose, since I certainly wouldn't condemn you of the opposite, you indicting someone else.

So: Certainly not.

Euth: So someone else is indicting you?

So: Absolutely.

Euth: Who is this person?

So: I don't know the man very well myself, Euthyphro; I think he is a young and unknown person. Anyway, I believe they call him Meletos. He is from the Pitthean deme*, if you know of a Meletos from Pitthos with straight hair, not much of a beard, but with a hooked nose.

c Euth: I don't know him, Socrates. But what charge has he indicted you on?

So: On what charge? It's no minor charge, I think, as it's no small thing for a young man to be knowledgeable about so important an issue. For he, he says, knows how the young are corrupted and who their corruptors are. He's probably somebody wise, and having seen how I in my ignorance corrupt the people of his generation, he is coming to tattle on me to the city, as though it were his mother. And he alone seems to me to be starting out in politics correctly, because the correct way is to first pay attention to how our young people will be the best possible, just as a good farmer probably cares first for his young plants, and after this to the others as well. And so Meletos too is presumably first rooting out us who corrupt the sprouting young people, as he puts it. Then after this it's clear that, having turned his attention to the older people, he will become a source of many great goods for the city, as is likely to happen to someone who starts off in this way.

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3a

Euth: I wish it were so, Socrates, but I'm afraid that the opposite might happen. Because it seems to me that by trying to wrong you he is starting out by recklessly harming the hearth of the city. And tell me, just what does he say you're doing to corrupt the young?

b

So: Strange things, you marvelous man, at least to hear him describe them, since he says I am a maker of gods, and because I make novel gods and do not acknowledge the old ones, he indicts me for their sake, he says.

Euth: I understand, Socrates. It's because you say the divine sign* comes to you occasionally. He has lodged this indictment because of your innovative religious ideas. And so he is obviously coming to the court intending to slander you, knowing that such things are easily misrepresented to the many. Indeed even in my case, whenever I say something in the assembly about religious matters, foretelling the future for them, they ridicule me as a madman, and yet I said nothing that was not true in what I foretold. Even so, they envy all of us who are like this. We should think nothing of them but fight them on their own ground.

c

d So: But my dear Euthyphro, being ridiculed is probably no big deal; indeed it seems to me that it doesn't matter much to the Athenians if they think someone is wise, so long as he not capable of teaching his wisdom. They become outraged with anyone they suspect of also trying to shape others in some way, whether because they are envious, as you claim, or for some other reason.

Euth: Which is why I have no great desire to have it put to the test, how they feel about me.

e So: It's probably because you seem to rarely make yourself available and appear unwilling to teach your wisdom, whereas I fear that, because of my love of people, I strike them as someone who is bursting to talk to everybody, and not just without demanding payment, but would even be glad to compensate anyone who cared to listen to me. So as I was saying, if they intend to laugh at me, as you said happened to you, there would be nothing unpleasant about spending time in court playing around and laughing. But if they are going to be serious, it's unclear at present how things will turn out, except to you prophets.

Euth: Well, it will probably be nothing, Socrates, and you will fight your case satisfactorily, as I think I will fight mine, too.

So: What exactly is your suit, Euthyphro? Are you defending or prosecuting it?

Euth: I am prosecuting.

So: Whom?

4a Euth: A man whom by pursuing I will again appear crazy.

So: But why? You're pursuing someone who flies?

Euth: He is long way from flying. As a matter of fact he happens to be well advanced in years.

So: Who is he?

Euth: My father.

So: Your father, you fantastic fellow?!

Euth: Absolutely.

So: But what is the charge, and what are the circumstances?

Euth: Murder, Socrates.

b So: Heracles! I think most people wouldn't know how to act properly in such a case, since I don't think that just anyone could take care of this correctly, but only someone, I suspect, who has progressed a long way in wisdom.

Euth: By Zeus, a long way indeed, Socrates.

So: Surely the person killed by your father is one of your relatives? It must be, since you would not prosecute him for murder on behalf of a stranger.

c Euth: It's ridiculous, Socrates, that you think that it makes a difference whether the man killed is a stranger or a relative, and don't think it is necessary to watch only for this, whether the killer killed legally or not, and if it was legal, to let him go, and if not, to prosecute him, if the killer, that is, shares one's hearth and eats at the same table. Because the pollution is the same if you are aware that you share the guilt and do not both purify yourself and prosecute him in law.

The victim, as a matter of fact, was a certain laborer of mine, and

d when we were farming in Naxos he was employed by us there. Drunk and having been provoked by another one of our household, he slit this man's throat. So my father bound his feet and hands, threw him into some ditch and sent a man here to inquire of the interpreter of religious law about what should be done. But during that time he paid no attention to the bound man and neglected him as a murderer and thought nothing of it if he died too, which is in fact what happened, since he died of hunger and cold and his bonds before the messenger returned from the interpreter.

e That's why both my father and my other relatives are angry, because I am prosecuting my father on behalf of a murderer, when he didn't kill him, they say, or if he did in fact kill him, well, since the man he killed was a murderer, one should not be concerned about such people—because, they say, it's unholy for a son to prosecute his father for murder, not really knowing, Socrates, how the religious law stands with respect to holiness and unholiness.

So: But by Zeus, do you, Euthyphro, think you have such accurate knowledge about how the religious laws stand, about both piety and impiety, that with these things having taken place in the way you describe, you are not afraid that, prosecuting your father, you might be committing another impiety in doing so?

5a Euth: I would be of no use, Socrates, and neither would Euthyphro be better than the majority of men, if I did not have accurate knowledge of all such matters.

b So: Then it would be excellent for me to become a student of yours, marvelous Euthyphro, and prior to this dispute with Meletos I will challenge him in this very way, saying that while even in the past I used to make knowledge of religious law my top priority, now, because he says I err by judging rashly and innovating with respect to the religious laws, I have also become your student. "And," I would say, "if you agree, Meletos, that Euthyphro is wise in such matters, then believe that I too worship properly and do not charge me. If not, see about bringing a charge against him, my teacher, rather than me, since he corrupts the elderly—me and his father—by teaching me and by rebuking and chastising him." And if he is not convinced by me and doesn't withdraw the charge or indict you in my place, shouldn't I say the exact same thing in court as I said in challenging him?

c Euth: Yes by Zeus, Socrates. If he tried to indict me I think I would uncover in what way he is unsound and we would have found that the discussion in court would have been about him long before it was about me.

d So: And indeed, my dear Euthyphro, I recognize this and want to become a student of yours, seeing how practically everyone else and Meletos himself pretends not to notice you, but he sees through me so clearly and easily that he indicts me for impiety. So now, by Zeus, explain to me what you were just now affirming to know clearly: what sort of thing do you say holiness is, and unholiness, with respect to both murder and everything else? Or isn't the pious the same as itself in every action, and the impious in turn is the complete opposite of the pious but the same as itself, and everything that in fact turns out to be impious has a single

form with respect to its impiousness?

Euth: It certainly is, Socrates.

So: So tell me, what do you say the pious is, and what is the impious?

e Euth: Well now, I claim that the pious is what I am doing now, prosecuting someone who is guilty of wrongdoing, either of murder or temple robbery or anything else of the sort, whether it happens to be one's
 6a father or mother or whoever else, and the impious is failing to prosecute. For observe, Socrates, how great a proof I will give you that this is how the law stands, one I have already given to others as well, which shows such actions to be correct—not yielding to impious people, that is, no matter who they happen to be. Because these very people also happen to worship Zeus as the best and most just of the gods, and agree that he put his own father in bonds because he unjustly swallowed his sons, and the father too castrated his own father for other similar reasons.* Yet they are sore at me because I am prosecuting my father for his injustice. And so they say opposite things about the gods and me.

b So: Maybe this, Euthyphro, is why I am being prosecuted for this crime, that whenever someone says such things about the gods, for some reason I find them hard to accept? On account of which, I suppose, someone will claim I misbehave. So now if you also, with your expertise in such matters, share these beliefs, it's surely necessary, I suppose, that we too must agree, for else what will we say, those of us, that is, who admit openly that we know nothing about these matters? But by the god of friendship tell me, do you truly believe these things happened like this?

Euth: These and still more amazing things, Socrates, that the many are unaware of.

c So: And do you believe there is really a war amongst the gods, with terrible feuds, even, and battles and many other such things, such as are recounted by the poets and the holy artists, and that have been elaborately decorated for us on other sacred objects and especially the robe covered with such designs which is brought up to the acropolis at the great Panathenaea?* Are we to say that these things are true, Euthyphro?

Euth: Not only these, Socrates, but as I said just now, I could describe many other things about the divine laws to you in addition, if you want, which I am sure you will be astounded to hear.

d So: I wouldn't be surprised. But you can describe these to me at leisure some other time. For the time being, however, try to describe more clearly what I asked you just now, since previously, my friend, you did not teach me well enough when I asked what the pious was but you told me that what you're doing is something pious, prosecuting your father for murder.

Euth: And what's more, I spoke the truth, Socrates.

So: Perhaps. But in fact, Euthyphro, you say there are many other pious things.

Euth: Indeed there are.

So: So remember that I did not request this from you, to teach me one or two of the many pious things, but to teach me the form itself by which everything pious is pious? For you said that it's by one form that

- e impious things are somehow impious and pious things pious. Or don't you remember?
 Euth: I certainly do.
 So: So then tell me whatever this form itself is, so that, by looking at it and using it as a paradigm, I can declare what you or anyone else might do of that kind to be pious, and if it is not of that kind, that it is not.
 Euth: Well if that's what you want, Socrates, that's what I'll tell you.
 So: That's exactly what I want.
 Euth: Well, what is beloved by the gods is pious, and what is not
- 7a beloved by them is impious.
 So: Excellent, Euthyphro! With this you have answered in the way I was looking for you to answer. Whether or not it's true, that I don't quite know, but it's clear that you will teach me how what you say is true.
 Euth: Absolutely.
 So: Come then, let's look at what we said. An action or a person that is beloved by the gods is pious, while an action or person that is despised by the gods is impious. They are not the same, but complete opposites, the pious and impious. Isn't that so?
 Euth: Indeed it is.
 So: And this seems right?
- b Euth: I think so, Socrates.
 So: But wasn't it also said that that gods are at odds with each other and disagree with one another and that there are feuds among them?
 Euth: Yes, it was.
 So: Disagreement about *what* is the cause of the hatred and anger, my good man? Let's look at it this way. If we disagree, you and I, about quantity, over which of two groups is greater, would our disagreement over this make us enemies and angry with each other, or wouldn't we
- c quickly resolve the issue by resorting to counting?
 Euth: Certainly.
 So: And again if we disagreed about bigger and smaller, we would quickly put an end to the disagreement by resorting to measurement?
 Euth: That's right.
 So: And we would use weighing, I presume, to reach a decision about heavier and lighter?
 Euth: How else?
- d So: Then what topic, exactly, would divide us and what decision would we be unable to reach such that we would be enemies and angry with one another? Perhaps you don't have an answer at hand, so see while I'm talking whether it's the just and the unjust, and the noble and shameful, and the good and the bad. Isn't it these things that divide us and about which we're not able to come to a satisfactory decision and so become enemies of one another, whenever that happens, whether it's me and you, or any other men?
 Euth: It is indeed this disagreement, Socrates, and over these things.
 So: What about the gods, Euthyphro? If they indeed disagree over something, don't they disagree over these very things?
 Euth: It's undoubtedly necessary.
- e So: Then some of the gods think different things to be just,

according to you, worthy Euthyphro, and noble and shameful and good and bad, since they surely wouldn't be at odds with one another unless they were disagreeing about these things. Right?

Euth: You're right.

So: And so what each group thinks is noble and good and just, they also love these things, and they hate the things that are the opposites of these?

Euth: Certainly.

8a So: Then according to you some of them think that these things are just, while others think they are unjust, the things that, because there's a dispute, they are at odds about and are at war over. Isn't this so?

Euth: It is.

So: The same things, it seems, are both hated by the gods and loved, and so would be both despised and beloved by them?

Euth: It seems so.

So: And the same things would be both pious and impious, Euthyphro, according to this argument?

Euth: I'm afraid so.

b So: So you haven't answered what I was asking, you marvelous man. Because I didn't ask you for what is both pious and impious at once, and as it appears, both beloved and despised by the gods. As a result, Euthyphro, it wouldn't be surprising if in doing what you're doing now—punishing your father—you were doing something beloved by Zeus but despised by Kronos and Ouranos, and while it is dear to Hephaestus, it is despised by Hera, and if any other god disagrees with another on the subject, your action will appear the same way to them, too.

Euth: But I believe, Socrates, that on this matter at least none of the gods will disagree with any other, that any man who has killed another person unjustly need not pay the penalty.

c So: What's that? Haven't you ever heard a human being arguing that someone who killed unjustly or did something else unjustly should not pay the penalty?

Euth: There's no end to these arguments, both outside and inside the courts, since people commit so many injustices and do and say anything to escape the punishment.

So: Do they actually agree that they are guilty, Euthyphro, and despite agreeing they nonetheless say that they shouldn't pay the penalty?

Euth: They don't agree on that at all.

d So: So they don't do or say *everything*, since, I think, they don't dare to make this claim nor do they argue that if they in fact are guilty they should *not* pay the penalty, but I think they claim that they're not guilty. Right?

Euth: That's true.

So: So they don't argue, at least, that the guilty person shouldn't pay the penalty, but perhaps they argue about who the guilty party is and what he did and when.

Euth: That's true.

So: Doesn't the very same thing happen to the gods, too, if indeed, as you said, they are at odds about just and unjust things, some saying that

e a god commits an injustice against another one, while others deny it? But absolutely no one at all, you marvelous man, either god or human, dares to say that the guilty person need not pay the penalty.

Euth: Yes. What you say is true, Socrates, for the most part.

So: But I think that those who dispute, Euthyphro, both men and gods, if the gods actually dispute, argue over the particulars of what was done. Differing over a certain action, some say that it was done justly, others that it was done unjustly. Isn't that so?

Euth: Certainly.

9a So: Come now, my dear Euthyphro. So that I can become wiser, teach me too what evidence you have that all the gods think the man was killed unjustly, the one who committed murder while he was working for you, and was bound by the master of the man he killed, and died from his bonds before the servant could learn from the interpreter what ought to be done in his case, and is the sort of person on whose behalf it is proper for a son to prosecute his father and make an allegation of murder. Come, try to give me a clear indication of how in this case more than all others the gods think that this action is proper. If you could point this out to me satisfactorily I would never stop praising you for your wisdom.

Euth: But this is probably quite a task, Socrates, though I could show it to you very clearly, even so.

So: I understand. It's because you think I'm a slower learner than the judges, since you could make it clear to *them* in what way these actions are unjust and how the gods all hate such things.

Euth: Very clear indeed, Socrates, if only they would listen to what I have to say.

c So: Of course they'll listen, so long as they think you speak well. While you were speaking the following occurred to me and I thought to myself, "Even if Euthyphro convincingly shows me that all the gods think this kind of death is unjust, what at all will I have learned from Euthyphro about what the pious and the impious are? Because while this particular deed might be despised by the gods, as is likely, it was already apparent, just a moment ago, that the pious and impious aren't defined this way, since we saw that what is despised by the gods is also beloved by them." So I release you from this task, Euthyphro. If you want, let us allow that all the gods think this is unjust and that all of them despise it. But this current correction to the definition—that what all the gods despise is impious while what they love is pious, and what some love and some hate is neither or both—do you want us to now define the pious and the impious in this way?

Euth: Well, what is stopping us, Socrates?

So: For my part nothing, Euthyphro, but you look out for yourself, whether you will teach me what you promised as easily as possible by adopting this definition.

e Euth: I for my part affirm the claim that the pious is what all the gods love, and the opposite, what all the gods hate, is impious.

So: Let's see again, Euthyphro, whether it's well stated. Or will we be content and simply accept our own definition or the definition of others, agreeing that it is right just because somebody says it is. Or must we

examine what the speaker is saying?

Euth: We must examine it. But I'm quite confident that what we have now is well put.

10a So: We'll soon know better, my good man. Think about this: Is the pious loved by the gods because it's pious, or it is pious because it is loved?

Euth: I don't know what you mean, Socrates.

So: I'll try to express myself more clearly. We speak of something being carried and carrying, and being led and leading, and being seen and seeing, and so you understand that all of these are different from one another and in what way they are different?

Euth: I think I understand.

So: So there's a thing loved and different from this there's the thing that loves?

Euth: How could there not be?

b So: Then tell me whether what is carried is a carried thing because it is carried, or because of something else?

Euth: No; it's because of this.

So: And clearly what is led because it is led, and what is seen because it is seen?

Euth: Absolutely.

So: So it is not that, because it is something seen, it is seen, but the opposite, that because it is seen it is something seen. And it is not because it is something led that it is led, but because it is led it is something led. And it is not because it is something carried that it is carried, but because it is carried, it is something carried. Is it clear, what I'm trying to say, Euthyphro? I mean this: that if something becomes or is affected by something, it's not because it is a thing coming to be that it comes to be, but because it comes to be it is a thing coming into being. Nor is it affected by something because it is a thing that is affected, but because it is affected, it is a thing that is being affected. Or don't you agree?

c

Euth: I do

So: And is a loved thing either a thing that comes to be or is affected by something?

Euth: Certainly.

So: And does the same apply to this as the previous ones: it is not because it is a loved thing that it is loved by those who love it, but it is a loved thing because it is loved?

Euth: Necessarily

d

So: So what do we say about the pious, Euthyphro? Precisely that is it loved by all the gods, according to your statement?

Euth: Yes.

So: Is it because of this that it is pious, or because of something else?

Euth: No, it's because of this.

So: Isn't it because it is pious that it is loved, and it's not because it is loved that it is pious?

Euth: It seems so.

So: It must be that it's because it is loved by the gods that it is a loved thing and beloved by the gods?

Euth: How could it not?

So: So the beloved is not pious, Euthyphro, nor is the pious beloved by the gods, as you claim, but the one is different from the other.

e Euth: How so, Socrates?

So: Because we agree that the pious is loved because of this, that is, because it's pious, and we don't agree that it is pious because it is loved. Right?

Euth: Yes.

So: The beloved, on the other hand, because it is loved by gods, is beloved due to this very act of being loved, and it is not because it is beloved that it is being loved?

Euth: That's true.

11a So: But if the beloved and the pious were in fact the same, my dear Euthyphro, then, if the pious were loved because of being the pious, then the beloved would be loved because of being the beloved, and again, if the beloved was beloved because of being loved by gods, the pious would also be pious by being loved. But as it is, you see that the two are opposites and are completely different from one another, since the one is lovable because it is loved, while the other is loved because it is lovable.

b So it's likely, Euthyphro, that when you were asked what in the world the pious is, you did not want to reveal its nature to me, but wanted to tell me some one of its qualities—that the pious has this quality: it is loved by all the gods—but as for what it *is*, you did not say at all. So if I am dear to you, don't keep me in the dark but tell me again from the beginning what in the world the pious is. And we won't differ over whether it is loved by the gods or whatever else happens to it, but tell me without delay, what the pious is, and the impious?

Euth: But Socrates I have no way of telling you what I'm thinking, because somehow whatever I put forward for us always wanders off and doesn't want to stay where we put it.

c So: The things you say, Euthyphro, seem to belong to my ancestor Dedalos.* And if I were saying them and putting them forward, perhaps you would be joking about how my works made of words run away even on me because he's kin and don't want to stay wherever a person might put them. But at present these propositions are yours, and so we have to find some other joke, since they don't want to stay put for you, as even you yourself admit.

d Euth: It seems to me that pretty much the same joke applies to what was said, Socrates, since I am not the inspiration for their wandering off and their refusal to stay in the same place, but you seem to me to be the Dedalos, since they would stay in place just fine for me, at least.

e So: It's likely, my friend, that I've become more skilled than him in the craft, to the extent that while he could only make his own works move, I can do so to others' works as well as my own. And to my mind this is the most exquisite thing about my skill, that I am unintentionally clever, since I wanted the words to stay put for me and to be fixed motionless more than to have the money of Tantalos and the skill of Dedalos combined. But enough of this; I think you are spoiled. I am eager for you to show me how you will educate me about the pious. So don't give up the task. See

whether you believe that everything pious is necessarily just.

Euth: I do.

12a So: And is everything just pious? Or is every pious thing just but not every just thing is pious, but some just things are pious, and some are something else again?

Euth: I can't keep up with what you're saying, Socrates.

So: And yet you are younger than me by at least as much as you are wiser than me! But, as I say, you are spoiled by your abundance of wisdom. Put your back into it, you blessed man, since what I'm saying is not difficult to get your head around. Surely I mean the opposite of what the poet meant when he wrote: *

Zeus who created it and who produced all of these

b You do not want to revile; for where there is fear there is also shame. I disagree with this statement of the poet. Shall I tell you how?

Euth: Yes indeed.

So: I don't think that "where there is fear there is also shame" since I think many people who fear sickness, poverty and many other things feel fear, but they do not feel shame at these things they fear. Don't you think so, too?

Euth: Certainly.

c So: Where there is shame, though, there is also fear, for is there anyone who feels shame and humiliation at something who doesn't also feel fear and dread a reputation for cowardice?

Euth: He does indeed dread it.

So: So it's not right to claim that "where there is fear there is also shame" but where there is shame there is also fear, for shame is not in fact everywhere fear is. I think fear covers more than shame. Shame is a part of fear, just as oddness is a part of number, so that it's not the case that where there is number there is also oddness, but where there is oddness, there is also number. Do you follow now, at least?

Euth: I certainly do.

d So: This is the kind of thing I was talking about earlier when I was questioning you: where there is justice, is there also piety? Or is it that where there is piety, there is also justice, but piety is not everywhere justice is, since piety is a part of justice? Do you think we should speak in this way or in some other?

Euth: No, in this way. I think you're speaking properly.

So: Then see what follows this: if the pious is a part of the just, we must, it seems, discover what part of the just the pious might be. If you now asked me something about what we were discussing just now, such as what part of number the even is, and what number it happens to be, I would say that it would be the number that can be divided into two equal and not unequal parts.* Doesn't it seem so to you?

Euth: It does.

e So: So try to teach me in this way, Euthyphro, what sort of part of the just piety is, so that we can also tell Meletos not to do us wrong and charge me with impiety, since I have already learned enough from you about what is holy and what is pious and what is not.

Euth: It seems to me now, Socrates, that holiness and piety is the

part of justice concerned with attending to the gods, while the remaining part of justice is concerned with attending to human beings.

13a So: I think you put that well, Euthyphro. But I still need just one small thing: I don't know quite what you mean by "attending". Surely you don't mean that attending to the gods is like the other kinds of attending even though we do say so, such as when we say that not everybody knows how to attend to a horse, except the horse-trainer. Right?

Euth: Certainly.

So: Horse-training is attending to horses?

Euth: Yes.

So: And no one but the dog-trainer knows how to attend to dogs?

Euth: Right.

So: And dog-training is attending to dogs?

b Euth: Yes.

So: And cattle-herding is of cattle?

Euth: Absolutely.

So: Naturally, then, piety and holiness are of the gods, Euthyphro? That's what you mean?

Euth: I do.

So: Does all attending bring about the same effect? Something of the following sort, the good and benefit of what is attended to, in just the way you see that horses being attended to by horse-trainers are benefited and become better? Or don't you think they are?

Euth: They are.

c So: And dogs by the dog-trainer somehow, and cattle by the cattle-herder, and all the others similarly? Or do you think the attending is aimed at harming what is attended to?

Euth: By Zeus, I do not.

So: But at benefiting them?

Euth: How could it not be?

So: And since piousness is attending to the gods, does it benefit the gods and make the gods better? Do you agree to this, that whenever one does something pious it results in some improvement of the gods?

Euth: By Zeus, no, I don't.

d So: Nor did I think that that's what you meant, Euthyphro—far from it, in fact—and so that's why I was asking what in the world you meant by "attending to the gods", because I didn't think you mean this kind of thing.

Euth: And you're right, Socrates. Because I mean no such thing.

So: Alright then. But what kind of attending to the gods would piousness be, then?

Euth: The kind, Socrates, when slaves attend to their masters.

So: I understand. It would be a kind of service to gods, it seems .

Euth: Certainly.

So: Can you tell me about service to doctors, what end result is it a service aimed at? Don't you think it's at health?

Euth: I do.

e So: And what about service to shipbuilders? What end result is it a service aimed at?

Euth: Clearly it's aimed at sailing, Socrates.

So: And service to house-builders, I suppose, is aimed at houses?

Euth: Yes.

So: Tell me then, best of men, what end result is service to the gods a service aimed at? It's obvious that you know, since you claim to have the finest religious knowledge, at least, of any human.

Euth: And as a matter of fact, Socrates, I speak the truth.

So: So tell me, by Zeus, what in the world is that magnificent task which the gods accomplish by using us as servants?

Euth: Many fine tasks, Socrates.

14a So: Well, and so do the generals, my friend. But nevertheless one could easily say what their key purpose is, that they achieve victory in war. Or not?

Euth: How else could it be?

So: And I think the farmers accomplish many fine tasks. And yet their key purpose is nourishment from the soil.

Euth: Very much so.

So: So what, then, about the many fine things that the gods accomplish? What is the key purpose of their labor?

b Euth: I said a little earlier, Socrates, that it is a great task to learn exactly how all these things are. But I will put it for you generally: if a man knows how to speak and act pleasingly to the gods in his prayers and sacrifices, those are pious, and such things preserve both his own home and the common good of the city. But the opposites of these pleasing things are unholy, which obviously overturn and destroy everything.

c So: If you were willing, Euthyphro, you could have told me the heart of what I was asking much more briefly. But in fact you are not eager to teach me, that much is clear. Since now when you were just about to do so, you turned away. If you had answered, I would already have gotten a satisfactory understanding of piety from you. But for the present, the lover must follow his beloved wherever he might lead. So what do say the pious and piety are, again? Don't you say it's a certain kind of knowledge, of how to sacrifice and pray?

Euth: I do.

So: And sacrificing is giving to the gods, while praying is making a request of the gods?

Euth: Very much so, Socrates.

d So: Based on this, piety would be knowledge of making requests and giving things to the gods?

Euth: You have understood my meaning very well, Socrates.

So: It's because I am eager for your wisdom, my friend, and pay close attention to it, so that nothing you might say falls to the ground. But tell me, what is this service to the gods? You say it is making requests of them and giving to them?

Euth: I do.

So: And proper requests would be requests for what we need from them, asking them for these things?

Euth: What else?

e So: And again, giving properly would be giving what they happen

to need from us, to give these things to them in return? Since to give a gift by giving someone what he has no need of would not be too skillful, I suppose.

Euth: That's true, Socrates.

So: So pioussness for gods and humans, Euthyphro, would be some skill of trading with one another?

Euth: If naming it that way is sweeter for you, call it "trading".

15a So: As far as I'm concerned, nothing is sweeter unless it is true. Tell me, how do the gods benefit from the gifts they receive from us? What they give us is clear to everyone, since every good we have was given by them. But what they receive from us, what good is it? Or do we fare so much better than them in the trade that we get everything that's good from them, while they get nothing from us?

Euth: But do you think, Socrates, that they gods are benefited by what they receive from us?

So: Well then what in the world would they be, Euthyphro, these gifts from us to the gods?

Euth: What else, do you think, but honor and admiration and, as I said just now, gratitude?

b So: So being shown gratitude is what's pious, Euthyphro, but it is neither beneficial to the gods nor dear to them?

Euth: I think it is dear to them above everything else.

So: So the pious is once again, it seems, what is dear to gods.

Euth: Very much so.

c So: Are you at all surprised, when you say such things, that your words seem not to stand still but to move around? And you accuse me of making them move around like a Dedalus when you yourself are much more skilled than Dedalus, even making things go around in circles? Or don't you see that our discussion has gone around and arrived back at the same place? You remember, no doubt, that previously the pious and the beloved by the gods seemed to us not to be the same but different from one another. Or don't you remember?

Euth: I certainly do.

So: Well, don't you realize now that you're saying that what is dear to the gods is pious? But is this anything other than what is beloved by the gods? Or not?

Euth: It certainly is.

So: So either what we decided then was wrong, or, if we were right then, we are wrong to think it now.

Euth: So it seems.

d So: We must begin again from the beginning to examine what the pious is, since as far as I am concerned, I will not give up until I understand it. Do not scorn me, but applying your mind in every way, tell me the truth, now more than ever. Because you know it if anybody does and, like Proteus,* you cannot be released until you tell me, because unless you knew clearly about the pious and impious there is no way you would ever have tried to pursue your aging father for murder on behalf of a hired laborer, but instead you would have been afraid before the gods, and ashamed before men, to run the risk of conducting this matter improperly.

e But as it is, I am sure that you think that you have clear knowledge of the pious and the impious. So tell me, great Euthyphro, and do not conceal what you think it is.

Euth: Well, some other time, then, Socrates, because I'm in a hurry to get somewhere and it's time for me to go.

16a So: What a thing to do, my friend! By leaving, you have cast me down from a great hope I had, that I would learn from you what is pious and what is not, and would free myself from Meletos' charge, by showing him that, thanks to Euthyphro, I had already become wise in religious matters and that I would no longer speak carelessly and innovate about these things due to ignorance, and in particular that I would live better for the rest of my life.

NOTES

A star (*) in the text indicates a note.

- 2a *Lyceum*. A gymnasium outside the walls of Athens.
- 2a *the porch of the king*. The "porch" is a covered walkway in the Athenian *agora* (marketplace or forum. See the "Stoa Basileios" on the [map](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Agora_of_Athens) at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Agora_of_Athens.)
- 2a *before the king*. The 'king' was one of nine *archons* or magistrates. At this stage of the proceedings, accusations would be lodged and testimony recorded from those involved and from witnesses. The king archon was in charge of religious matters. Socrates is there because he has been charged with a religious crime—of not acknowledging the gods of the city; Euthyphro is there because he believes that his father, as a murderer, is polluting the religious spaces of the city, which then needs to be purified. (See 4c and [Athenian Constitution 57](#). (On-line at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/athe6.htm#57>.)
- 2a *a public indictment*. It was up to individuals (in Socrates' case, Meletos, along with Anytos and Lycon) to bring cases on behalf of the city.
- 2b *deme*. An administrative region of Attica.
- 3b *divine sign*. See *Socrates' Defense* 31b and 41a-c.
- 6a *Zeus ... his father ... his father ...*. For the stories of Zeus, Kronos and Ouranos, see Hesiod's *Theogony* lines 154-182 and 453-506. (On-line at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>)
- 6c *robe ... great Panathanaea?* The Panathanaea was a celebration of Athena's, birthday, held annually, with a larger ("great") celebration every four years. A new robe would be presented to the statue of the goddess Athena.
- 11c *Dedalos*. The statues of the mythical Dedalos were said to be so life-like that they appeared to move. Dedalos is most famous for making wings for himself and his son Icaros to use to escape from Crete.
- 12a-b The quote is from Stanislos' *Cypria*, a collection of tales describing the events prior to where the *Iliad* begins. (Not available on-line.)
- 12d *divided into two equal and not unequal parts*. Literally "isosceles and not scalene". Presumably because isosceles triangles have two equal legs.
- 15d *Proteus*. A mythical sea god who could change shape. Menelaus had to hold on to Proteus as he changed shape in order to get him to prophesy. (See [Odyssey 4.398-463](#). For an on-line version, see [http://www.ancientclassics.com/odyssey/odyssey4.htm](#).)

Questions for Thomas Aquinas, *Fides et Ratio*

1. In both question 91 article 1, which affirms the existence of an eternal law and question 91 article 2, which maintains that human beings have a natural law within them that ought to govern our moral actions, Thomas uses scripture -Proverbs in article 1 and Psalms in article 2. He concludes article 2 with a definition of natural law as nothing other than a participation in eternal law of a rational creature. Should we infer from his use of Scripture that Thomas' claim that there is an interior natural law through which the actions of human beings are to be judged and measured can only be known by faith?
2. Thomas' argument for natural law as universal and applicable to all people for all times includes the logical appeal to "self-evident truths" and the principle of non-contradiction (Q 94, Art. 2). Should we assume that these logical arguments are equally compelling? Would denying the equality of all men and women, for instance, be equivalent to denying the principle of non-contradiction?
3. Thomas makes the case for our inclination, in accordance with natural law, to avoid ignorance and "not [to] offend others with whom he has to live in community." (Q 94, Art. 2). Are there some questions--such as "what is the meaning of life?"--that are more appropriately addressed by theologians than by philosophers?
4. In *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II highlights the contributions of the Bible's Wisdom literature and Greek philosophy to the lives of believers. Should we see these contributions as more fundamental than the Church's traditions and history (e.g., Vatican councils)?
5. Citing the "ancient philosophers," John Paul II makes the case that "trusting dialogue" is vital for sustaining the search for truth, with "friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical inquiry." Does the philosophical search the truth, then, presuppose the virtue of friendship and an understanding of what it means to live in community with others?
6. If we are called by nature's law to avoid ignorance, according to John Paul II what hindrances present themselves among the faithful that serve as roadblocks to the study of philosophy and a proper attention to the life of the mind?



AGORA
*great books, great ideas,
 great conversations*

Encyclical Letter - Fides et Ratio

by John Paul II

Blessing

*My Venerable Brother Bishops,
 Health and the Apostolic Blessing!*

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. *Ex* 33:18; *Ps* 27:8-9; 63:2-3; *Jn* 14:8; 1 *Jn* 3:2).

Introduction - “Know Yourself”

1. In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded—as it must—within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. This is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition *Know yourself* was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as “human beings”, that is as those who “know themselves”.

Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: *Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?* These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning

1 which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.

2. The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14:6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: the *diakonia of the truth*;¹ This mission on the one hand makes the believing community a partner in humanity’s shared struggle to arrive at truth;² and on the other hand it obliges the believing community to proclaim the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully” (1 *Cor* 13:12).

3. Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is *philosophy*, which is directly concerned with asking the question of life’s meaning and sketching an answer to it. Philosophy emerges, then, as one of noblest of human tasks. According to its Greek etymology, the term philosophy means “love of wisdom”. Born and nurtured when the human being first asked questions about the reason for things and their purpose, philosophy shows in different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It is an innate property of human reason to ask why things are as they are, even though the answers which gradually emerge are set within a horizon which reveals how the different human cultures are complementary.

Philosophy’s powerful influence on the formation and development of the cultures of the West should not obscure the influence it has also had upon the ways of understanding existence found in the East. Every people has its own native and seminal wisdom which, as a true cultural treasure, tends to find voice and develop in forms which are genuinely philosophical. One example of this is the basic form of philosophical knowledge which is evident to this day in the postulates which inspire national and international legal systems in regulating the life of society.

4. Nonetheless, it is true that a single term conceals a variety of meanings. Hence the need for a preliminary clarification. Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization. These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the wonder awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny. Here begins, then, the journey which will lead them to discover ever new frontiers of knowledge. Without wonder, men and

1 women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.

Through philosophy's work, the ability to speculate which is proper to the human intellect produces a
 5 rigorous mode of thought; and then in turn, through the logical coherence of the affirmations made and the organic unity of their content, it produces a systematic body of knowledge. In different cultural contexts and at different times, this process has yielded results which have produced genuine systems of thought. Yet often enough in history this has brought with it the temptation to identify one single stream with the whole of philosophy. In such cases, we are clearly dealing with a "philosophical pride" which seeks to present its own
 10 partial and imperfect view as the complete reading of all reality. In effect, every philosophical *system*, while it should always be respected in its wholeness, without any instrumentalization, must still recognize the primacy of philosophical *enquiry*, from which it stems and which it ought loyally to serve.

Although times change and knowledge increases, it is possible to discern a core of philosophical insight
 15 within the history of thought as a whole. Consider, for example, the principles of non-contradiction, finality and causality, as well as the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness. Consider as well certain fundamental moral norms which are shared by all. These are among the indications that, beyond different schools of thought, there exists a body of knowledge which may be judged a kind of spiritual heritage of humanity. It is as if we had come upon an *implicit philosophy*, as
 20 a result of which all feel that they possess these principles, albeit in a general and unreflective way. Precisely because it is shared in some measure by all, this knowledge should serve as a kind of reference-point for the different philosophical schools. Once reason successfully intuits and formulates the first universal principles of being and correctly draws from them conclusions which are coherent both logically and ethically, then it may be called right reason or, as the ancients called it, *orthós logos*, *recta ratio*.

25
 5. On her part, the Church cannot but set great value upon reason's drive to attain goals which render people's lives ever more worthy. She sees in philosophy the way to come to know fundamental truths about human life. At the same time, the Church considers philosophy an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.

30
 Therefore, following upon similar initiatives by my Predecessors, I wish to reflect upon this special activity of human reason. I judge it necessary to do so because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected. Modern philosophy clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man. From this starting-point, human reason with its many questions has developed further its
 35 yearning to know more and to know it ever more deeply. Complex systems of thought have thus been built, yielding results in the different fields of knowledge and fostering the development of culture and history. Anthropology, logic, the natural sciences, history, linguistics and so forth—the whole universe of knowledge has

1 been involved in one way or another. Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason,
 in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are
 always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individ-
 5 uals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based
 essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. It has hap-
 10 pened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the
 weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring
 to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has
 concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth,
 10 modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned.

This has given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism which have led philosophical research
 to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism. Recent times have seen the rise to prominence
 of various doctrines which tend to devalue even the truths which had been judged certain. A legitimate plu-
 15 rality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions
 are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth. Even
 certain conceptions of life coming from the East betray this lack of confidence, denying truth its exclusive
 character and assuming that truth reveals itself equally in different doctrines, even if they contradict one
 another. On this understanding, everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift. While,
 20 on the one hand, philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and
 its forms of expression, it has also tended to pursue issues—existential, hermeneutical or linguistic—which
 ignore the radical question of the truth about personal existence, about being and about God. Hence we see
 among the men and women of our time, and not just in some philosophers, attitudes of widespread distrust
 of the human being's great capacity for knowledge. With a false modesty, people rest content with partial and
 25 provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of
 human, personal and social existence. In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive
 answers to these questions has dwindled.

6. Sure of her competence as the bearer of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Church reaffirms the need
 30 to reflect upon truth. This is why I have decided to address you, my venerable Brother Bishops, with whom I
 share the mission of "proclaiming the truth openly" (2 *Cor* 4:2), as also theologians and philosophers whose
 duty it is to explore the different aspects of truth, and all those who are searching; and I do so in order to of-
 fer some reflections on the path which leads to true wisdom, so that those who love truth may take the sure
 path leading to it and so find rest from their labours and joy for their spirit.

35 I feel impelled to undertake this task above all because of the Second Vatican Council's insistence that the
 Bishops are "witnesses of divine and catholic truth".³ To bear witness to the truth is therefore a task entrust-

1 ed to us Bishops; we cannot renounce this task without failing in the ministry which we have received. In
reaffirming the truth of faith, we can both restore to our contemporaries a genuine trust in their capacity to
know and challenge philosophy to recover and develop its own full dignity.

5 There is a further reason why I write these reflections. In my Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, I drew
attention to “certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being
distorted or denied”.⁴ In the present Letter, I wish to pursue that reflection by concentrating on the theme of
truth itself and on its *foundation* in relation to *faith*. For it is undeniable that this time of rapid and complex
change can leave especially the younger generation, to whom the future belongs and on whom it depends,
10 with a sense that they have no valid points of reference. The need for a foundation for personal and commu-
nal life becomes all the more pressing at a time when we are faced with the patent inadequacy of perspectives
in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possibility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast
into doubt. This is why many people stumble through life to the very edge of the abyss without knowing
where they are going. At times, this happens because those whose vocation it is to give cultural expression
15 to their thinking no longer look to truth, preferring quick success to the toil of patient enquiry into what
makes life worth living. With its enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great responsi-
bility of forming thought and culture; and now it must strive resolutely to recover its original vocation. This
is why I have felt both the need and the duty to address this theme so that, on the threshold of the third
millennium of the Christian era, humanity may come to a clearer sense of the great resources with which it
20 has been endowed and may commit itself with renewed courage to implement the plan of salvation of which
its history is part.

Chapter II - Credo ut Intellegam

25

“Wisdom knows all and understands all” (Wis 9:11)

16. Sacred Scripture indicates with remarkably clear cues how deeply related are the knowledge conferred
30 by faith and the knowledge conferred by reason; and it is in the Wisdom literature that this relationship is
addressed most explicitly. What is striking about these biblical texts, if they are read without prejudice, is
that they embody not only the faith of Israel, but also the treasury of cultures and civilizations which have
long vanished. As if by special design, the voices of Egypt and Mesopotamia sound again and certain features
common to the cultures of the ancient Near East come to life in these pages which are so singularly rich in
35 deep intuition.

It is no accident that, when the sacred author comes to describe the wise man, he portrays him as one

1 who loves and seeks the truth: “Happy the man who meditates on wisdom and reasons intelligently, who
 reflects in his heart on her ways and ponders her secrets. He pursues her like a hunter and lies in wait on her
 paths. He peers through her windows and listens at her doors. He camps near her house and fastens his tent-
 peg to her walls; he pitches his tent near her and so finds an excellent resting-place; he places his children
 5 under her protection and lodges under her boughs; by her he is sheltered from the heat and he dwells in the
 shade of her glory” (*Sir* 14:20-27).

For the inspired writer, as we see, the desire for knowledge is characteristic of all people. Intelligence
 enables everyone, believer and non-believer, to reach “the deep waters” of knowledge (cf. *Prov* 20:5). It is true
 10 that ancient Israel did not come to knowledge of the world and its phenomena by way of abstraction, as did
 the Greek philosopher or the Egyptian sage. Still less did the good Israelite understand knowledge in the way
 of the modern world which tends more to distinguish different kinds of knowing. Nonetheless, the biblical
 world has made its own distinctive contribution to the theory of knowledge.

15 What is distinctive in the biblical text is the conviction that there is a profound and indissoluble unity be-
 tween the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith. The world and all that happens within it, includ-
 ing history and the fate of peoples, are realities to be observed, analysed and assessed with all the resources of
 reason, but without faith ever being foreign to the process. Faith intervenes not to abolish reason’s autonomy
 nor to reduce its scope for action, but solely to bring the human being to understand that in these events it is
 20 the God of Israel who acts. Thus the world and the events of history cannot be understood in depth without
 professing faith in the God who is at work in them. Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to dis-
 cover in the flux of events the workings of Providence. Here the words of the Book of Proverbs are pertinent:
 “The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps” (16:9). This is to say that with the light of
 reason human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and
 25 unhindered, only if with a rightly tuned spirit they search for it within the horizon of faith. Therefore, reason
 and faith cannot be separated without diminishing the capacity of men and women to know themselves, the
 world and God in an appropriate way.

17. There is thus no reason for competition of any kind between reason and faith: each contains the other,
 30 and each has its own scope for action. Again the Book of Proverbs points in this direction when it exclaims:
 “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out” (*Prov* 25:2). In their
 respective worlds, God and the human being are set within a unique relationship. In God there lies the
 origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and
 women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists. The Psalm-
 35 ist adds one final piece to this mosaic when he says in prayer: “How deep to me are your thoughts, O God!
 How vast is the sum of them! If I try to count them, they are more than the sand. If I come to the end, I am
 still with you” (139:17-18). The desire for knowledge is so great and it works in such a way that the human

1 heart, despite its experience of insurmountable limitation, yearns for the infinite riches which lie beyond, knowing that there is to be found the satisfying answer to every question as yet unanswered.

18. We may say, then, that Israel, with her reflection, was able to open to reason the path that leads to the
 5 mystery. With the Revelation of God Israel could plumb the depths of all that she sought in vain to reach by way of reason. On the basis of this deeper form of knowledge, the Chosen People understood that, if reason were to be fully true to itself, then it must respect certain basic rules. The first of these is that reason must realize that human knowledge is a journey which allows no rest; the second stems from the awareness that such a path is not for the proud who think that everything is the fruit of personal conquest; a third rule is
 10 grounded in the “fear of God” whose transcendent sovereignty and provident love in the governance of the world reason must recognize.

In abandoning these rules, the human being runs the risk of failure and ends up in the condition of “the fool”. For the Bible, in this foolishness there lies a threat to life. The fool thinks that he knows many things,
 15 but really he is incapable of fixing his gaze on the things that truly matter. Therefore he can neither order his mind (*Prov* 1:7) nor assume a correct attitude to himself or to the world around him. And so when he claims that “God does not exist” (cf. *Ps* 14:1), he shows with absolute clarity just how deficient his knowledge is and just how far he is from the full truth of things, their origin and their destiny.

20 19. The Book of Wisdom contains several important texts which cast further light on this theme. There the sacred author speaks of God who reveals himself in nature. For the ancients, the study of the natural sciences coincided in large part with philosophical learning. Having affirmed that with their intelligence human beings can “know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements... the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild beasts” (*Wis* 7:17,
 25 19-20)—in a word, that he can philosophize—the sacred text takes a significant step forward. Making his own the thought of Greek philosophy, to which he seems to refer in the context, the author affirms that, in reasoning about nature, the human being can rise to God: “From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator” (*Wis* 13:5). This is to recognize as a first stage of divine Revelation the marvelous “book of nature”, which, when read with the proper tools of human reason, can
 30 lead to knowledge of the Creator. If human beings with their intelligence fail to recognize God as Creator of all, it is not because they lack the means to do so, but because their free will and their sinfulness place an impediment in the way.

20. Seen in this light, reason is valued without being overvalued. The results of reasoning may in fact
 35 be true, but these results acquire their true meaning only if they are set within the larger horizon of faith: “All man’s steps are ordered by the Lord: how then can man understand his own ways?” (*Prov* 20:24). For the Old Testament, then, faith liberates reason in so far as it allows reason to attain correctly what it seeks

1 to know and to place it within the ultimate order of things, in which everything acquires true meaning. In
 brief, human beings attain truth by way of reason because, enlightened by faith, they discover the deeper
 meaning of all things and most especially of their own existence. Rightly, therefore, the sacred author iden-
 tifies the fear of God as the beginning of true knowledge: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowl-
 5 edge” (*Prov* 1:7; cf. *Sir* 1:14).

“Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding” (*Prov* 4:5)

21. For the Old Testament, knowledge is not simply a matter of careful observation of the human being,
 10 of the world and of history, but supposes as well an indispensable link with faith and with what has been re-
 vealed. These are the challenges which the Chosen People had to confront and to which they had to respond.
 Pondering this as his situation, biblical man discovered that he could understand himself only as “being in
 relation”—with himself, with people, with the world and with God. This opening to the mystery, which
 came to him through Revelation, was for him, in the end, the source of true knowledge. It was this which
 15 allowed his reason to enter the realm of the infinite where an understanding for which until then he had not
 dared to hope became a possibility.

For the sacred author, the task of searching for the truth was not without the strain which comes once
 the limits of reason are reached. This is what we find, for example, when the Book of Proverbs notes the
 20 weariness which comes from the effort to understand the mysterious designs of God (cf. 30:1-6). Yet, for all
 the toil involved, believers do not surrender. They can continue on their way to the truth because they are
 certain that God has created them “explorers” (cf. *Qoh* 1:13), whose mission it is to leave no stone unturned,
 though the temptation to doubt is always there. Leaning on God, they continue to reach out, always and
 everywhere, for all that is beautiful, good and true.

22. In the first chapter of his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul helps us to appreciate better the depth of
 insight of the Wisdom literature’s reflection. Developing a philosophical argument in popular language, the
 Apostle declares a profound truth: through all that is created the “eyes of the mind” can come to know God.
 Through the medium of creatures, God stirs in reason an intuition of his “power” and his “divinity” (cf. *Rom*
 30 1:20). This is to concede to human reason a capacity which seems almost to surpass its natural limitations.
 Not only is it not restricted to sensory knowledge, from the moment that it can reflect critically upon the
 data of the senses, but, by discoursing on the data provided by the senses, reason can reach the cause which
 lies at the origin of all perceptible reality. In philosophical terms, we could say that this important Pauline
 text affirms the human capacity for metaphysical enquiry.

35 According to the Apostle, it was part of the original plan of the creation that reason should without diffi-
 culty reach beyond the sensory data to the origin of all things: the Creator. But because of the disobedience

1 by which man and woman chose to set themselves in full and absolute autonomy in relation to the One who had created them, this ready access to God the Creator diminished.

5 This is the human condition vividly described by the Book of Genesis when it tells us that God placed the human being in the Garden of Eden, in the middle of which there stood “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (2:17). The symbol is clear: man was in no position to discern and decide for himself what was good and what was evil, but was constrained to appeal to a higher source. The blindness of pride deceived our first parents into thinking themselves sovereign and autonomous, and into thinking that they could ignore the knowledge which comes from God. All men and women were caught up in this primal disobedience, which
10 so wounded reason that from then on its path to full truth would be strewn with obstacles. From that time onwards the human capacity to know the truth was impaired by an aversion to the One who is the source and origin of truth. It is again the Apostle who reveals just how far human thinking, because of sin, became “empty”, and human reasoning became distorted and inclined to falsehood (cf. *Rom* 1:21-22). The eyes of the mind were no longer able to see clearly: reason became more and more a prisoner to itself. The coming
15 of Christ was the saving event which redeemed reason from its weakness, setting it free from the shackles in which it had imprisoned itself.

23. This is why the Christian’s relationship to philosophy requires thorough-going discernment. In the New Testament, especially in the Letters of Saint Paul, one thing emerges with great clarity: the opposition
20 between “the wisdom of this world” and the wisdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The depth of revealed wisdom disrupts the cycle of our habitual patterns of thought, which are in no way able to express that wisdom in its fullness.

The beginning of the First Letter to the Corinthians poses the dilemma in a radical way. The crucified
25 Son of God is the historic event upon which every attempt of the mind to construct an adequate explanation of the meaning of existence upon merely human argumentation comes to grief. The true key-point, which challenges every philosophy, is Jesus Christ’s death on the Cross. It is here that every attempt to reduce the Father’s saving plan to purely human logic is doomed to failure. “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the learned? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 *Cor*
30 1:20), the Apostle asks emphatically. The wisdom of the wise is no longer enough for what God wants to accomplish; what is required is a decisive step towards welcoming something radically new: “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise...; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not to reduce to nothing things that are” (1 *Cor* 1:27-28). Human wisdom refuses to see in its own weakness the possibility of its strength; yet Saint Paul is quick to affirm: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 *Cor*
35 12:10). Man cannot grasp how death could be the source of life and love; yet to reveal the mystery of his saving plan God has chosen precisely that which reason considers “foolishness” and a “scandal”. Adopting the language of the philosophers of his time, Paul comes to the summit of his teaching as he speaks the paradox:

1 “God has chosen in the world... that which is nothing to reduce to nothing things that are” (cf. 1 *Cor* 1:28).
 In order to express the gratuitous nature of the love revealed in the Cross of Christ, the Apostle is not afraid
 to use the most radical language of the philosophers in their thinking about God. Reason cannot eliminate
 the mystery of love which the Cross represents, while the Cross can give to reason the ultimate answer which
 5 it seeks. It is not the wisdom of words, but the Word of Wisdom which Saint Paul offers as the criterion of
 both truth and salvation.

The wisdom of the Cross, therefore, breaks free of all cultural limitations which seek to contain it and in-
 sists upon an openness to the universality of the truth which it bears. What a challenge this is to our reason,
 10 and how great the gain for reason if it yields to this wisdom! Of itself, philosophy is able to recognize the hu-
 man being’s ceaselessly self-transcendent orientation towards the truth; and, with the assistance of faith, it is
 capable of accepting the “foolishness” of the Cross as the authentic critique of those who delude themselves
 that they possess the truth, when in fact they run it aground on the shoals of a system of their own devising.
 The preaching of Christ crucified and risen is the reef upon which the link between faith and philosophy can
 15 break up, but it is also the reef beyond which the two can set forth upon the boundless ocean of truth. Here
 we see not only the border between reason and faith, but also the space where the two may meet.

Chapter III - Intellego ut Credam

20

Journeying in search of truth

24. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Evangelist Luke tells of Paul’s coming to Athens on one of his mission-
 25 ary journeys. The city of philosophers was full of statues of various idols. One altar in particular caught his
 eye, and he took this as a convenient starting-point to establish a common base for the proclamation of the
 kerygma. “Athenians,” he said, “I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the
 city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription,
 ‘To an unknown god’. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (*Acts* 17:22-23).
 30 From this starting-point, Saint Paul speaks of God as Creator, as the One who transcends all things and gives
 life to all. He then continues his speech in these terms: “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit
 the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they
 would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he
 is not far from each one of us” (*Acts* 17:26-27).

35

The Apostle accentuates a truth which the Church has always treasured: in the far reaches of the human
 heart there is a seed of desire and nostalgia for God. The Liturgy of Good Friday recalls this powerfully

1 when, in praying for those who do not believe, we say: “Almighty and eternal God, you created mankind so that all might long to find you and have peace when you are found”.²² There is therefore a path which the human being may choose to take, a path which begins with reason’s capacity to rise beyond what is contingent and set out towards the infinite.

5

In different ways and at different times, men and women have shown that they can articulate this intimate desire of theirs. Through literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture and every other work of their creative intelligence they have declared the urgency of their quest. In a special way philosophy has made this search its own and, with its specific tools and scholarly methods, has articulated this universal human
10 desire.

25. “All human beings desire to know”,²³ and truth is the proper object of this desire. Everyday life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves, beyond mere opinions, how things really are. Within visible creation, man is the only creature who not only is capable of knowing but who knows that he knows,
15 and is therefore interested in the real truth of what he perceives. People cannot be genuinely indifferent to the question of whether what they know is true or not. If they discover that it is false, they reject it; but if they can establish its truth, they feel themselves rewarded. It is this that Saint Augustine teaches when he writes: “I have met many who wanted to deceive, but none who wanted to be deceived”.²⁴ It is rightly claimed that persons have reached adulthood when they can distinguish independently between truth and
20 falsehood, making up their own minds about the objective reality of things. This is what has driven so many enquiries, especially in the scientific field, which in recent centuries have produced important results, leading to genuine progress for all humanity.

No less important than research in the theoretical field is research in the practical field—by which I mean
25 the search for truth which looks to the good which is to be performed. In acting ethically, according to a free and rightly tuned will, the human person sets foot upon the path to happiness and moves towards perfection. Here too it is a question of truth. It is this conviction which I stressed in my Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*: “There is no morality without freedom... Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek
30 the truth and to adhere to it once it is known”.²⁵

It is essential, therefore, that the values chosen and pursued in one’s life be true, because only true values can lead people to realize themselves fully, allowing them to be true to their nature. The truth of these values is to be found not by turning in on oneself but by opening oneself to apprehend that truth even at levels
35 which transcend the person. This is an essential condition for us to become ourselves and to grow as mature, adult persons.

1 26. The truth comes initially to the human being as a question: *Does life have a meaning? Where is it going?*
 At first sight, personal existence may seem completely meaningless. It is not necessary to turn to the phi-
 losophers of the absurd or to the provocative questioning found in the Book of Job in order to have doubts
 about life's meaning. The daily experience of suffering—in one's own life and in the lives of others—and
 5 the array of facts which seem inexplicable to reason are enough to ensure that a question as dramatic as the
 question of meaning cannot be evaded.²⁶ Moreover, the first absolutely certain truth of our life, beyond the
 fact that we exist, is the inevitability of our death. Given this unsettling fact, the search for a full answer is
 inescapable. Each of us has both the desire and the duty to know the truth of our own destiny. We want to
 know if death will be the definitive end of our life or if there is something beyond—if it is possible to hope
 10 for an after-life or not. It is not insignificant that the death of Socrates gave philosophy one of its decisive
 orientations, no less decisive now than it was more than two thousand years ago. It is not by chance, then,
 that faced with the fact of death philosophers have again and again posed this question, together with the
 question of the meaning of life and immortality.

15 27. No-one can avoid this questioning, neither the philosopher nor the ordinary person. The answer we
 give will determine whether or not we think it possible to attain universal and absolute truth; and this is
 a decisive moment of the search. Every truth—if it really is truth—presents itself as universal, even if it is
 not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times. Beyond this
 universality, however, people seek an absolute which might give to all their searching a meaning and an
 20 answer—something ultimate, which might serve as the ground of all things. In other words, they seek a final
 explanation, a supreme value, which refers to nothing beyond itself and which puts an end to all question-
 ing. Hypotheses may fascinate, but they do not satisfy. Whether we admit it or not, there comes for everyone
 the moment when personal existence must be anchored to a truth recognized as final, a truth which confers a
 certitude no longer open to doubt.

25 Through the centuries, philosophers have sought to discover and articulate such a truth, giving rise to
 various systems and schools of thought. But beyond philosophical systems, people seek in different ways
 to shape a “philosophy” of their own—in personal convictions and experiences, in traditions of family and
 culture, or in journeys in search of life's meaning under the guidance of a master. What inspires all of these is
 30 the desire to reach the certitude of truth and the certitude of its absolute value.

The different faces of human truth

35 28. The search for truth, of course, is not always so transparent nor does it always produce such results.
 The natural limitation of reason and the inconstancy of the heart often obscure and distort a person's search.
 Truth can also drown in a welter of other concerns. People can even run from the truth as soon as they
 glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands. Yet, for all that they may evade it, the truth still influenc-

1 es life. Life in fact can never be grounded upon doubt, uncertainty or deceit; such an existence would be threatened constantly by fear and anxiety. One may define the human being, therefore, as *the one who seeks the truth*.

5 29. It is unthinkable that a search so deeply rooted in human nature would be completely vain and useless. The capacity to search for truth and to pose questions itself implies the rudiments of a response. Human beings would not even begin to search for something of which they knew nothing or for something which they thought was wholly beyond them. Only the sense that they can arrive at an answer leads them to take the first step. This is what normally happens in scientific research. When scientists, following their intuition,
10 set out in search of the logical and verifiable explanation of a phenomenon, they are confident from the first that they will find an answer, and they do not give up in the face of setbacks. They do not judge their original intuition useless simply because they have not reached their goal; rightly enough they will say that they have not yet found a satisfactory answer.

15 The same must be equally true of the search for truth when it comes to the ultimate questions. The thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence into jeopardy. Everyday life shows well enough how each one of us is preoccupied by the pressure of a few fundamental questions and how in the soul of each of us there is at least an outline of the answers. One reason why the truth of these answers convinces is that they are no different in substance from the answers to which many
20 others have come. To be sure, not every truth to which we come has the same value. But the sum of the results achieved confirms that in principle the human being can arrive at the truth.

30 30. It may help, then, to turn briefly to the different modes of truth. Most of them depend upon immediate evidence or are confirmed by experimentation. This is the mode of truth proper to everyday life and to scientific research. At another level we find philosophical truth, attained by means of the speculative powers of the human intellect. Finally, there are religious truths which are to some degree grounded in philosophy, and which we find in the answers which the different religious traditions offer to the ultimate questions.²⁷

35 The truths of philosophy, it should be said, are not restricted only to the sometimes ephemeral teachings of professional philosophers. All men and women, as I have noted, are in some sense philosophers and have their own philosophical conceptions with which they direct their lives. In one way or other, they shape a comprehensive vision and an answer to the question of life's meaning; and in the light of this they interpret their own life's course and regulate their behaviour. At this point, we may pose the question of the link between, on the one hand, the truths of philosophy and religion and, on the other, the truth revealed in Jesus
Christ. But before tackling that question, one last datum of philosophy needs to be weighed.

31. Human beings are not made to live alone. They are born into a family and in a family they grow,

1 eventually entering society through their activity. From birth, therefore, they are immersed in traditions
 which give them not only a language and a cultural formation but also a range of truths in which they
 believe almost instinctively. Yet personal growth and maturity imply that these same truths can be cast into
 doubt and evaluated through a process of critical enquiry. It may be that, after this time of transition, these
 5 truths are “recovered” as a result of the experience of life or by dint of further reasoning. Nonetheless, there
 are in the life of a human being many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired
 by way of personal verification. Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings
 upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day
 after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge
 10 anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion?
 This means that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also *the one who lives by belief*.

32. In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. This suggests an important
 tension. On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowl-
 15 edge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence; on the other hand, belief is often
 humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play
 not only a person’s capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a
 relationship with them which is intimate and enduring.

20 It should be stressed that the truths sought in this interpersonal relationship are not primarily empirical
 or philosophical. Rather, what is sought is the *truth of the person*—what the person is and what the person
 reveals from deep within. Human perfection, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge
 of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others. It is in this faithful self-giving
 that a person finds a fullness of certainty and security. At the same time, however, knowledge through belief,
 25 grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth: in the act of believing, men and women entrust
 themselves to the truth which the other declares to them.

Any number of examples could be found to demonstrate this; but I think immediately of the martyrs,
 who are the most authentic witnesses to the truth about existence. The martyrs know that they have found
 30 the truth about life in the encounter with Jesus Christ, and nothing and no-one could ever take this certainty
 from them. Neither suffering nor violent death could ever lead them to abandon the truth which they
 have discovered in the encounter with Christ. This is why to this day the witness of the martyrs continues
 to arouse such interest, to draw agreement, to win such a hearing and to invite emulation. This is why their
 word inspires such confidence: from the moment they speak to us of what we perceive deep down as the
 35 truth we have sought for so long, the martyrs provide evidence of a love that has no need of lengthy ar-
 guments in order to convince. The martyrs stir in us a profound trust because they give voice to what we
 already feel and they declare what we would like to have the strength to express.

1 33. Step by step, then, we are assembling the terms of the question. It is the nature of the human being to
 seek the truth. This search looks not only to the attainment of truths which are partial, empirical or scientific;
 nor is it only in individual acts of decision-making that people seek the true good. Their search looks to-
 wards an ulterior truth which would explain the meaning of life. And it is therefore a search which can reach
 5 its end only in reaching the absolute.²⁸ Thanks to the inherent capacities of thought, man is able to encounter
 and recognize a truth of this kind. Such a truth—vital and necessary as it is for life—is attained not only
 by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity
 and certainty of the truth itself. There is no doubt that the capacity to entrust oneself and one’s life to another
 person and the decision to do so are among the most significant and expressive human acts.

10 It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue
 and sincere friendship. A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the
 teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for
 sound philosophical enquiry.

15 From all that I have said to this point it emerges that men and women are on a journey of discovery
 which is humanly unstoppable—a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust
 themselves. Christian faith comes to meet them, offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal which
 they seek. Moving beyond the stage of simple believing, Christian faith immerses human beings in the order
 20 of grace, which enables them to share in the mystery of Christ, which in turn offers them a true and coherent
 knowledge of the Triune God. In Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, faith recognizes the ultimate appeal to
 humanity, an appeal made in order that what we experience as desire and nostalgia may come to its fulfilment.

25 34. This truth, which God reveals to us in Jesus Christ, is not opposed to the truths which philosophy
 perceives. On the contrary, the two modes of knowledge lead to truth in all its fullness. The unity of truth
 is a fundamental premise of human reasoning, as the principle of non-contradiction makes clear. Revelation
 renders this unity certain, showing that the God of creation is also the God of salvation history. It is the one
 and the same God who establishes and guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order
 of things upon which scientists confidently depend,²⁹ and who reveals himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus
 30 Christ. This unity of truth, natural and revealed, is embodied in a living and personal way in Christ, as the
 Apostle reminds us: “Truth is in Jesus” (cf. *Eph* 4:21; *Col* 1:15-20). He is the *eternal Word* in whom all things
 were created, and he is the *incarnate Word* who in his entire person ³⁰ reveals the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:14, 18).
 What human reason seeks “without knowing it” (cf. *Acts* 17:23) can be found only through Christ: what is
 revealed in him is “the full truth” (cf. *Jn* 1:14-16) of everything which was created in him and through him
 35 and which therefore in him finds its fulfilment (cf. *Col* 1:17).

35. On the basis of these broad considerations, we must now explore more directly the relationship

1 between revealed truth and philosophy. This relationship imposes a twofold consideration, since the truth
 conferred by Revelation is a truth to be understood in the light of reason. It is this duality alone which
 allows us to specify correctly the relationship between revealed truth and philosophical learning. First, then,
 let us consider the links between faith and philosophy in the course of history. From this, certain principles
 5 will emerge as useful reference-points in the attempt to establish the correct link between the two orders of
 knowledge.

Chapter IV - The Relationship Between Faith and Reason

10

Important moments in the encounter of faith and reason

36. The Acts of the Apostles provides evidence that Christian proclamation was engaged from the very
 first with the philosophical currents of the time. In Athens, we read, Saint Paul entered into discussion with
 15 “certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers” (17:18); and exegetical analysis of his speech at the Areopagus has
 revealed frequent allusions to popular beliefs deriving for the most part from Stoicism. This is by no means
 accidental. If pagans were to understand them, the first Christians could not refer only to “Moses and the
 prophets” when they spoke. They had to point as well to natural knowledge of God and to the voice of con-
 science in every human being (cf. *Rom* 1:19-21; 2:14-15; *Acts* 14:16-17). Since in pagan religion this natural
 20 knowledge had lapsed into idolatry (cf. *Rom* 1:21-32), the Apostle judged it wiser in his speech to make the
 link with the thinking of the philosophers, who had always set in opposition to the myths and mystery cults
 notions more respectful of divine transcendence.

One of the major concerns of classical philosophy was to purify human notions of God of mythological
 25 elements. We know that Greek religion, like most cosmic religions, was polytheistic, even to the point of
 divinizing natural things and phenomena. Human attempts to understand the origin of the gods and hence
 the origin of the universe find their earliest expression in poetry; and the theogonies remain the first evidence
 of this human search. But it was the task of the fathers of philosophy to bring to light the link between rea-
 son and religion. As they broadened their view to include universal principles, they no longer rested content
 30 with the ancient myths, but wanted to provide a rational foundation for their belief in the divinity. This
 opened a path which took its rise from ancient traditions but allowed a development satisfying the demands
 of universal reason. This development sought to acquire a critical awareness of what they believed in, and the
 concept of divinity was the prime beneficiary of this. Superstitions were recognized for what they were and
 religion was, at least in part, purified by rational analysis. It was on this basis that the Fathers of the Church
 35 entered into fruitful dialogue with ancient philosophy, which offered new ways of proclaiming and under-
 standing the God of Jesus Christ.

1 37. In tracing Christianity's adoption of philosophy, one should not forget how cautiously Christians re-
 regarded other elements of the cultural world of paganism, one example of which is gnosticism. It was easy to
 confuse philosophy—understood as practical wisdom and an education for life—with a higher and esoteric
 kind of knowledge, reserved to those few who were perfect. It is surely this kind of esoteric speculation which
 5 Saint Paul has in mind when he puts the Colossians on their guard: “See to it that no-one takes you captive
 through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of
 the universe and not according to Christ” (2:8). The Apostle's words seem all too pertinent now if we apply
 them to the various kinds of esoteric superstition widespread today, even among some believers who lack a
 proper critical sense. Following Saint Paul, other writers of the early centuries, especially Saint Irenaeus and
 10 Tertullian, sound the alarm when confronted with a cultural perspective which sought to subordinate the
 truth of Revelation to the interpretation of the philosophers.

38. Christianity's engagement with philosophy was therefore neither straight-forward nor immediate.
 The practice of philosophy and attendance at philosophical schools seemed to the first Christians more of a
 15 disturbance than an opportunity. For them, the first and most urgent task was the proclamation of the Risen
 Christ by way of a personal encounter which would bring the listener to conversion of heart and the request
 for Baptism. But that does not mean that they ignored the task of deepening the understanding of faith and
 its motivations. Quite the contrary. That is why the criticism of Celsus—that Christians were “illiterate and
 uncouth”³¹—is unfounded and untrue. Their initial disinterest is to be explained on other grounds. The en-
 20 counter with the Gospel offered such a satisfying answer to the hitherto unresolved question of life's meaning
 that delving into the philosophers seemed to them something remote and in some ways outmoded.

That seems still more evident today, if we think of Christianity's contribution to the affirmation of the
 right of everyone to have access to the truth. In dismantling barriers of race, social status and gender, Chris-
 25 tianity proclaimed from the first the equality of all men and women before God. One prime implication of
 this touched the theme of truth. The elitism which had characterized the ancients' search for truth was clear-
 ly abandoned. Since access to the truth enables access to God, it must be denied to none. There are many
 paths which lead to truth, but since Christian truth has a salvific value, any one of these paths may be taken,
 as long as it leads to the final goal, that is to the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

30 A pioneer of positive engagement with philosophical thinking—albeit with cautious discernment—was
 Saint Justin. Although he continued to hold Greek philosophy in high esteem after his conversion, Justin
 claimed with power and clarity that he had found in Christianity “the only sure and profitable philosophy”.³²
 Similarly, Clement of Alexandria called the Gospel “the true philosophy”,³³ and he understood philosophy,
 35 like the Mosaic Law, as instruction which prepared for Christian faith³⁴ and paved the way for the Gospel.³⁵
 Since “philosophy yearns for the wisdom which consists in rightness of soul and speech and in purity of
 life, it is well disposed towards wisdom and does all it can to acquire it. We call philosophers those who love

1 the wisdom that is creator and mistress of all things, that is knowledge of the Son of God”.³⁶ For Clement,
 Greek philosophy is not meant in the first place to bolster and complete Christian truth. Its task is rather the
 defence of the faith: “The teaching of the Saviour is perfect in itself and has no need of support, because it
 is the strength and the wisdom of God. Greek philosophy, with its contribution, does not strengthen truth;
 5 but, in rendering the attack of sophistry impotent and in disarming those who betray truth and wage war
 upon it, Greek philosophy is rightly called the hedge and the protective wall around the vineyard”.³⁷

39. It is clear from history, then, that Christian thinkers were critical in adopting philosophical thought.
 Among the early examples of this, Origen is certainly outstanding. In countering the attacks launched by the
 10 philosopher Celsus, Origen adopts Platonic philosophy to shape his argument and mount his reply. As-
 suming many elements of Platonic thought, he begins to construct an early form of Christian theology. The
 name “theology” itself, together with the idea of theology as rational discourse about God, had to this point
 been tied to its Greek origins. In Aristotelian philosophy, for example, the name signified the noblest part
 and the true summit of philosophical discourse. But in the light of Christian Revelation what had signified
 15 a generic doctrine about the gods assumed a wholly new meaning, signifying now the reflection undertaken
 by the believer in order to express *the true doctrine* about God. As it developed, this new Christian thought
 made use of philosophy, but at the same time tended to distinguish itself clearly from philosophy. History
 shows how Platonic thought, once adopted by theology, underwent profound changes, especially with regard
 to concepts such as the immortality of the soul, the divinization of man and the origin of evil.

20
 40. In this work of christianizing Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought, the Cappadocian Fathers, Diony-
 sius called the Areopagite and especially Saint Augustine were important. The great Doctor of the West had
 come into contact with different philosophical schools, but all of them left him disappointed. It was when he
 encountered the truth of Christian faith that he found strength to undergo the radical conversion to which
 25 the philosophers he had known had been powerless to lead him. He himself reveals his motive: “From this
 time on, I gave my preference to the Catholic faith. I thought it more modest and not in the least misleading
 to be told by the Church to believe what could not be demonstrated—whether that was because a demon-
 stration existed but could not be understood by all or whether the matter was not one open to rational
 proof—rather than from the Manichees to have a rash promise of knowledge with mockery of mere belief,
 30 and then afterwards to be ordered to believe many fabulous and absurd myths impossible to prove true”.³⁸
 Though he accorded the Platonists a place of privilege, Augustine rebuked them because, knowing the goal
 to seek, they had ignored the path which leads to it: the Word made flesh.³⁹ The Bishop of Hippo succeeded
 in producing the first great synthesis of philosophy and theology, embracing currents of thought both Greek
 and Latin. In him too the great unity of knowledge, grounded in the thought of the Bible, was both con-
 35 firmed and sustained by a depth of speculative thinking. The synthesis devised by Saint Augustine remained
 for centuries the most exalted form of philosophical and theological speculation known to the West. Rein-
 forced by his personal story and sustained by a wonderful holiness of life, he could also introduce into his

1 works a range of material which, drawing on experience, was a prelude to future developments in different
currents of philosophy.

41. The ways in which the Fathers of East and West engaged the philosophical schools were, therefore,
5 quite different. This does not mean that they identified the content of their message with the systems to
which they referred. Consider Tertullian's question: "What does Athens have in common with Jerusalem?
The Academy with the Church?"⁴⁰ This clearly indicates the critical consciousness with which Christian
thinkers from the first confronted the problem of the relationship between faith and philosophy, viewing it
comprehensively with both its positive aspects and its limitations. They were not naive thinkers. Precisely
10 because they were intense in living faith's content they were able to reach the deepest forms of speculation.
It is therefore minimalizing and mistaken to restrict their work simply to the transposition of the truths of
faith into philosophical categories. They did much more. In fact they succeeded in disclosing completely all
that remained implicit and preliminary in the thinking of the great philosophers of antiquity.⁴¹ As I have
noted, theirs was the task of showing how reason, freed from external constraints, could find its way out of
15 the blind alley of myth and open itself to the transcendent in a more appropriate way. Purified and rightly
tuned, therefore, reason could rise to the higher planes of thought, providing a solid foundation for the per-
ception of being, of the transcendent and of the absolute.

It is here that we see the originality of what the Fathers accomplished. They fully welcomed reason which
20 was open to the absolute, and they infused it with the richness drawn from Revelation. This was more than a
meeting of cultures, with one culture perhaps succumbing to the fascination of the other. It happened rather
in the depths of human souls, and it was a meeting of creature and Creator. Surpassing the goal towards
which it unwittingly tended by dint of its nature, reason attained the supreme good and ultimate truth
in the person of the Word made flesh. Faced with the various philosophies, the Fathers were not afraid to
25 acknowledge those elements in them that were consonant with Revelation and those that were not. Recogni-
tion of the points of convergence did not blind them to the points of divergence.

42. In Scholastic theology, the role of philosophically trained reason becomes even more conspicuous
under the impulse of Saint Anselm's interpretation of the *intellectus fidei*. For the saintly Archbishop of Can-
30 terbury the priority of faith is not in competition with the search which is proper to reason. Reason in fact is
not asked to pass judgement on the contents of faith, something of which it would be incapable, since this is
not its function. Its function is rather to find meaning, to discover explanations which might allow everyone
to come to a certain understanding of the contents of faith. Saint Anselm underscores the fact that the intel-
lect must seek that which it loves: the more it loves, the more it desires to know. Whoever lives for the truth
35 is reaching for a form of knowledge which is fired more and more with love for what it knows, while having
to admit that it has not yet attained what it desires: "To see you was I conceived; and I have yet to conceive
that for which I was conceived (*Ad te videndum factus sum; et nondum feci propter quod factus sum*)".⁴² The

1 desire for truth, therefore, spurs reason always to go further; indeed, it is as if reason were overwhelmed to
 see that it can always go beyond what it has already achieved. It is at this point, though, that reason can learn
 where its path will lead in the end: “I think that whoever investigates something incomprehensible should be
 satisfied if, by way of reasoning, he reaches a quite certain perception of its reality, even if his intellect cannot
 5 penetrate its mode of being... But is there anything so incomprehensible and ineffable as that which is above
 all things? Therefore, if that which until now has been a matter of debate concerning the highest essence has
 been established on the basis of due reasoning, then the foundation of one’s certainty is not shaken in the
 least if the intellect cannot penetrate it in a way that allows clear formulation. If prior thought has concluded
 rationally that one cannot comprehend (*rationaliliter comprehendit incomprehensibile esse*) how supernal wis-
 10 dom knows its own accomplishments..., who then will explain how this same wisdom, of which the human
 being can know nothing or next to nothing, is to be known and expressed?”⁴³

The fundamental harmony between the knowledge of faith and the knowledge of philosophy is once
 again confirmed. Faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason; and at the summit of its
 15 searching reason acknowledges that it cannot do without what faith presents.

The enduring originality of the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas

43. A quite special place in this long development belongs to Saint Thomas, not only because of what he
 20 taught but also because of the dialogue which he undertook with the Arab and Jewish thought of his time.
 In an age when Christian thinkers were rediscovering the treasures of ancient philosophy, and more particu-
 larly of Aristotle, Thomas had the great merit of giving pride of place to the harmony which exists between
 faith and reason. Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, he argued; hence there can
 be no contradiction between them.⁴⁴

25 More radically, Thomas recognized that nature, philosophy’s proper concern, could contribute to the
 understanding of divine Revelation. Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust
 in it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment,⁴⁵ so faith builds upon and perfects reason.
 Illumined by faith, reason is set free from the fragility and limitations deriving from the disobedience of sin
 30 and finds the strength required to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God. Although he made much of the
 supernatural character of faith, the Angelic Doctor did not overlook the importance of its reasonableness;
 indeed he was able to plumb the depths and explain the meaning of this reasonableness. Faith is in a sense
 an “exercise of thought”; and human reason is neither annulled nor debased in assenting to the contents of
 faith, which are in any case attained by way of free and informed choice.⁴⁶

35 This is why the Church has been justified in consistently proposing Saint Thomas as a master of thought
 and a model of the right way to do theology. In this connection, I would recall what my Predecessor, the

1 Servant of God Paul VI, wrote on the occasion of the seventh centenary of the death of the Angelic Doctor:
 “Without doubt, Thomas possessed supremely the courage of the truth, a freedom of spirit in confronting
 new problems, the intellectual honesty of those who allow Christianity to be contaminated neither by secular
 philosophy nor by a prejudiced rejection of it. He passed therefore into the history of Christian thought as
 5 a pioneer of the new path of philosophy and universal culture. The key point and almost the kernel of the
 solution which, with all the brilliance of his prophetic intuition, he gave to the new encounter of faith and
 reason was a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel, thus avoid-
 ing the unnatural tendency to negate the world and its values while at the same time keeping faith with the
 supreme and inexorable demands of the supernatural order”.⁴⁷

10

44. Another of the great insights of Saint Thomas was his perception of the role of the Holy Spirit in the
 process by which knowledge matures into wisdom. From the first pages of his *Summa Theologiae*,⁴⁸ Aquinas
 was keen to show the primacy of the wisdom which is the gift of the Holy Spirit and which opens the way
 to a knowledge of divine realities. His theology allows us to understand what is distinctive of wisdom in its
 15 close link with faith and knowledge of the divine. This wisdom comes to know by way of connaturality; it
 presupposes faith and eventually formulates its right judgement on the basis of the truth of faith itself: “The
 wisdom named among the gifts of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the wisdom found among the intellectual
 virtues. This second wisdom is acquired through study, but the first ‘comes from on high’, as Saint James
 puts it. This also distinguishes it from faith, since faith accepts divine truth as it is. But the gift of wisdom
 20 enables judgement according to divine truth”.⁴⁹

Yet the priority accorded this wisdom does not lead the Angelic Doctor to overlook the presence of two
 other complementary forms of wisdom—*philosophical* wisdom, which is based upon the capacity of the
 intellect, for all its natural limitations, to explore reality, and *theological* wisdom, which is based upon Revela-
 25 tion and which explores the contents of faith, entering the very mystery of God.

Profoundly convinced that “whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit” (*omne verum a quocumque
 dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est*)⁵⁰ Saint Thomas was impartial in his love of truth. He sought truth wherever it
 might be found and gave consummate demonstration of its universality. In him, the Church’s Magisterium
 30 has seen and recognized the passion for truth; and, precisely because it stays consistently within the horizon
 of universal, objective and transcendent truth, his thought scales “heights unthinkable to human intelli-
 gence”.⁵¹ Rightly, then, he may be called an “apostle of the truth”.⁵² Looking unreservedly to truth, the
 realism of Thomas could recognize the objectivity of truth and produce not merely a philosophy of “what
 seems to be” but a philosophy of “what is”.

35

The drama of the separation of faith and reason

1 45. With the rise of the first universities, theology came more directly into contact with other forms of
 learning and scientific research. Although they insisted upon the organic link between theology and philos-
 ophy, Saint Albert the Great and Saint Thomas were the first to recognize the autonomy which philosophy
 and the sciences needed if they were to perform well in their respective fields of research. From the late
 5 Medieval period onwards, however, the legitimate distinction between the two forms of learning became
 more and more a fateful separation. As a result of the exaggerated rationalism of certain thinkers, positions
 grew more radical and there emerged eventually a philosophy which was separate from and absolutely inde-
 pendent of the contents of faith. Another of the many consequences of this separation was an ever deeper
 mistrust with regard to reason itself. In a spirit both sceptical and agnostic, some began to voice a general
 10 mistrust, which led some to focus more on faith and others to deny its rationality altogether.

In short, what for Patristic and Medieval thought was in both theory and practice a profound unity,
 producing knowledge capable of reaching the highest forms of speculation, was destroyed by systems which
 espoused the cause of rational knowledge sundered from faith and meant to take the place of faith.

15 46. The more influential of these radical positions are well known and high in profile, especially in the
 history of the West. It is not too much to claim that the development of a good part of modern philoso-
 phy has seen it move further and further away from Christian Revelation, to the point of setting itself quite
 explicitly in opposition. This process reached its apogee in the last century. Some representatives of idealism
 20 sought in various ways to transform faith and its contents, even the mystery of the Death and Resurrection
 of Jesus, into dialectical structures which could be grasped by reason. Opposed to this kind of thinking were
 various forms of atheistic humanism, expressed in philosophical terms, which regarded faith as alienating
 and damaging to the development of a full rationality. They did not hesitate to present themselves as new re-
 ligions serving as a basis for projects which, on the political and social plane, gave rise to totalitarian systems
 25 which have been disastrous for humanity.

In the field of scientific research, a positivistic mentality took hold which not only abandoned the Chris-
 tian vision of the world, but more especially rejected every appeal to a metaphysical or moral vision. It
 follows that certain scientists, lacking any ethical point of reference, are in danger of putting at the centre
 30 of their concerns something other than the human person and the entirety of the person's life. Further still,
 some of these, sensing the opportunities of technological progress, seem to succumb not only to a mar-
 ket-based logic, but also to the temptation of a quasi-divine power over nature and even over the human
 being.

35 As a result of the crisis of rationalism, what has appeared finally is *nihilism*. As a philosophy of nothing-
 ness, it has a certain attraction for people of our time. Its adherents claim that the search is an end in itself,
 without any hope or possibility of ever attaining the goal of truth. In the nihilist interpretation, life is no

1 more than an occasion for sensations and experiences in which the ephemeral has pride of place. Nihilism is at the root of the widespread mentality which claims that a definitive commitment should no longer be made, because everything is fleeting and provisional.

5 47. It should also be borne in mind that the role of philosophy itself has changed in modern culture. From universal wisdom and learning, it has been gradually reduced to one of the many fields of human knowing; indeed in some ways it has been consigned to a wholly marginal role. Other forms of rationality have acquired an ever higher profile, making philosophical learning appear all the more peripheral. These forms of rationality are directed not towards the contemplation of truth and the search for the ultimate goal
10 and meaning of life; but instead, as “instrumental reason”, they are directed—actually or potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power.

In my first Encyclical Letter I stressed the danger of absolutizing such an approach when I wrote: “The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work
15 of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will. All too soon, and often in an unforeseeable way, what this manifold activity of man yields is not only subject to ‘alienation’, in the sense that it is simply taken away from the person who produces it, but rather it turns against man himself, at least in part, through the indirect consequences of its effects returning on himself. It is or can be directed against him. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence
20 in its broadest and universal dimension. Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid of what he produces—not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative—can radically turn against himself”.⁵³

In the wake of these cultural shifts, some philosophers have abandoned the search for truth in itself and
25 made their sole aim the attainment of a subjective certainty or a pragmatic sense of utility. This in turn has obscured the true dignity of reason, which is no longer equipped to know the truth and to seek the absolute.

48. This rapid survey of the history of philosophy, then, reveals a growing separation between faith and philosophical reason. Yet closer scrutiny shows that even in the philosophical thinking of those who helped
30 drive faith and reason further apart there are found at times precious and seminal insights which, if pursued and developed with mind and heart rightly tuned, can lead to the discovery of truth’s way. Such insights are found, for instance, in penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imaginary and the unconscious, of personhood and intersubjectivity, of freedom and values, of time and history. The theme of death as well can become for all thinkers an incisive appeal to seek within themselves the true meaning of their
35 own life. But this does not mean that the link between faith and reason as it now stands does not need to be carefully examined, because each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled. Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal.

1 Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so run the risk of no longer being a uni-
 5 versal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on
 the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason
 which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being.

This is why I make this strong and insistent appeal—not, I trust, untimely—that faith and philosophy
 recover the profound unity which allows them to stand in harmony with their nature without compromising
 their mutual autonomy. The *parrhesia* of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason.

10

Chapter V - The Magisterium's Interventions in Philosophical Matters

The Magisterium's discernment as diakonia of the truth

49. The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy
 in preference to others.⁵⁴ The underlying reason for this reluctance is that, even when it engages theology,
 philosophy must remain faithful to its own principles and methods. Otherwise there would be no guarantee
 that it would remain oriented to truth and that it was moving towards truth by way of a process governed
 by reason. A philosophy which did not proceed in the light of reason according to its own principles and
 methods would serve little purpose. At the deepest level, the autonomy which philosophy enjoys is rooted in
 the fact that reason is by its nature oriented to truth and is equipped moreover with the means necessary to
 arrive at truth. A philosophy conscious of this as its “constitutive status” cannot but respect the demands and
 the data of revealed truth.

Yet history shows that philosophy—especially modern philosophy—has taken wrong turns and fallen
 into error. It is neither the task nor the competence of the Magisterium to intervene in order to make good
 the lacunas of deficient philosophical discourse. Rather, it is the Magisterium's duty to respond clearly and
 strongly when controversial philosophical opinions threaten right understanding of what has been revealed,
 and when false and partial theories which sow the seed of serious error, confusing the pure and simple faith
 of the People of God, begin to spread more widely.

50. In the light of faith, therefore, the Church's Magisterium can and must authoritatively exercise a
 critical discernment of opinions and philosophies which contradict Christian doctrine.⁵⁵ It is the task of the
 Magisterium in the first place to indicate which philosophical presuppositions and conclusions are incom-
 patible with revealed truth, thus articulating the demands which faith's point of view makes of philosophy.
 Moreover, as philosophical learning has developed, different schools of thought have emerged. This pluralism
 also imposes upon the Magisterium the responsibility of expressing a judgement as to whether or not the

1 basic tenets of these different schools are compatible with the demands of the word of God and theological enquiry.

It is the Church's duty to indicate the elements in a philosophical system which are incompatible with her
 5 own faith. In fact, many philosophical opinions—concerning God, the human being, human freedom and ethical behaviour— engage the Church directly, because they touch on the revealed truth of which she is the guardian. In making this discernment, we Bishops have the duty to be “witnesses to the truth”, fulfilling a humble but tenacious ministry of service which every philosopher should appreciate, a service in favour of *recta ratio*, or of reason reflecting rightly upon what is true.

10

51. This discernment, however, should not be seen as primarily negative, as if the Magisterium intended to abolish or limit any possible mediation. On the contrary, the Magisterium's interventions are intended above all to prompt, promote and encourage philosophical enquiry. Besides, philosophers are the first to understand the need for self-criticism, the correction of errors and the extension of the too restricted terms in
 15 which their thinking has been framed. In particular, it is necessary to keep in mind the unity of truth, even if its formulations are shaped by history and produced by human reason wounded and weakened by sin. This is why no historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth, nor to be the complete explanation of the human being, of the world and of the human being's relationship with God.

20 Today, then, with the proliferation of systems, methods, concepts and philosophical theses which are often extremely complex, the need for a critical discernment in the light of faith becomes more urgent, even if it remains a daunting task. Given all of reason's inherent and historical limitations, it is difficult enough to recognize the inalienable powers proper to it; but it is still more difficult at times to discern in specific philosophical claims what is valid and fruitful from faith's point of view and what is mistaken or dangerous.
 25 Yet the Church knows that “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hidden in Christ (*Col 2:3*) and therefore intervenes in order to stimulate philosophical enquiry, lest it stray from the path which leads to recognition of the mystery.

52. It is not only in recent times that the Magisterium of the Church has intervened to make its mind
 30 known with regard to particular philosophical teachings. It is enough to recall, by way of example, the pronouncements made through the centuries concerning theories which argued in favour of the pre-existence of the soul,⁵⁶ or concerning the different forms of idolatry and esoteric superstition found in astrological speculations,⁵⁷ without forgetting the more systematic pronouncements against certain claims of Latin Averroism which were incompatible with the Christian faith.⁵⁸

35

If the Magisterium has spoken out more frequently since the middle of the last century, it is because in that period not a few Catholics felt it their duty to counter various streams of modern thought with a

1 philosophy of their own. At this point, the Magisterium of the Church was obliged to be vigilant lest these
 philosophies developed in ways which were themselves erroneous and negative. The censures were delivered
 even-handedly: on the one hand, *fideism*⁵⁹ and *radical traditionalism*,⁶⁰ for their distrust of reason's natu-
 5 ral capacities, and, on the other, *rationalism*⁶¹ and *ontologism*⁶² because they attributed to natural reason a
 knowledge which only the light of faith could confer. The positive elements of this debate were assembled in
 the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, in which for the first time an Ecumenical Council—in this case, the
 First Vatican Council—pronounced solemnly on the relationship between reason and faith. The teaching
 contained in this document strongly and positively marked the philosophical research of many believers and
 remains today a standard reference-point for correct and coherent Christian thinking in this regard.

10

53. The Magisterium's pronouncements have been concerned less with individual philosophical theses
 than with the need for rational and hence ultimately philosophical knowledge for the understanding of faith.
 In synthesizing and solemnly reaffirming the teachings constantly proposed to the faithful by the ordinary
 Papal Magisterium, the First Vatican Council showed how inseparable and at the same time how distinct
 15 were faith and reason, Revelation and natural knowledge of God. The Council began with the basic crite-
 rion, presupposed by Revelation itself, of the natural knowability of the existence of God, the beginning
 and end of all things,⁶³ and concluded with the solemn assertion quoted earlier: "There are two orders of
 knowledge, distinct not only in their point of departure, but also in their object".⁶⁴ Against all forms of ra-
 tionalism, then, there was a need to affirm the distinction between the mysteries of faith and the findings of
 20 philosophy, and the transcendence and precedence of the mysteries of faith over the findings of philosophy.
 Against the temptations of fideism, however, it was necessary to stress the unity of truth and thus the positive
 contribution which rational knowledge can and must make to faith's knowledge: "Even if faith is superior
 to reason there can never be a true divergence between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the
 mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could
 25 not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth".⁶⁵

54. In our own century too the Magisterium has revisited the theme on a number of occasions, warning
 against the lure of rationalism. Here the pronouncements of Pope Saint Pius X are pertinent, stressing as
 they did that at the basis of Modernism were philosophical claims which were phenomenist, agnostic and
 30 immanentist.⁶⁶ Nor can the importance of the Catholic rejection of Marxist philosophy and atheistic Com-
 munist be forgotten.⁶⁷

Later, in his Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII warned against mistaken interpretations
 linked to evolutionism, existentialism and historicism. He made it clear that these theories had not been
 35 proposed and developed by theologians, but had their origins "outside the sheepfold of Christ".⁶⁸ He added,
 however, that errors of this kind should not simply be rejected but should be examined critically: "Catholic
 theologians and philosophers, whose grave duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instill it

1 in human hearts, cannot afford to ignore these more or less erroneous opinions. Rather they must come to
 understand these theories well, not only because diseases are properly treated only if rightly diagnosed and
 because even in these false theories some truth is found at times, but because in the end these theories pro-
 voke a more discriminating discussion and evaluation of philosophical and theological truths".⁶⁹

5 In accomplishing its specific task in service of the Roman Pontiff's universal Magisterium,⁷⁰ the Congrega-
 tion for the Doctrine of Faith has more recently had to intervene to re-emphasize the danger of an uncritical
 adoption by some liberation theologians of opinions and methods drawn from Marxism.⁷¹

10 In the past, then, the Magisterium has on different occasions and in different ways offered its discernment
 in philosophical matters. My revered Predecessors have thus made an invaluable contribution which must
 not be forgotten.

15 55. Surveying the situation today, we see that the problems of other times have returned, but in a new
 key. It is no longer a matter of questions of interest only to certain individuals and groups, but convictions so
 widespread that they have become to some extent the common mind. An example of this is the deep-seated
 distrust of reason which has surfaced in the most recent developments of much of philosophical research, to
 the point where there is talk at times of "the end of metaphysics". Philosophy is expected to rest content with
 more modest tasks such as the simple interpretation of facts or an enquiry into restricted fields of human
 20 knowing or its structures.

In theology too the temptations of other times have reappeared. In some contemporary theologies, for
 instance, a certain *rationalism* is gaining ground, especially when opinions thought to be philosophically
 well founded are taken as normative for theological research. This happens particularly when theologians,
 25 through lack of philosophical competence, allow themselves to be swayed uncritically by assertions which
 have become part of current parlance and culture but which are poorly grounded in reason.⁷²

There are also signs of a resurgence of *fideism*, which fails to recognize the importance of rational knowl-
 edge and philosophical discourse for the understanding of faith, indeed for the very possibility of belief in
 30 God. One currently widespread symptom of this fideistic tendency is a "biblicism" which tends to make
 the reading and exegesis of Sacred Scripture the sole criterion of truth. In consequence, the word of God
 is identified with Sacred Scripture alone, thus eliminating the doctrine of the Church which the Second Vati-
 can Council stressed quite specifically. Having recalled that the word of God is present in both Scripture and
 Tradition,⁷³ the Constitution *Dei Verbum* continues emphatically: "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture
 35 comprise a single sacred deposit of the word of God entrusted to the Church. Embracing this deposit and
 united with their pastors, the People of God remain always faithful to the teaching of the Apostles".⁷⁴ Scrip-
 ture, therefore, is not the Church's sole point of reference. The "supreme rule of her faith"⁷⁵ derives from the

1 unity which the Spirit has created between Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the
Church in a reciprocity which means that none of the three can survive without the others.⁷⁶

Moreover, one should not underestimate the danger inherent in seeking to derive the truth of Sacred
5 Scripture from the use of one method alone, ignoring the need for a more comprehensive exegesis which
enables the exegete, together with the whole Church, to arrive at the full sense of the texts. Those who
devote themselves to the study of Sacred Scripture should always remember that the various hermeneutical
approaches have their own philosophical underpinnings, which need to be carefully evaluated before they are
applied to the sacred texts.

10

Other modes of latent fideism appear in the scant consideration accorded to speculative theology, and in
disdain for the classical philosophy from which the terms of both the understanding of faith and the actual
formulation of dogma have been drawn. My revered Predecessor Pope Pius XII warned against such neglect
of the philosophical tradition and against abandonment of the traditional terminology.⁷⁷

15

56. In brief, there are signs of a widespread distrust of universal and absolute statements, especially among
those who think that truth is born of consensus and not of a consonance between intellect and objective
reality. In a world subdivided into so many specialized fields, it is not hard to see how difficult it can be
to acknowledge the full and ultimate meaning of life which has traditionally been the goal of philosophy.
20 Nonetheless, in the light of faith which finds in Jesus Christ this ultimate meaning, I cannot but encourage
philosophers—be they Christian or not—to trust in the power of human reason and not to set themselves
goals that are too modest in their philosophizing. The lesson of history in this millennium now drawing to
a close shows that this is the path to follow: it is necessary not to abandon the passion for ultimate truth,
the eagerness to search for it or the audacity to forge new paths in the search. It is faith which stirs reason
25 to move beyond all isolation and willingly to run risks so that it may attain whatever is beautiful, good and
true. Faith thus becomes the convinced and convincing advocate of reason.

The Church's interest in philosophy

30 57. Yet the Magisterium does more than point out the misperceptions and the mistakes of philosophical
theories. With no less concern it has sought to stress the basic principles of a genuine renewal of philosoph-
ical enquiry, indicating as well particular paths to be taken. In this regard, Pope Leo XIII with his Encyclical
Letter *Aeterni Patris* took a step of historic importance for the life of the Church, since it remains to this day
the one papal document of such authority devoted entirely to philosophy. The great Pope revisited and devel-
35 oped the First Vatican Council's teaching on the relationship between faith and reason, showing how philo-
sophical thinking contributes in fundamental ways to faith and theological learning.⁷⁸ More than a century
later, many of the insights of his Encyclical Letter have lost none of their interest from either a practical or

1 pedagogical point of view—most particularly, his insistence upon the incomparable value of the philosophy
of Saint Thomas. A renewed insistence upon the thought of the Angelic Doctor seemed to Pope Leo XIII
the best way to recover the practice of a philosophy consonant with the demands of faith. “Just when Saint
Thomas distinguishes perfectly between faith and reason”, the Pope writes, “he unites them in bonds of mu-
5 tual friendship, conceding to each its specific rights and to each its specific dignity”.⁷⁹

10 58. The positive results of the papal summons are well known. Studies of the thought of Saint Thomas
and other Scholastic writers received new impetus. Historical studies flourished, resulting in a rediscovery
of the riches of Medieval thought, which until then had been largely unknown; and there emerged new
10 Thomistic schools. With the use of historical method, knowledge of the works of Saint Thomas increased
greatly, and many scholars had courage enough to introduce the Thomistic tradition into the philosophical
and theological discussions of the day. The most influential Catholic theologians of the present century, to
whose thinking and research the Second Vatican Council was much indebted, were products of this revival
of Thomistic philosophy. Throughout the twentieth century, the Church has been served by a powerful array
15 of thinkers formed in the school of the Angelic Doctor.

20 59. Yet the Thomistic and neo-Thomistic revival was not the only sign of a resurgence of philosophical
thought in culture of Christian inspiration. Earlier still, and parallel to Pope Leo’s call, there had emerged a
number of Catholic philosophers who, adopting more recent currents of thought and according to a spe-
cific method, produced philosophical works of great influence and lasting value. Some devised syntheses
so remarkable that they stood comparison with the great systems of idealism. Others established the epis-
temological foundations for a new consideration of faith in the light of a renewed understanding of moral
consciousness; others again produced a philosophy which, starting with an analysis of immanence, opened
the way to the transcendent; and there were finally those who sought to combine the demands of faith with
25 the perspective of phenomenological method. From different quarters, then, modes of philosophical specula-
tion have continued to emerge and have sought to keep alive the great tradition of Christian thought which
unites faith and reason.

30 60. The Second Vatican Council, for its part, offers a rich and fruitful teaching concerning philosophy. I
cannot fail to note, especially in the context of this Encyclical Letter, that one chapter of the Constitution
Gaudium et Spes amounts to a virtual compendium of the biblical anthropology from which philosophy too
can draw inspiration. The chapter deals with the value of the human person created in the image of God,
explains the dignity and superiority of the human being over the rest of creation, and declares the transcen-
dent capacity of human reason.⁸⁰ The problem of atheism is also dealt with in *Gaudium et Spes*, and the
35 flaws of its philosophical vision are identified, especially in relation to the dignity and freedom of the human
person.⁸¹ There is no doubt that the climactic section of the chapter is profoundly significant for philosophy;
and it was this which I took up in my first Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* and which serves as one of

1 the constant reference-points of my teaching: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word
 does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, Christ
 the Lord. Christ, the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully
 reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling”.⁸²

5

The Council also dealt with the study of philosophy required of candidates for the priesthood; and its
 recommendations have implications for Christian education as a whole. These are the Council’s words: “The
 philosophical disciplines should be taught in such a way that students acquire in the first place a solid and
 harmonious knowledge of the human being, of the world and of God, based upon the philosophical heritage
 10 which is enduringly valid, yet taking into account currents of modern philosophy”.⁸³

These directives have been reiterated and developed in a number of other magisterial documents in order
 to guarantee a solid philosophical formation, especially for those preparing for theological studies. I have
 myself emphasized several times the importance of this philosophical formation for those who one day, in
 15 their pastoral life, will have to address the aspirations of the contemporary world and understand the causes
 of certain behaviour in order to respond in appropriate ways.⁸⁴

61. If it has been necessary from time to time to intervene on this question, to reiterate the value of the
 Angelic Doctor’s insights and insist on the study of his thought, this has been because the Magisterium’s
 20 directives have not always been followed with the readiness one would wish. In the years after the Second
 Vatican Council, many Catholic faculties were in some ways impoverished by a diminished sense of the im-
 portance of the study not just of Scholastic philosophy but more generally of the study of philosophy itself. I
 cannot fail to note with surprise and displeasure that this lack of interest in the study of philosophy is shared
 by not a few theologians.

25

There are various reasons for this disenchantment. First, there is the distrust of reason found in much
 contemporary philosophy, which has largely abandoned metaphysical study of the ultimate human questions
 in order to concentrate upon problems which are more detailed and restricted, at times even purely formal.
 Another reason, it should be said, is the misunderstanding which has arisen especially with regard to the “hu-
 30 man sciences”. On a number of occasions, the Second Vatican Council stressed the positive value of scientific
 research for a deeper knowledge of the mystery of the human being.⁸⁵ But the invitation addressed to theo-
 logians to engage the human sciences and apply them properly in their enquiries should not be interpreted as
 an implicit authorization to marginalize philosophy or to put something else in its place in pastoral forma-
 tion and in the *praeparatio fidei*. A further factor is the renewed interest in the inculturation of faith. The life
 35 of the young Churches in particular has brought to light, together with sophisticated modes of thinking, an
 array of expressions of popular wisdom; and this constitutes a genuine cultural wealth of traditions. Yet the
 study of traditional ways must go hand in hand with philosophical enquiry, an enquiry which will allow the

1 positive traits of popular wisdom to emerge and forge the necessary link with the proclamation of the Gos-
pel.⁸⁶

62. I wish to repeat clearly that the study of philosophy is fundamental and indispensable to the struc-
5 ture of theological studies and to the formation of candidates for the priesthood. It is not by chance that
the curriculum of theological studies is preceded by a time of special study of philosophy. This decision,
confirmed by the Fifth Lateran Council,⁸⁷ is rooted in the experience which matured through the Middle
Ages, when the importance of a constructive harmony of philosophical and theological learning emerged.
This ordering of studies influenced, promoted and enabled much of the development of modern philosophy,
10 albeit indirectly. One telling example of this is the influence of the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* of Francisco
Suárez, which found its way even into the Lutheran universities of Germany. Conversely, the dismantling of
this arrangement has created serious gaps in both priestly formation and theological research. Consider, for
instance, the disregard of modern thought and culture which has led either to a refusal of any kind of dia-
logue or to an indiscriminate acceptance of any kind of philosophy.

15

I trust most sincerely that these difficulties will be overcome by an intelligent philosophical and theologi-
cal formation, which must never be lacking in the Church.

63. For the reasons suggested here, it has seemed to me urgent to re-emphasize with this Encyclical Letter
20 the Church's intense interest in philosophy—indeed the intimate bond which ties theological work to the
philosophical search for truth. From this comes the Magisterium's duty to discern and promote philosophical
thinking which is not at odds with faith. It is my task to state principles and criteria which in my judgement
are necessary in order to restore a harmonious and creative relationship between theology and philosophy.
In the light of these principles and criteria, it will be possible to discern with greater clarity what link, if any,
25 theology should forge with the different philosophical opinions or systems which the world of today presents.

Chapter VI - The Interaction Between Philosophy and Theology

30 *The knowledge of faith and the demands of philosophical reason*

64. The word of God is addressed to all people, in every age and in every part of the world; and the hu-
man being is by nature a philosopher. As a reflective and scientific elaboration of the understanding of God's
word in the light of faith, theology for its part must relate, in some of its procedures and in the performance
35 of its specific tasks, to the philosophies which have been developed through the ages. I have no wish to direct
theologians to particular methods, since that is not the competence of the Magisterium. I wish instead to
recall some specific tasks of theology which, by the very nature of the revealed word, demand recourse to

1 philosophical enquiry.

65. Theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. With the first, theology makes its own the content of Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church's living Magisterium.⁸⁸ With the second, theology seeks to respond through speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought.

Philosophy contributes specifically to theology in preparing for a correct *auditus fidei* with its study of the structure of knowledge and personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language. No less important is philosophy's contribution to a more coherent understanding of Church Tradition, the pronouncements of the Magisterium and the teaching of the great masters of theology, who often adopt concepts and thought-forms drawn from a particular philosophical tradition. In this case, the theologian is summoned not only to explain the concepts and terms used by the Church in her thinking and the development of her teaching, but also to know in depth the philosophical systems which may have influenced those concepts and terms, in order to formulate correct and consistent interpretations of them.

66. With regard to the *intellectus fidei*, a prime consideration must be that divine Truth "proposed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and rightly interpreted by the Church's teaching"⁸⁹ enjoys an innate intelligibility, so logically consistent that it stands as an authentic body of knowledge. The *intellectus fidei* expounds this truth, not only in grasping the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions in which the Church's teaching is framed, but also, indeed primarily, in bringing to light the salvific meaning of these propositions for the individual and for humanity. From the sum of these propositions, the believer comes to know the history of salvation, which culminates in the person of Jesus Christ and in his Paschal Mystery. Believers then share in this mystery by their assent of faith.

For its part, *dogmatic theology* must be able to articulate the universal meaning of the mystery of the One and Triune God and of the economy of salvation, both as a narrative and, above all, in the form of argument. It must do so, in other words, through concepts formulated in a critical and universally communicable way. Without philosophy's contribution, it would in fact be impossible to discuss theological issues such as, for example, the use of language to speak about God, the personal relations within the Trinity, God's creative activity in the world, the relationship between God and man, or Christ's identity as true God and true man. This is no less true of the different themes of moral theology, which employ concepts such as the moral law, conscience, freedom, personal responsibility and guilt, which are in part defined by philosophical ethics.

It is necessary therefore that the mind of the believer acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities—the world and man himself—which are also the object of divine Revelation. Still more, rea-

son must be able to articulate this knowledge in concept and argument. Speculative dogmatic theology thus presupposes and implies a philosophy of the human being, the world and, more radically, of being, which has objective truth as its foundation.

67. With its specific character as a discipline charged with giving an account of faith (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15), the concern of *fundamental theology* will be to justify and expound the relationship between faith and philosophical thought. Recalling the teaching of Saint Paul (cf. *Rom* 1:19-20), the First Vatican Council pointed to the existence of truths which are naturally, and thus philosophically, knowable; and an acceptance of God's Revelation necessarily presupposes knowledge of these truths. In studying Revelation and its credibility, as well as the corresponding act of faith, fundamental theology should show how, in the light of the knowledge conferred by faith, there emerge certain truths which reason, from its own independent enquiry, already perceives. Revelation endows these truths with their fullest meaning, directing them towards the richness of the revealed mystery in which they find their ultimate purpose. Consider, for example, the natural knowledge of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine Revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience. From all these truths, the mind is led to acknowledge the existence of a truly propaedeutic path to faith, one which can lead to the acceptance of Revelation without in any way compromising the principles and autonomy of the mind itself.⁹⁰

Similarly, fundamental theology should demonstrate the profound compatibility that exists between faith and its need to find expression by way of human reason fully free to give its assent. Faith will thus be able "to show fully the path to reason in a sincere search for the truth. Although faith, a gift of God, is not based on reason, it can certainly not dispense with it. At the same time, it becomes apparent that reason needs to be reinforced by faith, in order to discover horizons it cannot reach on its own".⁹¹

68. *Moral theology* has perhaps an even greater need of philosophy's contribution. In the New Testament, human life is much less governed by prescriptions than in the Old Testament. Life in the Spirit leads believers to a freedom and responsibility which surpass the Law. Yet the Gospel and the Apostolic writings still set forth both general principles of Christian conduct and specific teachings and precepts. In order to apply these to the particular circumstances of individual and communal life, Christians must be able fully to engage their conscience and the power of their reason. In other words, moral theology requires a sound philosophical vision of human nature and society, as well as of the general principles of ethical decision-making.

69. It might be objected that the theologian should nowadays rely less on philosophy than on the help of other kinds of human knowledge, such as history and above all the sciences, the extraordinary advances of which in recent times stir such admiration. Others, more alert to the link between faith and culture, claim that theology should look more to the wisdom contained in peoples' traditions than to a philosophy

1 of Greek and Eurocentric provenance. Others still, prompted by a mistaken notion of cultural pluralism, simply deny the universal value of the Church's philosophical heritage.

There is some truth in these claims which are acknowledged in the teaching of the Council.⁹² Reference
 5 to the sciences is often helpful, allowing as it does a more thorough knowledge of the subject under study; but it should not mean the rejection of a typically philosophical and critical thinking which is concerned with the universal. Indeed, this kind of thinking is required for a fruitful exchange between cultures. What I wish to emphasize is the duty to go beyond the particular and concrete, lest the prime task of demonstrating the universality of faith's content be abandoned. Nor should it be forgotten that the specific contribution of
 10 philosophical enquiry enables us to discern in different world-views and different cultures "not what people think but what the objective truth is".⁹³ It is not an array of human opinions but truth alone which can be of help to theology.

70. Because of its implications for both philosophy and theology, the question of the relationship with
 15 cultures calls for particular attention, which cannot however claim to be exhaustive. From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures. Christ's mandate to his disciples to go out everywhere, "even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), in order to pass on the truth which he had revealed, led the Christian community to recognize from the first the universality of its message and the difficulties created by cultural differences. A passage of Saint Paul's letter
 20 to the Christians of Ephesus helps us to understand how the early community responded to the problem. The Apostle writes: "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the wall of hostility" (2:13-14).

25 In the light of this text, we reflect further to see how the Gentiles were transformed once they had embraced the faith. With the richness of the salvation wrought by Christ, the walls separating the different cultures collapsed. God's promise in Christ now became a universal offer: no longer limited to one particular people, its language and its customs, but extended to all as a heritage from which each might freely draw. From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of
 30 God's children. It is Christ who enables the two peoples to become "one". Those who were "far off" have come "near", thanks to the newness brought by the Paschal Mystery. Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery. This unity is so deep that the Church can say with Saint Paul: "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are saints and members of the household of God" (*Eph* 2:19).

35 This simple statement contains a great truth: faith's encounter with different cultures has created something new. When they are deeply rooted in experience, cultures show forth the human being's characteristic

1 openness to the universal and the transcendent. Therefore they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human.⁹⁴ Insofar as cultures appeal to the values of older traditions, they point—implicitly but authentically—to the manifestation of God in nature, as we saw earlier in considering the Wisdom literature and the teaching of Saint Paul.

5

71. Inseparable as they are from people and their history, cultures share the dynamics which the human experience of life reveals. They change and advance because people meet in new ways and share with each other their ways of life. Cultures are fed by the communication of values, and they survive and flourish insofar as they remain open to assimilating new experiences. How are we to explain these dynamics? All people are part of a culture, depend upon it and shape it. Human beings are both child and parent of the culture in which they are immersed. To everything they do, they bring something which sets them apart from the rest of creation: their unfailing openness to mystery and their boundless desire for knowledge. Lying deep in every culture, there appears this impulse towards a fulfilment. We may say, then, that culture itself has an intrinsic capacity to receive divine Revelation.

15

Cultural context permeates the living of Christian faith, which contributes in turn little by little to shaping that context. To every culture Christians bring the unchanging truth of God, which he reveals in the history and culture of a people. Time and again, therefore, in the course of the centuries we have seen repeated the event witnessed by the pilgrims in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Hearing the Apostles, they asked one another: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (*Acts 2:7-11*). While it demands of all who hear it the adherence of faith, the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own cultural identity. This in no way creates division, because the community of the baptized is marked by a universality which can embrace every culture and help to foster whatever is implicit in them to the point where it will be fully explicit in the light of truth.

30

This means that no one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God’s Revelation. The Gospel is not opposed to any culture, as if in engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms which are alien to it. On the contrary, the message which believers bring to the world and to cultures is a genuine liberation from all the disorders caused by sin and is, at the same time, a call to the fullness of truth. Cultures are not only not diminished by this encounter; rather, they are prompted to open themselves to the newness of the Gospel’s truth and to be stirred by this truth to develop in new ways.

35

1 72. In preaching the Gospel, Christianity first encountered Greek philosophy; but this does not mean
 at all that other approaches are precluded. Today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural
 worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation, which mean that our
 generation faces problems not unlike those faced by the Church in the first centuries.

5

My thoughts turn immediately to the lands of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of
 great antiquity. Among these lands, India has a special place. A great spiritual impulse leads Indian thought
 to seek an experience which would liberate the spirit from the shackles of time and space and would there-
 fore acquire absolute value. The dynamic of this quest for liberation provides the context for great metaphys-
 10 ical systems.

10

In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements com-
 patible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought. In this work of discernment, which finds its
 inspiration in the Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, certain criteria will have to be kept in mind. The first
 15 of these is the universality of the human spirit, whose basic needs are the same in the most disparate cultures.
 The second, which derives from the first, is this: in engaging great cultures for the first time, the Church can-
 not abandon what she has gained from her inculturation in the world of Greco-Latin thought. To reject this
 heritage would be to deny the providential plan of God who guides his Church down the paths of time and
 history. This criterion is valid for the Church in every age, even for the Church of the future, who will judge
 20 herself enriched by all that comes from today's engagement with Eastern cultures and will find in this inheri-
 tance fresh cues for fruitful dialogue with the cultures which will emerge as humanity moves into the future.
 Thirdly, care will need to be taken lest, contrary to the very nature of the human spirit, the legitimate defense
 of the uniqueness and originality of Indian thought be confused with the idea that a particular cultural tradi-
 tion should remain closed in its difference and affirm itself by opposing other traditions.

25

What has been said here of India is no less true for the heritage of the great cultures of China, Japan and
 the other countries of Asia, as also for the riches of the traditional cultures of Africa, which are for the most
 part orally transmitted.

30

73. In the light of these considerations, the relationship between theology and philosophy is best con-
 strued as a circle. Theology's source and starting-point must always be the word of God revealed in history,
 while its final goal will be an understanding of that word which increases with each passing generation.
 Yet, since God's word is Truth (cf. *Jn* 17:17), the human search for truth—philosophy, pursued in keeping
 with its own rules—can only help to understand God's word better. It is not just a question of theologi-
 35 cal discourse using this or that concept or element of a philosophical construct; what matters most is that
 the believer's reason use its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the word of God
 towards a better understanding of it. It is as if, moving between the twin poles of God's word and a better

1 understanding of it, reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from
 revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple. Instead, reason is stirred to explore
 paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take. This circular relationship with the word
 of God leaves philosophy enriched, because reason discovers new and unsuspected horizons.

5

74. The fruitfulness of this relationship is confirmed by the experience of great Christian theologians
 who also distinguished themselves as great philosophers, bequeathing to us writings of such high speculative
 value as to warrant comparison with the masters of ancient philosophy. This is true of both the Fathers of the
 Church, among whom at least Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and Saint Augustine should be mentioned, and
 10 the Medieval Doctors with the great triad of Saint Anselm, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas.
 We see the same fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God in the courageous research
 pursued by more recent thinkers, among whom I gladly mention, in a Western context, figures such as John
 Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson and Edith Stein and, in an Eastern
 context, eminent scholars such as Vladimir S. Soloviev, Pavel A. Florensky, Petr Chaadaev and Vladimir N.
 15 Lossky. Obviously other names could be cited; and in referring to these I intend not to endorse every aspect
 of their thought, but simply to offer significant examples of a process of philosophical enquiry which was en-
 riched by engaging the data of faith. One thing is certain: attention to the spiritual journey of these masters
 can only give greater momentum to both the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search
 to the service of humanity. It is to be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to
 20 cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition for the good of both the Church and humanity.

Different stances of philosophy

75. As appears from this brief sketch of the history of the relationship between faith and philosophy, one
 25 can distinguish different stances of philosophy with regard to Christian faith. First, there is a philosophy
 completely independent of the Gospel's Revelation: this is the stance adopted by philosophy as it took shape
 in history before the birth of the Redeemer and later in regions as yet untouched by the Gospel. We see here
 philosophy's valid aspiration to be an autonomous enterprise, obeying its own rules and employing the pow-
 ers of reason alone. Although seriously handicapped by the inherent weakness of human reason, this aspira-
 30 tion should be supported and strengthened. As a search for truth within the natural order, the enterprise of
 philosophy is always open—at least implicitly—to the supernatural.

Moreover, the demand for a valid autonomy of thought should be respected even when theological dis-
 course makes use of philosophical concepts and arguments. Indeed, to argue according to rigorous rational
 35 criteria is to guarantee that the results attained are universally valid. This also confirms the principle that
 grace does not destroy nature but perfects it: the assent of faith, engaging the intellect and will, does not
 destroy but perfects the free will of each believer who deep within welcomes what has been revealed.

1

It is clear that this legitimate approach is rejected by the theory of so-called “separate” philosophy, pursued by some modern philosophers. This theory claims for philosophy not only a valid autonomy, but a self-sufficiency of thought which is patently invalid. In refusing the truth offered by divine Revelation, philosophy only does itself damage, since this is to preclude access to a deeper knowledge of truth.

76. A second stance adopted by philosophy is often designated as *Christian philosophy*. In itself, the term is valid, but it should not be misunderstood: it in no way intends to suggest that there is an official philosophy of the Church, since the faith as such is not a philosophy. The term seeks rather to indicate a Christian way of philosophizing, a philosophical speculation conceived in dynamic union with faith. It does not therefore refer simply to a philosophy developed by Christian philosophers who have striven in their research not to contradict the faith. The term Christian philosophy includes those important developments of philosophical thinking which would not have happened without the direct or indirect contribution of Christian faith.

Christian philosophy therefore has two aspects. The first is subjective, in the sense that faith purifies reason. As a theological virtue, faith liberates reason from presumption, the typical temptation of the philosopher. Saint Paul, the Fathers of the Church and, closer to our own time, philosophers such as Pascal and Kierkegaard reproached such presumption. The philosopher who learns humility will also find courage to tackle questions which are difficult to resolve if the data of Revelation are ignored—for example, the problem of evil and suffering, the personal nature of God and the question of the meaning of life or, more directly, the radical metaphysical question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”.

The second aspect of Christian philosophy is objective, in the sense that it concerns content. Revelation clearly proposes certain truths which might never have been discovered by reason unaided, although they are not of themselves inaccessible to reason. Among these truths is the notion of a free and personal God who is the Creator of the world, a truth which has been so crucial for the development of philosophical thinking, especially the philosophy of being. There is also the reality of sin, as it appears in the light of faith, which helps to shape an adequate philosophical formulation of the problem of evil. The notion of the person as a spiritual being is another of faith’s specific contributions: the Christian proclamation of human dignity, equality and freedom has undoubtedly influenced modern philosophical thought. In more recent times, there has been the discovery that history as event—so central to Christian Revelation—is important for philosophy as well. It is no accident that this has become pivotal for a philosophy of history which stakes its claim as a new chapter in the human search for truth.

Among the objective elements of Christian philosophy we might also place the need to explore the rationality of certain truths expressed in Sacred Scripture, such as the possibility of man’s supernatural vocation and original sin itself. These are tasks which challenge reason to recognize that there is something true and

1 rational lying far beyond the straits within which it would normally be confined. These questions in fact
broaden reason's scope for action.

In speculating on these questions, philosophers have not become theologians, since they have not sought
5 to understand and expound the truths of faith on the basis of Revelation. They have continued working on
their own terrain and with their own purely rational method, yet extending their research to new aspects of
truth. It could be said that a good part of modern and contemporary philosophy would not exist without
this stimulus of the word of God. This conclusion retains all its relevance, despite the disappointing fact that
many thinkers in recent centuries have abandoned Christian orthodoxy.

10

77. Philosophy presents another stance worth noting *when theology itself calls upon it*. Theology in fact
has always needed and still needs philosophy's contribution. As a work of critical reason in the light of faith,
theology presupposes and requires in all its research a reason formed and educated to concept and argument.
Moreover, theology needs philosophy as a partner in dialogue in order to confirm the intelligibility and uni-
15 versal truth of its claims. It was not by accident that the Fathers of the Church and the Medieval theologians
adopted non-Christian philosophies. This historical fact confirms the value of philosophy's *autonomy*, which
remains unimpaired when theology calls upon it; but it shows as well the profound transformations which
philosophy itself must undergo.

20 It was because of its noble and indispensable contribution that, from the Patristic period onwards, philos-
ophy was called the *ancilla theologiae*. The title was not intended to indicate philosophy's servile submission
or purely functional role with regard to theology. Rather, it was used in the sense in which Aristotle had spo-
ken of the experimental sciences as "ancillary" to "*prima philosophia*". The term can scarcely be used today,
given the principle of autonomy to which we have referred, but it has served throughout history to indicate
25 the necessity of the link between the two sciences and the impossibility of their separation.

Were theologians to refuse the help of philosophy, they would run the risk of doing philosophy unwit-
tingly and locking themselves within thought-structures poorly adapted to the understanding of faith. Were
philosophers, for their part, to shun theology completely, they would be forced to master on their own the
30 contents of Christian faith, as has been the case with some modern philosophers. Either way, the grounding
principles of autonomy which every science rightly wants guaranteed would be seriously threatened.

When it adopts this stance, philosophy, like theology, comes more directly under the authority of the
Magisterium and its discernment, because of the implications it has for the understanding of Revelation, as
35 I have already explained. The truths of faith make certain demands which philosophy must respect whenever
it engages theology.

1 78. It should be clear in the light of these reflections why the Magisterium has repeatedly acclaimed the
 merits of Saint Thomas' thought and made him the guide and model for theological studies. This has not
 been in order to take a position on properly philosophical questions nor to demand adherence to particular
 theses. The Magisterium's intention has always been to show how Saint Thomas is an authentic model for all
 5 who seek the truth. In his thinking, the demands of reason and the power of faith found the most elevated
 synthesis ever attained by human thought, for he could defend the radical newness introduced by Revelation
 without ever demeaning the venture proper to reason.

79. Developing further what the Magisterium before me has taught, I intend in this final section to point
 10 out certain requirements which theology—and more fundamentally still, the word of God itself—makes
 today of philosophical thinking and contemporary philosophies. As I have already noted, philosophy must
 obey its own rules and be based upon its own principles; truth, however, can only be one. The content of
 Revelation can never debase the discoveries and legitimate autonomy of reason. Yet, conscious that it cannot
 15 set itself up as an absolute and exclusive value, reason on its part must never lose its capacity to question and
 to be questioned. By virtue of the splendour emanating from subsistent Being itself, revealed truth offers the
 fullness of light and will therefore illumine the path of philosophical enquiry. In short, Christian Revelation
 becomes the true point of encounter and engagement between philosophical and theological thinking in
 their reciprocal relationship. It is to be hoped therefore that theologians and philosophers will let themselves
 be guided by the authority of truth alone so that there will emerge a philosophy consonant with the word
 20 of God. Such a philosophy will be a place where Christian faith and human cultures may meet, a point of
 understanding between believer and non-believer. It will help lead believers to a stronger conviction that
 faith grows deeper and more authentic when it is wedded to thought and does not reject it. It is again the
 Fathers who teach us this: “To believe is nothing other than to think with assent... Believers are also thinkers:
 in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe... If faith does not think, it is nothing”.⁹⁵ And again: “If
 25 there is no assent, there is no faith, for without assent one does not really believe”.⁹⁶

End Notes

30 1 In my first Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, I wrote: “We have become sharers in this mission of the prophet Christ, and in virtue of
 that mission we together with him are serving divine truth in the Church. Being responsible for that truth also means loving it and seeking the
 most exact understanding of it, in order to bring it closer to ourselves and others in all its saving power, its splendour and its profundity joined
 with simplicity”: No. 19: *AAS* 71 (1979), 306.

2 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

3 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

4 No. 4: *AAS* 85 (1993), 1136.

....

23 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1.

24 *Confessions*, X, 23, 33: CCL 27, 173.

25 No. 34: *AAS* 85 (1993), 1161.

26 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (11 February 1984), 9: AAS 76 (1984), 209-210.

27 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relations of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

28 This is a theme which I have long pursued and which I have addressed on a number of occasions. “ ‘What is man and of what use is he? What is good in him and what is evil?’ (*Sir* 18:8)... These are questions in every human heart, as the poetic genius of every time and every people has shown, posing again and again—almost as the prophetic voice of humanity—the *serious question* which makes human beings truly what they are. They are questions which express the urgency of finding a reason for existence, in every moment, at life’s most important and decisive times as well as more ordinary times. These questions show the deep reasonableness of human existence, since they summon human intelligence and will to search freely for a solution which can reveal the full meaning of life. These enquiries, therefore, are the highest expression of human nature; which is why the answer to them is the gauge of the depth of his engagement with his own existence. In particular, when *the why of things* is explored in full harmony with the search for the ultimate answer, then human reason reaches its zenith and opens to the religious impulse. The religious impulse is the highest expression of the human person, because it is the highpoint of his rational nature. It springs from the profound human aspiration for the truth and it is the basis of the human being’s free and personal search for the divine”: General Audience (19 October 1983), 1-2: *Insegnamenti* VI, 2 (1983), 814-815.

29 “[Galileo] declared explicitly that the two truths, of faith and of science, can never contradict each other, ‘Sacred Scripture and the natural world proceeding equally from the divine Word, the first as dictated by the Holy Spirit, the second as a very faithful executor of the commands of God’, as he wrote in his letter to Father Benedetto Castelli on 21 December 1613. The Second Vatican Council says the same thing, even adopting similar language in its teaching: ‘Methodical research, in all realms of knowledge, if it respects... moral norms, will never be genuinely opposed to faith: the reality of the world and of faith have their origin in the same God’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 36). Galileo sensed in his scientific research the presence of the Creator who, stirring in the depths of his spirit, stimulated him, anticipating and assisting his intuitions”: John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (10 November 1979): *Insegnamenti*, II, 2 (1979), 1111-1112.

30 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 4.

31 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3, 55: SC 136, 130.

32 *Dialogue with Trypho*, 8, 1: PG 6, 492.

33 *Stromata* I, 18, 90, 1: SC 30, 115.

34 Cf. *ibid.*, I, 16, 80, 5: SC 30, 108.

35 Cf. *ibid.*, I, 5, 28, 1: SC 30, 65.

36 *Ibid.*, VI, 7, 55, 1-2: PG 9, 277.

37 *Ibid.*, I, 20, 100, 1: SC 30, 124.

38 Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, VI, 5, 7: CCL 27, 77-78.

39 Cf. *ibid.*, VII, 9, 13-14: CCL 27, 101-102.

40 *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, VII, 9: SC 46, 98: “ *Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? Quid academiae et ecclesiae?*”.

41 Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church in Priestly Formation (10 November 1989), 25: AAS 82 (1990), 617-618.

42 Saint Anselm, *Proslogion*, 1: PL 158, 226.

43 Idem, *Monologion*, 64: PL 158, 210.

44 Cf. *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 7.

45 Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, 1, 8 ad 2: “ *cum enim gratia non tollat naturam sed perficiat*”.

46 Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Participants at the IX International Thomistic Congress (29 September 1990): *Insegnamenti*, XIII, 2 (1990), 770-771.

47 Apostolic Letter *Lumen Ecclesiae* (20 November 1974), 8: AAS 66 (1974), 680.

48 Cf. I, 1, 6: “ *Praeterea, haec doctrina per studium acquiritur. Sapientia autem per infusionem habetur, unde inter septem dona Spiritus Sancti connumeratur*”.

49 *Ibid.*, II-II, 45, 1 ad 2; cf. also II-II, 45, 2.

50 *Ibid.*, I-II, 109, 1 ad 1, which echoes the well known phrase of the *Ambrosiaster*, *In Prima Cor* 12:3: PL 17, 258.

51 Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris* (4 August 1879): ASS 11 (1878-79), 109.

52 Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Lumen Ecclesiae* (20 November 1974), 8: AAS 66 (1974), 683.

53 Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 286.

54 Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 566.

55 Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ *Pastor Aeternus*: DS 3070; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 25 c.

56 Cf. Synod of Constantinople, *DS* 403.

57 Cf. Council of Toledo I, *DS* 205; Council of Braga I, *DS* 459-460; Sixtus V, Bull *Coeli et Terrae Creator* (5 January 1586): *Bullarium Romanum* 4/4, Rome 1747, 176-179; Urban VIII, *Inscrutabilis Iudiciorum* (1 April 1631): *Bullarium Romanum* 6/1, Rome 1758, 268-270.

58 Cf. Ecumenical Council of Vienne, Decree *Fidei Catholicae*, *DS* 902; Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Bull *Apostoli Regiminis*, *DS* 1440.

59 Cf. *Theses a Ludovico Eugenio Bautain iussu sui Episcopi subscriptae* (8 September 1840), *DS* 2751-2756; *Theses a Ludovico Eugenio Bautain ex mandato S. Cong. Episcoporum et Religiosorum subscriptae* (26 April 1844), *DS* 2765-2769.

60 Cf. Sacred Congregation of the Index, Decree *Theses contra Traditionalismum Augustini Bonnetty* (11 June 1855), *DS* 2811-2814.

61 Cf. Pius IX, Brief *Eximiam Tuam* (15 June 1857), *DS* 2828-2831; Brief *Gravissimas Inter* (11 December 1862), *DS* 2850-2861.

62 Cf. Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, Decree *Errores Ontologistarum* (18 September 1861), *DS* 2841-2847.

63 Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, II: *DS* 3004; and Canon 2, 1: *DS* 3026.

64 *Ibid.*, IV: *DS* 3015, cited in Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 59.

- 1 65 First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, IV: DS 3017.
 66 Cf. Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (8 September 1907): ASS 40 (1907), 596-597.
 67 Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris* (19 March 1937): AAS 29 (1937), 65-106.
 68 Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 562-563.
 69 *Ibid.*, loc. cit., 563-564.
 70 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), Arts. 48-49: AAS 80 (1988), 873; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (24 May 1990), 18: AAS 82 (1990), 1558.
- 5 71 Cf. Instruction on Certain Aspects of the “Theology of Liberation” *Libertatis Nuntius* (6 August 1984), VII-X: AAS 76 (1984), 890-903.
 72 In language as clear as it is authoritative, the First Vatican Council condemned this error, affirming on the one hand that “as regards this faith..., the Catholic Church professes that it is a supernatural virtue by means of which, under divine inspiration and with the help of grace, we believe to be true the things revealed by God, not because of the intrinsic truth of the things perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself, who reveals them and who can neither deceive nor be deceived”: Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, III: DS 3008, and Canon 3, 2: DS 3032. On the other hand, the Council declared that reason is never “able to penetrate [these mysteries] as it does the truths which are its proper object”: *ibid.*, IV: DS 3016. It then drew a practical conclusion: “The Christian faithful not only have no right to defend as legitimate scientific conclusions opinions which are contrary to the doctrine of the faith, particularly if condemned by the Church, but they are strictly obliged to regard them as errors which have no more than a fraudulent semblance of truth”: *ibid.*, IV: DS 3018.
- 10 73 Cf. Nos. 9-10.
 74 *Ibid.*, 10.
 75 *Ibid.*, 21.
 76 Cf. *ibid.*, 10.
 77 Cf. Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 565-567; 571-573.
 78 Cf. Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris* (4 August 1879): ASS 11 (1878-1879), 97-115.
 79 *Ibid.*, loc. cit., 109.
- 15 80 Cf. Nos. 14-15.
 81 Cf. *ibid.*, 20-21.
 82 *Ibid.*, 22; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 8: AAS 71 (1979), 271-272.
 83 Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 15.
 84 Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (15 April 1979), Arts. 79-80: AAS 71 (1979), 495-496; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 52: AAS 84 (1992), 750-751. Cf. also various remarks on the philosophy of Saint Thomas: Address to the International Pontifical Athenaeum “Angelicum” (17 November 1979): *Insegnamenti* II, 2 (1979), 1177-1189; Address to the Participants of the Eighth International Thomistic Congress (13 September 1980): *Insegnamenti* III, 2 (1980), 604-615; Address to the Participants at the International Congress of the Saint Thomas Society on the Doctrine of the Soul in Saint Thomas (4 January 1986): *Insegnamenti* IX, 1 (1986), 18-24.
- 20 Also the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (6 January 1970), 70-75: AAS 62 (1970), 366-368; *Decree Sacra Theologia* (20 January 1972): AAS 64 (1972), 583-586.
 85 Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 57; 62.
 86 Cf. *ibid.*, 44.
 87 Cf. Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Bull *Apostolici Regimini Sollicitudo*, Session VIII: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, 1991, 605-606.
 88 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10.
 89 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 5, 3 ad 2.
- 25 90 “The search for the conditions in which man on his own initiative asks the first basic questions about the meaning of life, the purpose he wishes to give it and what awaits him after death constitutes the necessary preamble to fundamental theology, so that today too, faith can fully show the way to reason in a sincere search for the truth”: John Paul II, *Letter to Participants in the International Congress of Fundamental Theology on the 125th Anniversary of “Dei Filius”* (30 September 1995), 4: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 3 October 1995, 8.
 91 *Ibid.*
 92 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 15; Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 22.
 93 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *De Caelo*, 1, 22.
- 30 94 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 53-59.
 95 Saint Augustine, *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, 2, 5: PL 44, 963.
 96 Idem, *De Fide, Spe et Caritate*, 7: CCL 64, 61.

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QUESTION 91

The Different Kinds of Law

5 We next have to consider the different kinds of law. On this topic there are six questions: (1) Is there such a thing as eternal law? (2) Is there such a thing as natural law? (3) Is there such a thing as human law? (4) Is there a such a thing as divine law? (5) Is there just a single [divine] law, or more than one? (6) Is there such a thing as ‘the law of sin’?

Article 1

10 **Is there such a thing as eternal law?**

It seems that there is no such thing as eternal law:

Objection 1: Every law is imposed on someone. But there was no one on whom law could have been imposed from eternity, since God alone existed from eternity. Therefore, there is no such thing as eternal law.

15 **Objection 2:** Promulgation is part of the nature of law. But there could not have been a promulgation from eternity, since nothing existed from eternity to which the law might have been promulgated. Therefore, there cannot be any such thing as eternal law.

Objection 3: Law implies an ordering to an end. But there is nothing eternal that might be ordered to an end, since the ultimate end alone is eternal. Therefore, there is no such thing as eternal law.

But contrary to this: In *De Libero Arbitrio* 1 Augustine says, “The law that is called the ‘highest ideal plan’ (*summa ratio*) cannot but seem unchangeable and eternal to anyone who understands it.”

20 **I respond:** As was explained above (q. 90, a. 4), law is nothing other than a certain dictate (*dictamen*) of practical reason on the part of a ruler who governs some complete community. But once we assume, as was established in the first part (*ST* 1, q. 22, a. 1), that the world is governed by divine providence, it is obvious that the entire community of the universe is governed by divine reason. Therefore, the very nature of the governance of things that exists in God as the ruler of the universe has the character of law. And since, as Proverbs 8:23 puts it, God’s reason does not conceive of anything temporally but instead has an eternal conception, it follows that a law of this kind must be called eternal law.

25 **Reply to objection 1:** Those things that do not exist in themselves exist in God’s presence (*apud Deum*) insofar as they are foreknown and preordained by Him—this according to Romans 4:17 (“He calls the things that are not in the same way as those that are”). So, then, the eternal conception of God’s law has the character of an eternal law, since it is ordered by God toward the governance of the things foreknown by Him.

30 **Reply to objection 2:** Promulgation is accomplished by both the spoken word (*verbum*) and the written word (*scriptum*), and the eternal law has both sorts of promulgation on the part of God who promulgates it. For God’s Word is eternal (see *ST* 1, q. 34), and the writing in the book of life is eternal (see *ST* 1, q. 24).

On the other hand, as far as the creature who hears or reads is concerned, the promulgation cannot be eternal.

35 **Reply to objection 3:** Law implies an ordering to an end in the *active* sense—viz., in the sense that certain things are ordered to the end through law.

However, law does not imply an ordering to an end in the *passive* sense, i.e., in the sense that the law itself is ordered to an end—except, incidentally, in the case of a governor whose end lies outside himself and is such that his law, too, must be ordered to it. By contrast, the end of divine governance is

1 God Himself, and His law is not distinct from Himself. Hence, the eternal law is not ordered toward any further end.

5 Article 2

Is there any such thing as natural law in us?

It seems that there is no such thing as natural law in us:

Objection 1: Man is sufficiently governed by eternal law, since, as Augustine says in *De Libero Arbitrio* 1, “Eternal law is the law by which it is just that all things should be well ordered.” But nature does not abound in what is superfluous, just as it is not deficient in what is necessary. Therefore, there is no such thing as natural law for man.

Objection 2: As was established above (q. 90, a.1), it is through law that man is ordered to the end in his acts. But the ordering of human acts to their end does not stem from nature in the way that this occurs in non-rational creatures, which act for the sake of an end by natural appetite alone; instead, man acts for the sake of an end through his reason and will. Therefore, there is no law that is natural to man.

Objection 3: The more free someone is, the less subject he is to law. But man is more free than all the [other] animals because of the power of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*), which he has in contrast to all the other animals. Therefore, since the other animals are not subject to a natural law, neither is man subject to any natural law.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on Romans 2:14 (“For when the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, do by nature those things that are of the Law”) says, “Even if they do not have the written Law, they nonetheless have the natural law, by which everyone understands and knows within himself what is good and what is evil.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 90, a. 1), since law is a rule and a measure, there are two senses in which it can exist in something: first, in the sense of existing in that which regulates and measures and, second, in the sense of existing in that which is regulated and measured. For a thing is measured and regulated to the extent that it has some participation in the rule and measure. So since, as is clear from what was said above (a. 1), all the things subject to divine providence are regulated and measured by eternal law, it is clear that all things in some way participate in eternal law. More precisely, because eternal law is imprinted on them, they have inclinations toward their own proper acts and ends.

Now among all creatures, the rational creature is subject to divine providence in a more excellent manner, because he himself participates in providence, providing for himself and for others. Hence, in him, too, there is a participation in eternal reason through which he has a natural inclination to his due act and end. And the rational creature’s mode of participation in the eternal law is called natural law.

Hence, after the Psalmist (Psalm 4:6) has said, “Offer up the sacrifice of justice,” he adds, as if someone were asking what the works of justice are, “Many say, ‘Who is there to show us good works?’” In reply to this question he says, “The light of Your countenance, Lord, is imprinted on us”—as if to say, the light of natural reason, by which we discern what is good and what is evil. This has to do with natural law, which is nothing other than the imprint of God’s light within us.

Hence, it is clear that natural law is nothing other than a participation in eternal law on the part of a rational creature.

Reply to objection 1: This argument assumes that natural law is something different from eternal law. However, as has been explained, natural law is nothing other than a certain kind of participation in eternal law.

1 **Reply to objection 2:** As was established above (q. 10, a. 1), every operation of reason and will in us is derived from what is in accord with nature. For every instance of discursive reasoning stems from principles that are naturally known to us, and every desire for things that are ordered to an end stems from a natural desire for the ultimate end. And so, likewise, the initial ordering of our acts to their end (*prima directio actuum nostrorum ad finem*) must be brought about through natural law.

5 **Reply to objection 3:** Non-rational animals participate in the eternal law in their own way, just as rational creatures do. However, since a rational creature participates in natural law in an intellectual and rational way, a rational creature's participation in the eternal law is itself properly called a law. For as was explained above (q. 90, a. 1), law belongs to reason. By contrast, a non-rational creature does not participate in the eternal law in a rational way, and so its participation cannot be called law except by way of a likeness (*per similitudinem*).

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QUESTION 94

The Natural Law

5 We next have to consider the natural law. And on this topic there are six questions: (1) What is the natural law? (2) Which precepts belong to the natural law? (3) Are all the acts of the virtues part of the natural law? (4) Is there a single natural law for everyone? (5) Is the natural law changeable? (6) Can the natural law be erased from the human mind (*possit a mente hominis deleri*)?

Article 1

10

Is the natural law a habit?

It seems that the natural law is a habit:

Objection 1: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics 2*, “There are three sorts of things in the soul: powers, habits, and passions.” But as is clear from going through each of these one by one, the natural law is not one of the powers of the soul or one of the passions. Therefore, the natural law is a habit.

15 **Objection 2:** Basil says, “Conscience (*conscientia*) or synderesis (*synderesis*) is our intellect’s law”—and by this he cannot mean anything other than the natural law. But as was established in the first part (*ST 1*, q. 79, a. 12), synderesis is a certain habit. Therefore, the natural law is a habit.

Objection 3: As will be shown below (a. 6), the natural law remains within a man always. But a man’s reason, which is what the law has to do with, is not always actually thinking about the natural law. Therefore, the natural law is a habit and not an act.

20 **But contrary to this:** In *De Bono Coniugali* Augustine says, “A habit is that by means of which something is done when there is need.” But the natural law is not like this, since it exists even in children and in the damned, who cannot act through it. Therefore, the natural law is not a habit.

I respond: There are two senses in which something can be called a habit.

25 In the first sense, something is called a habit *properly and essentially*, and in this sense the natural law is not a habit. For it was explained above (q. 90, a. 1) that the natural law is something constituted by reason, in the same way that a proposition is a work of reason. But *what* someone does or makes is not the same as *that by means of which* he does it or makes it. For instance, it is by means of the habit of grammar that someone makes a coherent utterance. Therefore, since a habit is *that by means of which* one acts, no sort of law can be a habit properly and essentially.

30 In the second sense, *that which is had* by means of a habit can itself be called the habit—in the way that the Faith is that which is held by means of faith. And since the precepts of the natural law are such that even though at times they are actually being considered by reason, at other times they exist only habitually in reason, one can say in this sense that the natural law is a habit. In the same way, the indemonstrable principles in speculative matters are not the habit itself with respect to those principles; rather, they are principles with respect to which there is a habit.

35 **Reply to objection 1:** In this passage the Philosopher means to be looking for the genus of *virtue*, and since it is clear that a virtue is a principle of acts, he proposes only the sorts of things that serve as the principles of human acts, viz., powers, habits, and passions. However, besides these three, there are other sorts of things that exist in the soul. For instance, certain kinds of acts exist in the soul, e.g., an act of willing exists in one who wills; (b) again, things that are known exist in the one who knows them; and (c) the natural properties of the soul exist in the soul, e.g., immortality and others of this sort.

Reply to objection 2: Synderesis is called our intellect’s law because it is a habit containing the precepts of the natural law, which are first principles of human works.

Reply to objection 3: The conclusion of this argument is that the natural law is had in a habitual

1 manner. This we concede.

Reply to argument for the contrary: By the very fact that something exists habitually in a man, it follows that he is sometimes unable to make use of it because of an impediment. For instance, a man who is sleeping cannot make use of his habit of knowing conclusions (*habitus scientiae*). In the same way, because he is not of the right age, a young child cannot make use of the habit of grasping first principles (*intellectus*); nor, again, can he make use of the natural law, which exists in him habitually.

Article 2

Does the natural law contain many precepts or just one precept?

10 It seems that the natural law contains just one precept and not many precepts:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 92, a. 2), law is contained under the genus *precept*. Therefore, if the natural law contained many precepts, it would follow that there are likewise many natural laws.

Objection 2: The natural law follows upon the nature of man. But human nature is one taken as a whole, even though it has multiple parts. Therefore, either (a) there is just one precept of the law of nature because of the oneness of the whole or (b) there are many precepts because of the multiplicity of the parts of human nature, in which case even what stems from the inclination of the concupiscible [part of the soul] will belong to the natural law.

Objection 3: As was explained above (q. 90, a. 1), law is something that belongs to reason. But there is just a single faculty of reason in a man. Therefore, the natural law contains just one precept.

But contrary to this: The precepts of the natural law play the same role in a man with respect to matters of action that first principles play with respect to matters of demonstration. But there are many indemonstrable first principles. Therefore, there are likewise many precepts of the natural law.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), the precepts of the law of nature bear the same relation to practical reason that the first principles of demonstration bear to speculative reason. For in both cases they are principles that are known *per se* (*per se nota*).

Now there are two senses in which something is said to be known *per se*: (a) in its own right (*secundum se*) and (b) as regards us (*quoad nos*). Every proposition (*propositio*) said to be known *per se* in its own right is such that its predicate is part of the notion of its subject (*de ratione subiecti*); and yet it happens that such a proposition will not be known *per se* to someone who does not know the definition of the subject. For instance, the proposition ‘A man is rational’ is known *per se* given its own nature, since anyone who expresses *man* expresses *rational*; and yet this proposition is not known *per se* to someone who does not know the real definition (*quid sit*) of man. This is why, as Boethius points out in *De Hebdomadibus*, certain fundamental truths (*dignitates*) and propositions (*propositiones*) are known *per se* in general to everyone—and these are the ones whose terms are known to everyone, e.g., ‘Every whole is greater than its part’ and ‘Things equal to one and the same thing are equal to each other’—whereas other propositions are known *per se* only to the wise, who understand what the terms of the proposition signify. For instance, to someone who understands that an angel is not a body it is known *per se* that an angel does not exist circumscriptively in a place; however, this is not obvious to unsophisticated people, who do not grasp the point in question.

Now there is a certain ordering among those things that fall within everyone’s apprehension. The first thing to fall within apprehension is *being*, a grasp of which is included in everything that anyone apprehends. So the first indemonstrable principle, founded upon the notions *being* and *non-being*, is

1 ‘One is not to affirm and deny [the same thing] at the same time’. And, as *Metaphysics* 4 says, all the other principles are founded upon this one.

Now just as *being* is the first thing to fall within apprehension absolutely speaking, so *good* is the first thing to fall within the apprehension of practical reason, which is ordered toward action. For every agent acts for the sake of an end, which has the character of a good. And so the first principle in practical reasoning is what is founded on the notion *good*, which is the notion (*quod fundatur supra rationem boni quae est*): *The good is what all things desire*. Therefore, the first precept of law is that good ought to be done and pursued and that evil ought to be avoided. And all the other precepts of the law of nature are founded upon this principle—so that, namely, all the things to be done or avoided that practical reason naturally apprehends as human goods are such that they belong to the precepts of the law of nature. For since what is good has the character of an end and what is bad has the character of the contrary of an end, it follows that all the things man has a natural inclination toward are such that (a) reason naturally
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Therefore, there is an ordering of the precepts of the natural law that corresponds to the ordering of the natural inclinations.

First, man has an inclination toward the good with respect to the nature he shares in common with all substances, viz., insofar as every substance strives for the conservation of its own *esse* in accord with its own nature. And what belongs to the natural law in light of this inclination is everything through which man’s life is conserved or through which what is contrary to the preservation of his life is thwarted.

Second, man has an inclination toward certain more specific [goods] with respect to the nature that he shares in common with the other animals. Accordingly, those things are said to belong to the natural law which nature teaches all the animals, i.e., the union of male and female, the education of offspring, etc.

Third, man has an inclination toward the good with respect to the rational nature that is proper to him; for instance, man has a natural inclination toward knowing the truth about God and toward living in society. Accordingly, those things that are related to this sort of inclination belong to the natural law, e.g., that a man avoid ignorance, that he not offend the others with whom he has to live in community, and other such things related to this inclination.

Reply to objection 1: Insofar as all these precepts of the law of nature are traced back to a single first principle, they have the character of a single natural law.

Reply to objection 2: All the inclinations of any of the parts of human nature, e.g., the concupiscible part and the irascible part, are relevant to the natural law insofar as they are regulated by reason, and, as has been explained, they are traced back to a single first precept. Accordingly, even though the precepts of the law of nature are many in themselves, they nonetheless share a single root.

Reply to objection 3: Even if reason is in itself one, it nonetheless orders all the things relating to men. Accordingly, the law of reason contains everything that can be regulated by reason.

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Article 6

Can the natural law be wiped out of a man's heart?

It seems that the natural law can be wiped out of a man's heart (*possit aboleri a corde hominis*):

5 **Objection 1:** The Gloss on Romans 2:14 (“When the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, etc.”) says, “The law of justice, which sin had erased, is written in the inner man who is made new through grace.” But the law of justice is the same as the law of nature. Therefore, the law of nature can be erased (*potest deleri*).

Objection 2: The law of grace is more efficacious than the law of nature. But the law of grace is erased through sin. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the law of nature can be erased.

10 **Objection 3:** What is established by the law is proposed as being just. But there are many things established by men contrary to the law of nature. Therefore, the law of nature can be wiped out of the hearts of men.

But contrary to this: In *Confessiones* 2 Augustine says, “Your law was written in the hearts of men, and no sort of wickedness erases it.” But the law written in the hearts of men is the natural law. Therefore, the natural law cannot be erased.

15 **I respond:** As was explained above (a. 4-5), the natural law contains in the first place certain very general precepts that are known to everyone, but it also contains certain secondary, and more particular, precepts that are like conclusions lying in the neighborhood of the principles.

Thus, as far as the universal principles are concerned, the natural law cannot in any way be erased entirely from the hearts of men. However, it is erased with respect to particular actions insofar as reason is impeded from applying a universal principle to a particular action because of sensual desire or some other passion, as was explained above (q. 77, a. 2).

20 However, as far as the other, i.e., secondary, precepts are concerned, the natural law can be erased from the hearts of men, either (a) because of bad arguments, in the same way that errors occur in speculative matters with respect to necessary conclusions, or (b) because of depraved customs and corrupt habits—in the way that, as the Apostle points out in Romans 1:24ff., theft or even vices contrary to nature are not thought of as sins by some people.

Reply to objection 1: Sin erases the law of nature in particular cases, but not in general, except perhaps with respect to the secondary precepts of the law of nature in the way that has been explained.

25 **Reply to objection 2:** Even if grace is more efficacious than nature, nature nonetheless has more to do with man's essence (*essentialior est homini*) and is thus more permanent.

Reply to objection 3: This argument has to do with the secondary precepts of the law of nature. Some lawmakers have made statutes opposed to these precepts, and such statutes are wicked.

Questions for Maimonides

Maimonides works to reconcile Aristotle's natural philosophy with Scripture (e.g., Chapters 5 & 6), or to put in more contemporary terms, science to revelation. Much of this natural philosophy, especially his astronomy, is now outdated. Does this make Maimonides' arguments derived from natural science suspect? Or are his arguments based on a different set of assumptions, e.g., the existence of purpose in nature and inferences from numerology as evidence of God's will (Chapter 10 & 19)?

Comparing Abraham and Moses ("our teacher"), Maimonides says that "Abraham, our father, was the first that taught it [*Creation ex nihilo*] after he had established it by philosophical research" (Chapter 13). What is the significance of Maimonides' pointing out the original nature of Abraham's knowledge to the acceptance of the "fundamental principles" of the faith?

Maimonides is known for making statements that, on the surface at least, seem hard to reconcile. He says, for instance, that "we take the text of the Bible literally and say that it teaches us a truth which we cannot prove; and the miracles are evidence for the correctness of our view." But also: "...it cannot be said that God produced the Universe *In the Beginning*." Is this latter point, found in a nuanced discussion about time, a challenge to our taking Genesis 1:1 literally—the Scriptural account, which he says cannot be taken literally (Chapter 17)?

In discussing the theories (in Chapter 13) of those who believe in the existence of God, Maimonides cites both Aristotle and Plato. The latter seems to provide a philosophical teaching that is not "in opposition to the fundamental principles of our religion" (chapter 25). Is Maimonides' argument concerning Plato consistent and convincing, compared to what he concludes about Aristotle's teaching?

In many places Maimonides makes distinctions between those who understand and those who don't (e.g., Chapter 2). Should we conclude from this that the **Guide** challenges the reader to a test of her understanding—or, lacking that, helps make the case for his accepting/defending the authority of the Scripture as final? Can the case be made, based on Maimonides' clues as to his intent and methods, that the **Guide** is as much an intellectual polemic as a dispassionate philosophic undertaking?

While Maimonides spends the bulk of his time in refuting the Eternity theory of Aristotle, he alludes to the teachings of Epicurus as opinions "it would be quite useless to mention" in that they do not recognize the existence of God and espouse "that the existing state of things is the result of accidental combination and separation of the elements" (Chapter 13). Why does he see the arguments of Aristotle and Plato more worthy of in-depth discussion than those of Epicurus?

1 Maimonides - *Guide for the Perplexed*, " Creation and the
2 Eternity of the Universe"

3 *PART II*

4 [145]

5 INTRODUCTION

6 TWENTY-FIVE of the propositions which are employed in the proof for the existence of God, or in
7 the arguments demonstrating that God is neither corporeal nor a force connected with a material
8 being, or that He is One, have been fully established, and their correctness is beyond doubt. Aristotle
9 and the Peripatetics who followed him have proved each of these propositions. There is, however,
10 one proposition which we do not accept—namely, the proposition which affirms the Eternity of the
11 Universe, but we will admit it for the present, because by doing so we shall be enabled clearly to
12 demonstrate our own theory.

13 PROPOSITION I.

14 The existence of an infinite magnitude is impossible.

15 PROPOSITION II.

16 The co-existence of an infinite number of finite magnitudes is impossible

17 PROPOSITION III.

18 The existence of an infinite number of causes and effects is impossible, even if these were not
19 magnitudes; if, e.g., one Intelligence were the cause of a second, the second the cause of a third, the
20 third the cause of a fourth, and so on, the series could not be continued *ad infinitum*.

21 PROPOSITION IV.

22 Four categories are subject to change:—

23 (a.) *Substance*.—Changes which affect the substance of a thing are called genesis and destruction.

24 (b.) *Quantity*.—Changes in reference to quantity are increase and decrease.

25 (c.) *Quality*.—Changes in the qualities of things are transformations.

1 (d.) *Place*.—Change of place is called motion.

2 The term “motion” is properly applied to change of place, but is also used in a general sense of all
3 kinds of changes.

4 PROPOSITION V.

5 Motion implies change and transition from potentiality to actuality.

6 PROPOSITION VI.

7 The motion of a thing is either essential or accidental; or it is due to an external force, or to the
8 participation of the thing in the motion of another thing. This latter kind of motion is similar to the
9 accidental one. An instance of essential motion may be found in the translation of a thing from one
10 place to another. The accident of a thing, as, e.g., its black colour, is said to move when the thing
11 itself changes its place. The upward motion of a stone, owing to a force applied to it in that
12 direction, is an instance of a motion due to an external force. The motion of a nail in a boat may
13 serve to illustrate motion due to the participation of a thing in the motion of another thing; for
14 when the boat moves, the nail is said to move likewise. The same is the case with everything
15 composed of several parts: when the thing itself moves, every part of it is likewise said to move.

16 [146]

17 PROPOSITION VII.

18 Things which are changeable are, at the same time, divisible. Hence everything that moves is
19 divisible, and consequently corporeal; but that which is indivisible cannot move, and cannot
20 therefore be corporeal.

21 PROPOSITION VIII.

22 A thing that moves accidentally must come to rest, because it does not move of its own accord;
23 hence accidental motion cannot continue forever.

24 PROPOSITION IX.

25 A corporeal thing that sets another corporeal thing in motion can only effect this by setting itself in
26 motion at the time it causes the other thing to move.

27 PROPOSITION X.

28 A thing which is said to be contained in a corporeal object must satisfy either of the two following
29 conditions: it either exists through that object, as is the case with accidents, or it is the cause of the

1 existence of that object; such is, e.g., its essential property. In both cases it is a force existing in a
2 corporeal object.

3 PROPOSITION XI.

4 Among the things which exist through a material object, there are some which participate in the
5 division of that object, and are therefore accidentally divisible, as, e.g., its colour, and all other
6 qualities that spread throughout its parts. On the other hand, among the things which form the
7 essential elements of an object, there are some which cannot be divided in any way, as, e.g., the soul
8 and the intellect.

9 PROPOSITION XII.

10 A force which occupies all parts of a corporeal object is finite, that object itself being finite.

11 PROPOSITION XIII.

12 None of the several kinds of change can be continuous, except motion from place to place, provided
13 it be circular.

14 PROPOSITION XIV.

15 Locomotion is in the natural order of the several kinds of motion the first and foremost. For genesis
16 and corruption are preceded by transformation, which, in its turn, is preceded by the approach of
17 the transforming agent to the object which is to be transformed. Also, increase and decrease are
18 impossible without previous genesis and corruption.

19 PROPOSITION XV.

20 Time is an accident that is related and joined to motion in such a manner that the one is never
21 found without the other. Motion is only possible in time, and the idea of time cannot be conceived
22 otherwise than in connexion with motion; things which do not move have no relation to time.

23 PROPOSITION XVI.

24 Incorporeal bodies can only be numbered when they are forces situated in a body; the several forces
25 must then be counted together with substances [147] or objects in which they exist. Hence purely
26 spiritual beings, which are neither corporeal nor forces situated in corporeal objects, cannot be
27 counted, except when considered as causes and effects.

28 PROPOSITION XVII.

1 When an object moves, there must be some agent that moves it, from without, as, e.g., in the case of
2 a stone set in motion by the hand; or from within, e.g., when the body of a living being moves.
3 Living beings include in themselves, at the same time, the moving agent and the thing moved; when,
4 therefore, a living being dies, and the moving agent, the soul, has left the body, i.e., the thing moved,
5 the body remains for some time in the same condition as before, and yet cannot move in the manner
6 it has moved previously. The moving agent, when included in the thing moved, is hidden from, and
7 imperceptible to, the senses. This circumstance gave rise to the belief that the body of an animal
8 moves without the aid of a moving agent. When we therefore affirm, concerning a thing in motion,
9 that it is its own moving agent, or, as is generally said, that it moves of its own accord, we mean to
10 say that the force which really sets the body in motion exists in that body itself.

11 PROPOSITION XVIII.

12 Everything that passes over from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, is caused to do so by some
13 external agent; because if that agent existed in the thing itself, and no obstacle prevented the
14 transition, the thing would never be in a state of potentiality, but always in that of actuality. If, on
15 the other hand, while the thing itself contained that agent, some obstacle existed, and at a certain
16 time that obstacle was removed, the same cause which removed the obstacle would undoubtedly be
17 described as the cause of the transition from potentiality to actuality, [and not the force situated
18 within the body]. Note this.

19 PROPOSITION XIX.

20 A thing which owes its existence to certain causes has in itself merely the possibility of existence; for
21 only if these causes exist, the thing likewise exists. It does not exist if the causes do not exist at all, or
22 if they have ceased to exist, or if there has been a change in the relation which implies the existence
23 of that thing as a necessary consequence of those causes.

24 PROPOSITION XX.

25 A thing which has in itself the necessity of existence cannot have for its existence any cause whatever.

26 PROPOSITION XXI.

27 A thing composed of two elements has necessarily their composition as the cause of its present
28 existence. Its existence is therefore not necessitated by its own essence; it depends on the existence of
29 its two component parts and their combination.

30 PROPOSITION XXII.

31 Material objects are always composed of two elements [at least], and are without exception subject to
32 accidents. The two component elements of all bodies are substance and form. The accidents
33 attributed to material objects are quantity, geometrical form, and position.

1 [148]

2 PROPOSITION XXIII.

3 Everything that exists potentially, and whose essence includes a certain state of possibility, may at
4 some time be without actual existence.

5 PROPOSITION XXIV.

6 That which is potentially a certain thing is necessarily material, for the state of possibility is always
7 connected with matter.

8 PROPOSITION XXV.

9 Each compound substance consists of matter and form, and requires an agent for its existence, viz., a
10 force which sets the substance in motion, and thereby enables it to receive a certain form. The force
11 which thus prepares the substance of a certain individual being, is called the immediate motor.

12 Here the necessity arises of investigating into the properties of motion, the moving agent and the
13 thing moved. But this has already been explained sufficiently; and the opinion of Aristotle may be
14 expressed in the following proposition: Matter does not move of its own accord—an important
15 proposition that led to the investigation of the Prime Motor (the first moving agent).

16 Of these foregoing twenty-five propositions some may be verified by means of a little reflection and
17 the application of a few propositions capable of proof, or of axioms or theorems of almost the same
18 force, such as have been explained by me. Others require many arguments and propositions, all of
19 which, however, have been established by conclusive proofs partly in the *Physics* and its
20 commentaries, and partly in the *Metaphysics* and its commentary. I have already stated that in this
21 work it is not my intention to copy the books of the philosophers or to explain difficult problems,
22 but simply to mention those propositions which are closely connected with our subject, and which
23 we want for our purpose.

24 To the above propositions one must be added which enunciates that the universe is eternal, and
25 which is held by Aristotle to be true, and even more acceptable than any other theory. For the
26 present we admit it, as a hypothesis, only for the purpose of demonstrating our theory. It is the
27 following proposition:—

28 PROPOSITION XXVI

29 Time and motion are eternal, constant, and in actual existence.

30 In accordance with this proposition, Aristotle is compelled to assume that there exists actually a body
31 with constant motion, viz., the fifth element. He therefore says that the heavens are not subject to

1 genesis or destruction, because motion cannot be generated nor destroyed. He also holds that every
2 motion must necessarily be preceded by another motion, either of the same or of a different kind.
3 The belief that the locomotion of an animal is not preceded by another motion, is not true; for the
4 animal is caused to move, after it had been in rest, by the intention to obtain those very things which
5 bring about that locomotion. A change in its state of health, or some image, or some new idea can
6 produce a desire to seek that which is conducive to its welfare and to avoid that which is contrary.
7 Each of these three causes [149] sets the living being in motion, and each of them is produced by
8 various kinds of motion. Aristotle likewise asserts that everything which is created must, before its
9 actual creation, have existed *in potentiâ*. By inferences drawn from this assertion he seeks to establish
10 his proposition, viz., The thing that moves is finite, and its path finite; but it repeats the motion in
11 its path an infinite number of times. This can only take place when the motion is circular, as has
12 been stated in Proposition XIII. Hence follows also the existence of an infinite number of things
13 which do not co-exist but follow one after the other.

14 Aristotle frequently attempts to establish this proposition; but I believe that he did not consider his
15 proofs to be conclusive. It appeared to him to be the most probable and acceptable proposition. His
16 followers, however, and the commentators of his books, contend that it contains not only a probable
17 but a demonstrative proof, and that it has, in fact, been fully established. On the other hand, the
18 Mutakallemim try to prove that the proposition cannot be true, as, according to their opinion, it is
19 impossible to conceive how an infinite number of things could even come into existence successively.
20 They assume this impossibility as an axiom. I, however, think that this proposition is admissible, but
21 neither demonstrative, as the commentators of Aristotle assert, nor, on the other hand, impossible, as
22 the Mutakallemim say. We have no intention to explain here the proofs given by Aristotle, or to
23 show our doubts concerning them, or to set forth our opinions on the creation of the universe. I here
24 simply desire to mention those propositions which we shall require for the proof of the three
25 principles stated above. Having thus quoted and admitted these propositions, I will now proceed to
26 explain what may be inferred from them.

27 CHAPTER I

28 ACCORDING to Proposition XXV., a moving agent must exist which has moved the substance of all
29 existing transient things and enabled it to receive Form. The cause of the motion of that agent is
30 found in the existence of another motor of the same or of a different class, the term "motion," in a
31 general sense, being common to four categories (Prop. IV.). This series of motions is not infinite
32 (Prop. III.); we find that it can only be continued till the motion of the fifth element is arrived at,
33 and then it ends. The motion of the fifth element is the source of every force that moves and
34 prepares any substance on earth for its combination with a certain form, and is connected with that
35 force by a chain of intermediate motions. The celestial sphere [or the fifth element] performs the act
36 of locomotion which is the first of the several kinds of motion (Prop. XIV.), and all locomotion is
37 found to be the indirect effect of the motion of this sphere; e.g., a stone is set in motion by a stick,
38 the stick by a man's hand, the hand by the sinews, the sinews by the muscles, the muscles by the
39 nerves, the nerves by the natural heat of the body, and the heat of the body by its form. This is
40 undoubtedly the immediate motive cause, but the action of this immediate cause is due to a certain
41 design, e.g., to bring a stone into a hole by striking against it with a stick in order to prevent the

1 draught from coming through the crevice. The motion of the air that causes the draught is the effect
2 of the motion of [150] the celestial sphere. Similarly it may be shown that the ultimate cause of all
3 genesis and destruction can be traced to the motion of the sphere. But the motion of the sphere must
4 likewise have been effected by an agent (Prop. XVII.) residing either without the sphere or within it;
5 a third case being impossible. In the first case, if the motor is without the sphere, it must either be
6 corporeal or incorporeal; if incorporeal, it cannot be said that the agent is *without* the sphere; it can
7 only be described as *separate* from it; because an incorporeal object can only be said metaphorically
8 to reside without a certain corporeal object. In the second case, if the agent resides within the sphere,
9 it must be either a force distributed throughout the whole sphere so that each part of the sphere
10 includes a part of the force, as is the case with the heat of fire; or it is an indivisible force, e.g., the
11 soul and the intellect (Props. X. and XI.). The agent which sets the sphere in motion must
12 consequently be one of the following four things: a corporeal object without the sphere; an
13 incorporeal object separate from it; a force spread throughout the whole of the sphere; or an
14 indivisible force [within the sphere].

15 The first case, viz., that the moving agent of the sphere is a corporeal object without the sphere, is
16 impossible, as will be explained. Since the moving agent is corporeal, it must itself move while
17 setting another object in motion (Prop. IX.), and as the sixth element would likewise move when
18 imparting motion to another body, it would be set in motion by a seventh element, which must also
19 move. An infinite number of bodies would thus be required before the sphere could be set in
20 motion. This is contrary to Proposition II.

21 The third case, viz., that the moving object be a force distributed throughout the whole body, is
22 likewise impossible. For the sphere is corporeal, and must therefore be finite (Prop. I.); also the force
23 it contains must be finite (Prop. XII.), since each part of the sphere contains part of the force (Prop.
24 XI.): the latter can consequently not produce an infinite motion, such as we assumed according to
25 Proposition XXVI., which we admitted for the present.

26 The fourth case is likewise impossible, viz., that the sphere is set in motion by an indivisible force
27 residing in the sphere in the same manner as the soul resides in the body of man. For this force,
28 though indivisible, could not be the cause of infinite motion by itself alone; because if that were the
29 case the prime motor would have an accidental motion (Prop. VI.). But things that move
30 accidentally must come to rest (Prop. VIII.), and then the thing comes also to rest which is set in
31 motion. (The following may serve as a further illustration of the nature of accidental motion. When
32 man is moved by the soul, i.e., by his form, to go from the basement of the house to the upper
33 storey, his body moves directly, while the soul, the really efficient cause of that motion, participates
34 in it accidentally. For through the translation of the body from the basement to the upper storey, the
35 soul has likewise changed its place, and when no fresh impulse for the motion of the body is given by
36 the soul, the body which has been set in motion by such impulse comes to rest, and the accidental
37 motion of the soul is discontinued). Consequently the motion of that supposed first motor must be
38 due to some cause which does not form part of things composed of two elements, viz., a moving
39 agent [151] and an object moved; if such a cause is present the motor in that compound sets the
40 other element in motion; in the absence of such a cause no motion takes place. Living beings do
41 therefore not move continually, although each of them possesses an indivisible motive element;
42 because this element is not constantly in motion, as it would be if it produced motion of its own

1 accord. On the contrary, the things to which the action is due are separate from the motor. The
2 action is caused either by desire for that which is agreeable, or by aversion from that which is
3 disagreeable, or by some image, or by some ideal when the moving being has the capacity of
4 conceiving it. When any of these causes are present then the motor acts; its motion is accidental, and
5 must therefore come to an end (Prop. VIII.). If the motor of the sphere were of this kind the sphere
6 could not move *ad infinitum*. Our opponent, however, holds that the spheres move continually *ad*
7 *infinitum*; if this were the case, and it is in fact possible (Prop. XIII.), the efficient cause of the
8 motion of the sphere must, according to the above division, be of the second kind, viz., something
9 incorporeal and separate from the sphere.

10 It may thus be considered as proved that the efficient cause of the motion of the sphere, if that
11 motion be eternal, is neither itself corporeal nor does it reside in a corporeal object; it must move
12 neither of its own accord nor accidentally; it must be indivisible and unchangeable (Prop. VII. and
13 Prop. V.). This Prime Motor of the sphere is God, praised be His name!

14 The hypothesis that there exist two Gods is inadmissible, because absolutely incorporeal beings
15 cannot be counted (Prop. XVI.), except as cause and effect; the relation of time is not applicable to
16 God (Prop. XV.), because motion cannot be predicated of Him.

17 The result of the above argument is consequently this: the sphere cannot move *ad infinitum* of its
18 own accord; the Prime Motor is not corporeal, nor a force residing within a body; it is One,
19 unchangeable, and in its existence independent of time. Three of our postulates are thus proved by
20 the principal philosophers.

21 The philosophers employ besides another argument, based on the following proposition of Aristotle.
22 If there be a thing composed of two elements, and the one of them is known to exist also by itself,
23 apart from that thing, then the other element is likewise found in existence by itself separate from
24 that compound. For if the nature of the two elements were such that they could only exist
25 together—as, e.g., matter and form—then neither of them could in any way exist separate from the
26 other. The fact that the one component is found also in a separate existence proves that the two
27 elements are not indissolubly connected, and that the same must therefore be the case with the other
28 component. Thus we infer from the existence of honey-vinegar and of honey by itself, that there
29 exists also vinegar by itself. After having explained this Proposition Aristotle continues thus: We
30 notice many objects consisting of a *motor* and a *motum*, i.e., objects which set other things in
31 motion, and whilst doing so are themselves set in motion by other things; such is clearly the case as
32 regards all the middle members of a series of things in motion. We also see a thing that is moved, but
33 does not itself move anything, viz., the last member of the series; consequently a *motor* must exist
34 without being at the same time a *motum*, and that is the Prime Motor, which, [152] not being subject
35 to motion, is indivisible, incorporeal, and independent of time, as has been shown in the preceding
36 argument.

37 *Third Philosophical Argument.*—This is taken from the words of Aristotle, though he gives it in a
38 different form. It runs as follows: There is no doubt that many things actually exist, as, e.g., things
39 perceived with the senses. Now there are only three cases conceivable, viz., either all these things are
40 without beginning and without end, or all of them have beginning and end, or some are with and

1 some without beginning and end. The first of these three cases is altogether inadmissible, since we
2 clearly perceive objects which come into existence and are subsequently destroyed. The second case is
3 likewise inadmissible, for if everything had but a temporary existence all things might be destroyed,
4 and that which is enunciated of a whole class of things as possible is necessarily actual. All things
5 must therefore come to an end, and then nothing would ever be in existence, for there would not
6 exist any being to produce anything. Consequently nothing whatever would exist [if all things were
7 transient]; but as we see things existing, and find ourselves in existence we conclude as follows:—
8 Since there are undoubtedly beings of a temporary existence, there must also be an eternal being that
9 is not subject to destruction, and whose existence is real, not merely possible.

10 It has been further argued that the existence of this being is necessary, either on account of itself
11 alone or on account of some external force. In the latter case its existence and non-existence would
12 be equally possible, because of its own properties, but its existence would be necessary on account of
13 the external force. That force would then be the being that possesses absolute existence (Prop. XIX.).
14 It is therefore certain that there must be a being which has absolutely independent existence, and is
15 the source of the existence of all things, whether transient or permanent, if, as Aristotle assumes,
16 there is in existence such a thing, which is the effect of an eternal cause, and must therefore itself be
17 eternal. This is a proof the correctness of which is not doubted, disputed, or rejected, except by those
18 who have no knowledge of the method of proof. We further say that the existence of anything that
19 has independent existence is not due to any cause (Prop. X.), and that such a being does not include
20 any plurality whatever (Prop. XXI.); consequently it cannot be a body, nor a force residing in a body
21 (Prop. XXII.). It is now clear that there must be a being with absolutely independent existence, a
22 being whose existence cannot be attributed to any external cause, and which does not include
23 different elements; it cannot therefore be corporeal, or a force residing in a corporeal object; this
24 being is God.

25 It can easily be proved that absolutely independent existence cannot be attributed to two beings. For,
26 if that were the case, absolutely independent existence would be a property added to the substance of
27 both; neither of them would be absolutely independent on account of their essence, but only
28 through a certain property, viz., that of this independent existence, which is common to both. It can
29 besides be shown in many ways that independent existence cannot be reconciled with the principle
30 of dualism by any means. It would make no difference, whether we imagine two beings of similar or
31 of different properties. The reason for all this is to be sought in the absolute simplicity and in the
32 utmost perfection of the essence of this being, which is [153] the only member of its species, and does
33 not depend on any cause whatever; this being has therefore nothing in common with other beings.

34 *Fourth Argument.*—This is likewise a well-known philosophical argument. We constantly see things
35 passing from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, but in every such case there is for that
36 transition of a thing an agent separate from it (Prop. XVIII.). It is likewise clear that the agent has
37 also passed from potentiality to actuality. It has at first been potential, because it could not be actual,
38 owing to some obstacle contained in itself, or on account of the absence of a certain relation between
39 itself and the object of its action; it became an actual agent as soon as that relation was present.
40 Whichever cause be assumed, an agent is again necessary to remove the obstacle or to create the
41 relation. The same can be argued respecting this last-mentioned agent that creates the relation or
42 removes the obstacle. This series of causes cannot go on *ad infinitum*; we must at last arrive at a cause

1 of the transition of an object from the state of potentiality to that of actuality, which is constant, and
2 admits of no potentiality whatever. In the essence of this cause nothing exists potentially, for if its
3 essence included any possibility of existence it would not exist at all (Prop. XXIII.); it cannot be
4 corporeal, but it must be spiritual (Prop. XXIV.); and the immaterial being that includes no
5 possibility whatever, but exists actually by its own essence, is God. Since He is incorporeal, as has
6 been demonstrated, it follows that He is One (Prop. XVI.).

7 Even if we were to admit the Eternity of the Universe, we could by any of these methods prove the
8 existence of God; that He is One and incorporeal, and that He does not reside as a force in a
9 corporeal object.

10 The following is likewise a correct method to prove the Incorporeality and the Unity of God: If
11 there were two Gods, they would necessarily have one element in common by virtue of which they
12 were Gods, and another element by which they were distinguished from each other and existed as
13 two Gods; the distinguishing element would either be in both different from the property common
14 to both—in that case both of them would consist of different elements, and neither of them would
15 be the First Cause, or have absolutely independent existence; but their existence would depend on
16 certain causes (Prop. XIX.)—or the distinguishing element would only in one of them be different
17 from the element common to both: then that being could not have absolute independence.

18 *Another proof of the Unity of God.*—It has been demonstrated by proof that the whole existing world
19 is one organic body, all parts of which are connected together; also, that the influences of the spheres
20 above pervade the earthly substance and prepare it for its forms. Hence it is impossible to assume
21 that one deity be engaged in forming one part, and another deity in forming another part of that
22 organic body of which all parts are closely connected together. A duality could only be imagined in
23 this way, either that at one time the one deity is active, the other at another time, or that both act
24 simultaneously, nothing being done except by both together. The first alternative is certainly absurd
25 for many reasons; if at the time the one deity be active the other *could* also be active, there is no
26 reason why the one deity should then act and the other not; if, on the other hand, it be impossible
27 for the one deity to act when the other is at work, there must be [154] some other cause [besides these
28 deities] which [at a certain time] enables the one to act and disables the other. [Such difference
29 would not be caused by time], since time is without change, and the object of the action likewise
30 remains one and the same organic whole. Besides, if two deities existed in this way, both would be
31 subject to the relations of time, since their actions would depend on time; they would also in the
32 moment of acting pass from potentiality to actuality, and require an agent for such transition; their
33 essence would besides include possibility [of existence]. It is equally absurd to assume that both
34 together produce everything in existence, and that neither of them does anything alone; for when a
35 number of forces must be united for a certain result, none of these forces acts of its own accord, and
36 none is by itself the immediate cause of that result, but their union is the immediate cause. It has,
37 furthermore, been proved that the action of the absolute cannot be due to an [external] cause. The
38 union is also an act which presupposes a cause effecting that union, and if that cause be one, it is
39 undoubtedly God; but if it also consists of a number of separate forces, a cause is required for the
40 combination of these forces, as in the first case. Finally, one simple being must be arrived at, that is
41 the cause of the existence of the Universe, which is one whole; it would make no difference whether
42 we assumed that the First Cause had produced the Universe by *creatio ex nihilo*, or whether the

1 Universe co-existed with the First Cause. It is thus clear how we can prove the Unity of God from
2 the fact that this Universe is one whole.

3 *Another argument concerning the Incorporeality of God.*—Every corporeal object is composed of matter
4 and form (Prop. XXII.); every compound of these two elements requires an agent for effecting their
5 combination. Besides, it is evident that a body is divisible and has dimensions; a body is thus
6 undoubtedly subject to accidents. Consequently nothing corporeal can be a unity, either because
7 everything corporeal is divisible or because it is a compound; that is to say, it can logically be
8 analysed into two elements; because a body can only be said to be a certain body when the
9 distinguishing element is added to the corporeal substratum, and must therefore include two
10 elements; but it has been proved that the Absolute admits of no dualism whatever.

11 Now that we have discussed these proofs, we will expound our own method in accordance with our
12 promise.

13 CHAPTER II

14 THE fifth essence, i.e., the heavenly spheres, must either be transient, and in this case motion would
15 likewise be temporary, or, as our opponent assumes, it must be eternal. If the spheres are transient,
16 then God is their Creator; for if anything comes into existence after a period of non-existence, it is
17 self-evident that an agent exists which has effected this result. It would be absurd to contend that the
18 thing itself effected it. If, on the other hand, the heavenly spheres be eternal, with a regular perpetual
19 motion, the cause of this perpetual motion, according to the Propositions enumerated in the
20 Introduction, must be something that is neither a body, nor a force residing in a body, and that is
21 God, praised be His name! We have thus shown that [155] whether we believe in the *Creatio ex*
22 *Nihilo*, or in the Eternity of the Universe, we can prove by demonstrative arguments the existence of
23 God, i.e., an absolute Being, whose existence cannot be attributed to any cause, or admit in itself any
24 potentiality. The theory that God is One and Incorporeal has likewise been established by proof
25 without any reference to the theory of the Creation or the Eternity of the Universe. This has been
26 explained by us in the third philosophical argument [in support of the Existence of God], and also in
27 our subsequent description of the methods of the philosophers in proving the Incorporeality and the
28 Unity of God.

29 We deem it now convenient to continue with the theory of the philosophers, and to give their proofs
30 for the existence of Intelligences. We will then show that their theory in this regard is in harmony
31 with the teaching of Scripture concerning the existence of angels. After the full treatment of this
32 subject we shall return to our task and discuss the theory of *creatio ex nihilo*. For the best arguments
33 in favour of this theory cannot be fully comprehended unless the theory of the existence of
34 Intelligences be well understood, and also the method which I adopt in proving their existence. We
35 must, however, first give the following note, which will introduce you into the secrets of this whole
36 subject, both of that which we have already given and of what will yet be given.

37 *Note.*—It was not my intention when writing this treatise to expound natural science or discuss
38 metaphysical systems; it was not my object to prove truths which have already been demonstrated, or

1 describe the number and the properties of the spheres: for the books written on these subjects serve
2 their purpose, and if in some points they are not satisfactory, I do not think that what I could say
3 would be better than what has already been explained by others. But my intention was, as has been
4 stated in the Introduction, to expound Biblical passages which have been impugned, and to elucidate
5 their hidden and true sense, which is above the comprehension of the multitude. When you
6 therefore notice that I prove the existence and number of Intelligences or the number of the spheres,
7 with the causes of their motion, or discuss the true relation of matter and form, the meaning of
8 Divine manifestation, or similar subjects, you must not think that I intend merely to establish a
9 certain philosophical proposition; for these subjects have been discussed in many books, and most of
10 them have been demonstrated by proof. I only desire to mention that which might, when well
11 understood, serve as a means of removing some of the doubts concerning anything taught in
12 Scripture; and indeed many difficulties will disappear when that which I am about to explain is
13 taken into consideration. From the Introduction to this treatise you may learn that its principal
14 object is to expound, as far as can be done, the account of the Creation (Gen. i.-iii.), and of the
15 Divine Chariot (Ezek. i.), and to answer questions raised in respect to Prophecy and to the
16 knowledge of God. You will sometimes notice that I am rather explicit on truths already ascertained;
17 some of them Natural Philosophy has established as facts; others Metaphysics has either fully
18 demonstrated, or at least shown to be worthy of belief; others Mathematics have made plain. But
19 you will invariably find that my exposition includes the key for the understanding of some allegorical
20 passage of Holy Writ and its esoteric interpretation, and that I have mentioned, explained, and
21 demonstrated the subject only because it [156] furthers the knowledge of the "Divine Chariot," or
22 "the Creation," or explains some principle with respect to Prophecy, or to the belief in any of the
23 truths taught in Scripture. Now, having made this statement, we return to the subject of which we
24 began to treat.

25 CHAPTER III

26 THE theory of Aristotle in respect to the causes of the motion of the spheres led him to assume the
27 existence of Intelligences. Although this theory consists of assertions which cannot be proved, yet it
28 is the least open to doubt, and is more systematic than any other, as has been stated by Alexander in
29 the book called *The Origin of the Universe*. It includes maxims which are identical with those taught
30 in Scripture, and it is to a still greater extent in harmony with doctrines contained in well-known
31 genuine Midrashim, as will be explained by me. For this reason I will cite his views and his proofs,
32 and collect from them what coincides with the teachings of Scripture, and agrees with the doctrine
33 held by our Sages.

34 CHAPTER IV

35 THE enunciation that the heavenly sphere is endowed with a soul will appear reasonable to all who
36 sufficiently reflect on it; but at first thought they may find it unintelligible or even objectionable;
37 because they wrongly assume that when we ascribe a soul to the heavenly spheres we mean
38 something like the soul of man, or that of an ass, or ox. We merely intend to say that the locomotion
39 of the sphere undoubtedly leads us to assume some inherent principle by which it moves; and this
40 principle is certainly a soul. For it would be absurd to assume that the principle of the circular

1 motion of the spheres was like that of the rectilinear motion of a stone downward or of fire upwards,
2 for the cause of the latter motion is a natural property and not a soul; a thing set in motion by a
3 natural property moves only as long as it is away from the proper place of its element, but when it
4 has again arrived there, it comes to rest; whilst the sphere continues its circular motion in its own
5 place. It is, however, not because the sphere has a soul, that it moves in this manner; for animate
6 beings move either by instinct or by reason. By “instinct” I mean the intention of an animal to
7 approach something agreeable, or to retreat from something disagreeable; e.g., to approach the water
8 it seeks because of thirst, or to retreat from the sun because of its heat. It makes no difference
9 whether that thing really exists or is merely imaginary, since the imagination of something agreeable
10 or of something disagreeable likewise causes the animal to move. The heavenly sphere does not move
11 for the purpose of withdrawing from what is bad or approaching what is good. For in the first
12 instance it moves toward the same point from which it has moved away, and *vice versâ* it moves away
13 from the same point towards which it has moved. Secondly, if this were the object of the motion, we
14 should expect that the sphere would move towards a certain point, and would then rest; for if it
15 moved for the purpose of avoiding something, and never obtained that object, the motion would be
16 in vain. The circular motion of the sphere is consequently due to the action of [157] some idea which
17 produces this particular kind of motion; but as ideas are only possible in intellectual beings, the
18 heavenly sphere is an intellectual being. But even a being that is endowed with the faculty of forming
19 an idea, and possesses a soul with the faculty of moving, does not change its place on each occasion
20 that it forms an idea; for an idea alone does not produce motion, as has been explained in
21 [Aristotle’s] *Metaphysics*. We can easily understand this, when we consider how often we form ideas
22 of certain things, yet do not move towards them, though we are able to do so; it is only when a
23 desire arises for the thing imagined, that we move in order to obtain it. We have thus shown that
24 both the soul, the principle of motion, and the intellect, the source of the ideas, would not produce
25 motion without the existence of a desire for the object of which an idea has been formed. It follows
26 that the heavenly sphere must have a desire for the ideal which it has comprehended, and that ideal,
27 for which it has a desire, is God, exalted be His name! When we say that God moves the spheres, we
28 mean it in the following sense: the spheres have a desire to become similar to the ideal
29 comprehended by them. This ideal, however, is simple in the strictest sense of the word, and not
30 subject to any change or alteration, but constant in producing everything good, whilst the spheres
31 are corporeal; the latter can therefore not be like this ideal in any other way, except in the production
32 of circular motion; for this is the only action of corporeal beings that can be perpetual; it is the most
33 simple motion of a body; there is no change in the essence of the sphere, nor in the beneficial results
34 of its motion.

35 When Aristotle had arrived at this result, he further investigated the subject, and found, by proof,
36 that there were many spheres, and that all moved in circles, but each with its peculiar motion as
37 regards velocity and direction. He naturally argued that the ideal comprehended by the one sphere,
38 which completes its circuit in one day, is different from that of another sphere which completes its
39 circuit in thirty years; he thus arrived at the conclusion that there were as many ideals as there were
40 spheres; each sphere has a desire for that ideal which is the source of its existence, and that desire is
41 the cause of its individual motion, so that in fact the ideal sets the sphere in motion. Aristotle does
42 not say, nor does any other authority, that there are ten or a hundred ideals; he simply states that
43 their number agrees with that of the spheres. When, therefore, some of his contemporaries held that
44 the number of spheres was fifty, he said, if that was true, the number of ideals must likewise be fifty.

1 For the scholars in his time were few and possessed but imperfect learning; they thought that there
2 must be a separate sphere for each movement, because they did not know that what appear to be
3 several distinct movements can be explained as resulting from the inclination of one sphere as is, e.g.,
4 the case with the change in the longitude of a star, its declination and the places of its rising and
5 setting noticed in the circle of the horizon. This point, however, does not concern us at present; let
6 us therefore return to our subject.

7 The later philosophers assumed ten Intelligences, because they counted the spheres containing stars
8 and the all-encompassing sphere, although some of the spheres included several distinct orbits. There
9 are altogether nine spheres, viz., the all-encompassing sphere, that of the fixed stars, and those of the
10 seven planets; nine Intelligences correspond to the nine spheres; [158] the tenth Intelligence is the
11 Active Intellect. The existence of the latter is proved by the transition of our intellect from a state of
12 potentiality to that of actuality, and by the same transition in the case of the forms of all transient
13 beings. For whatever passes from potentiality into actuality, requires for that transition an external
14 agent of the same kind as itself. Thus the builder does not build the storehouse in his capacity of
15 workman, but in that of a person that has the form of the storehouse in his mind; and that form of
16 the building which exists in the mind of the builder caused the transition of the potential form of the
17 storehouse into actuality, and impressed it on the material of the building. As that which gives form
18 to matter must itself be pure form, so the source of intellect must itself be pure intellect, and this
19 source is the Active Intellect. The relation of the latter to the elements and their compounds is the
20 same as that of the Intelligences to their respective spheres; and our intellect in action, which
21 originates in the Active Intellect, and enables us to comprehend that intellect, finds a parallel in the
22 intellect of each of the spheres which originates in the Intelligence corresponding to that sphere, and
23 enables the sphere to comprehend that Intelligence, to form an idea of it, and to move in seeking to
24 become similar to it.

25 Aristotle further infers, what has already been explained, that God does not act by means of direct
26 contact. When, e.g., He destroys anything with fire, the fire is set in motion through the movement
27 of the spheres, and the spheres by the Intelligences; the latter, which are identical with “the angels,”
28 and act by direct influence, are consequently, each in its turn, the cause of the motion of the spheres;
29 as however, purely spiritual beings do not differ in their essence, and are by no means discrete
30 quantities, he (Aristotle) came to the following conclusion: God created the first Intelligence, the
31 motive agent of the first sphere; the Intelligence which causes the second sphere to move has its
32 source and origin in the first Intelligence, and so on; the Intelligence which sets the sphere nearest to
33 the earth in motion is the source and origin of the Active Intellect, the last in the series of purely
34 spiritual beings. The series of material bodies similarly begins with the uppermost sphere, and ends
35 with the elements and their compounds. The Intelligence which moves the uppermost sphere cannot
36 be the Absolute Being, for there is an element common to all Intelligences, namely, the property of
37 being the motive agent of a sphere, and there is another element by which each of them is
38 distinguished from the rest; each of the ten Intelligences includes, therefore, two elements, and
39 consequently another being must be the First Cause.

40 This is the theory and opinion of Aristotle on these questions, and his proofs, where proof is
41 possible, are given in various works of the Aristotelian school. In short, he believes that the spheres
42 are animated and intellectual beings, capable of fully comprehending the *principia* of their existence;

1 that there exist purely spiritual beings (Intelligences), which do not reside in corporeal objects, and
2 which derive existence from God; and that these form the intermediate element between God and
3 this material world.

4 In the chapters which follow I will show how far the teaching of Scripture is in harmony with these
5 views, and how far it differs from them.

6 [159]

7 CHAPTER V

8 SCRIPTURE supports the theory that the spheres are animate and intellectual, i.e., capable of
9 comprehending things; that they are not, as ignorant persons believe, inanimate masses like fire and
10 earth, but are, as the philosophers assert, endowed with life, and serve their Lord, whom they
11 mightily praise and glorify; comp. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” etc. (Ps. xix. 2). It is a
12 great error to think that this is a mere figure of speech; for the verbs “to declare” and “to relate,”
13 when joined together, are, in Hebrew, only used of intellectual beings. That the Psalmist really
14 means to describe the heavens’ own doing, in other words, what the spheres actually do, and not
15 what man thinks of them, may be best inferred from the words, “There is no speech, nor language,
16 their voice is not heard” (ver. 4). Here he clearly shows that he describes the heavens themselves as in
17 reality praising God, and declaring His wonders without words of lip and tongue. When man praises
18 God in words actually uttered, he only relates the ideas which he has conceived, but these ideas form
19 the real praise. The reason why he gives expression to these ideas is to be found in his desire to
20 communicate them to others, or to make himself sure that he has truly conceived them. Therefore it
21 is said, “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” (Ps. iv. 5). Only ignorant or
22 obstinate persons would refuse to admit this proof taken from Scripture.

23 As to the opinion of our Sages, I do not see any necessity for expounding or demonstrating it.
24 Consider only the form they gave to the blessing recited on seeing the new moon, the ideas
25 repeatedly occurring in the prayers and the remarks in the Midrash on the following and similar
26 passages:—“And the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Neh. ix. 6); “When the morning stars sang
27 together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job xxxviii. 7). In *Bereshit Rabba*, on the
28 passage—“And the earth was empty and formless” (Gen. i. 2), our Sages remark as follows: “The
29 words *tohu* and *bohu* mean mourning and crying; the earth mourned and cried on account of her
30 evil lot, saying, ‘I and the heavens were created together, and yet the beings above live for ever, and
31 we are mortal.’ ” Our Sages, by this remark, indicate their belief that the spheres are animated
32 beings, and not inanimate matter like the elements.

33 The opinion of Aristotle, that the spheres are capable of comprehension and conception, is in
34 accordance with the words of our prophets and our theologians or Sages. The philosophers further
35 agree that this world below is governed by influences emanating from the spheres, and that the latter
36 comprehend and have knowledge of the things which they influence. This theory is also met with in
37 Scripture; comp. [the stars and all the host of heaven] “which the Lord thy God hath divided unto
38 all nations” (Deut. iv. 19), that is to say, the stars, which God appointed to be the means of

1 governing His creatures, and not the objects of man’s worship. It has therefore been stated clearly:
2 “And to rule over the day and over the night” (Gen. i. 18). The term “ruling” here refers to the
3 power which the spheres possess of governing the earth, in addition to the property of giving light
4 and darkness. The latter property is the direct cause of genesis and destruction; it is described in the
5 words, “And to divide the light from the darkness” (*ibid.*). It is impossible to assume that those who
6 rule a thing are ignorant [160] of that very thing which they rule, if we take “to rule” in its proper
7 sense. We will add another chapter on this subject.

8 CHAPTER VI

9 AS for the existence of angels, there is no necessity to cite any proof from Scripture, where the fact is
10 frequently mentioned. The term *elohim* signifies “judges”; comp. “The cause of both parties shall
11 come before the ‘judges’ ” (*ha-elohim*; Exod. xxii. 8). It has been figuratively applied to angels, and to
12 the Creator as being Judge over the angels. When God says, “I am the Lord your God,” the pronoun
13 “your” refers to all mankind; but in the phrase *elohi ha-elohim*, He is described as the God of the
14 angels, and in *adone ha-adonim*, as the Lord of the spheres and the stars, which are the masters of the
15 rest of the corporeal creation. The nouns *elohim* and *adonim* in these phrases do not refer to human
16 judges or masters, because these are in rank inferior to the heavenly bodies; much less do they refer
17 to mankind in general, including masters and servants, or to objects of stone and wood worshipped
18 by some as gods; for it is no honour or greatness to God to be superior to stone, wood, or a piece of
19 metal. The phrases therefore admit of no other meaning than this: God is the Judge over the judges;
20 i.e., over the angels, and the Lord over the spheres.

21 We have already stated above that the angels are incorporeal. This agrees with the opinion of
22 Aristotle: there is only this difference in the names employed—he uses the term “Intelligences,” and
23 we say instead “angels.” His theory is that the Intelligences are intermediate beings between the
24 Prime Cause and existing things, and that they effect the motion of the spheres, on which motion
25 the existence of all things depends. This is also the view we meet with in all parts of Scripture; every
26 act of God is described as being performed by angels. But “angel” means “messenger”; hence every
27 one that is intrusted with a certain mission is an angel. Even the movements of the brute creation are
28 sometimes due to the action of an angel, when such movements serve the purpose of the Creator,
29 who endowed it with the power of performing that movement; e.g., “God hath sent His angel, and
30 hath shut the lions’ mouths that they have not hurt me” (Dan. vi. 22). Another instance may be seen
31 in the movements of Balaam’s ass, described as caused by an angel. The elements are also called
32 angels. Comp. “Who maketh winds His angels, flaming fire His ministers” (Ps. civ. 4). There is no
33 doubt that the word “angel” is used of a messenger sent by man; e.g., “And Jacob sent angels” (Gen.
34 xxxii. 4); of a prophet, e.g., “And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim” (Judges ii.
35 1); “And He sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt” (Num. xx. 16). It is also used of
36 ideals, perceived by prophets in prophetic visions, and of man’s animal powers, as will be explained
37 in another place.

38 When we assert that Scripture teaches that God rules this world through angels, we mean such
39 angels as are identical with the Intelligences. In some passages the plural is used of God, e.g., “Let us
40 make man in our image” (Gen. i. 26); “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language”

1 (*ibid.* xi. 7). Our Sages explain this in the following manner: God, as it were, does nothing without
2 contemplating the host above. I wonder at the [161] expression “contemplating,” which is the very
3 expression used by Plato: God, as it were, “contemplates the world of ideals, and thus produces the
4 existing beings.” In other passages our Sages expressed it more decidedly: “God does nothing
5 without consulting the host above” (the word *familia* used in the original, is a Greek noun, and
6 signifies “host”). On the words, “what they have already made” (Eccles. ii. 12), the following remark
7 is made in *Bereshit Rabba* and in *Midrash Koheleth*: “It is not said ‘what He has made,’ but ‘what
8 they have made’; hence we infer that He, as it were, with His court, have agreed upon the form of
9 each of the limbs of man before placing it in its position, as it is said, ‘He hath made thee and
10 established thee’ ” (Deut. xxxii. 6). In *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. li.) it is also stated, that wherever the
11 term “and the Lord” occurred in Scripture, the Lord with His court is to be understood. These
12 passages do not convey the idea that God spoke, thought, reflected, or that He consulted and
13 employed the opinion of other beings, as ignorant persons have believed. How could the Creator be
14 assisted by those whom He created! They only show that all parts of the Universe, even the limbs of
15 animals in their actual form, are produced through angels; for natural forces and angels are identical.
16 How bad and injurious is the blindness of ignorance! Say to a person who is believed to belong to
17 the wise men of Israel that the Almighty sends His angel to enter the womb of a woman and to form
18 there the foetus, he will be satisfied with the account; he will believe it, and even find in it a
19 description of the greatness of God’s might and wisdom; although he believes that the angel consists
20 of burning fire, and is as big as a third part of the Universe, yet he considers it possible as a divine
21 miracle. But tell him that God gave the seed a formative power which produces and shapes the
22 limbs, and that this power is called “angel,” or that all forms are the result of the influence of the
23 Active Intellect, and that the latter is the angel, the Prince of the world, frequently mentioned by our
24 Sages, and he will turn away; because he cannot comprehend the true greatness and power of
25 creating forces that act in a body without being perceived by our senses. Our Sages have already
26 stated—for him who has understanding—that all forces that reside in a body are angels, much more
27 the forces that are active in the Universe. The theory that each force acts only in one particular way,
28 is expressed in *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. l.) as follows: “One angel does not perform two things, and two
29 angels do not perform one thing”; this is exactly the property of all forces. We may find a
30 confirmation of the opinion that the natural and psychical forces of an individual are called angels in
31 a statement of our Sages which is frequently quoted, and occurs originally in *Bereshit Rabba* (chap.
32 lxxviii.): “Every day God creates a legion of angels; they sing before Him, and disappear.” When, in
33 opposition to this statement, other statements were quoted to the effect that angels are eternal—and,
34 in fact, it has repeatedly been shown that they live permanently—the reply has been given that some
35 angels live permanently, others perish; and this is really the case; for individual forces are transient,
36 whilst the genera are permanent and imperishable. Again, we read (in *Bereshit Rabba*, chap. lxxxv.),
37 in reference to the relation between Judah and Tamar: “R. Jochanan said that Judah was about to
38 pass by [without noticing Tamar], but God caused the angel of lust, i.e., the libidinous disposition,
39 to present himself to him.” Man’s disposition is here called [162] an angel. Likewise we frequently
40 meet with the phrase “the angel set over a certain thing.” In *Midrash-Koheleth* (on Eccles. x. 7) the
41 following passage occurs: “When man sleeps, his soul speaks to the angel, the angel to the cherub.”
42 The intelligent reader will find here a clear statement that man’s imaginative faculty is also called
43 “angel,” and that “cherub” is used for man’s intellectual faculty. How beautiful must this appear to
44 him who understands it; how absurd to the ignorant!

1 We have already stated that the forms in which angels appear form part of the prophetic vision.
2 Some prophets see angels in the form of man, e.g., “And behold three men stood by him” (Gen.
3 xviii. 2); others perceive an angel as a fearful and terrible being, e.g., “And his countenance was as
4 the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible” (Judges xiii. 6); others see them as fire, e.g., “And
5 the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire” (Exod. iii. 2). In *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. 1.)
6 the following remark occurs: “To Abraham, whose prophetic power was great, the angels appeared in
7 the form of men; to Lot, whose power was weak, they appeared as angels.” This is an important
8 principle as regards Prophecy; it will be fully discussed when we treat of that subject (chap.
9 xxxii. *sqq.*). Another passage in *Bereshit Rabba* (*ibid.*) runs thus: “Before the angels have
10 accomplished their task they are called men, when they have accomplished it they are angels.”
11 Consider how clearly they say that the term “angel” signifies nothing but a certain action, and that
12 every appearance of an angel is part of a prophetic vision, depending on the capacity of the person
13 that perceives it.

14 There is nothing in the opinion of Aristotle on this subject contrary to the teaching of Scripture.
15 The whole difference between him and ourselves is this: he believes all these beings to be eternal, co-
16 existing with the First Cause as its necessary effect; but we believe that they have had a beginning,
17 that God created the Intelligences, and gave the spheres the capacity of seeking to become like them;
18 that in creating the Intelligences and the spheres, He endowed them with their governing powers. In
19 this point we differ from him.

20 In the course of this treatise we shall give his theory as well as the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo* taught
21 in Scripture.

22 CHAPTER VII

23 WE have already explained that the term “angel” is a homonym, and is used of the intellectual
24 beings, the spheres, and the elements; for all these are engaged in performing a divine command. But
25 do not imagine that the Intelligences and the spheres are like other forces which reside in bodies and
26 act by the laws of nature without being conscious of what they do. The spheres and the Intelligences
27 are conscious of their actions, and select by their own free will the objects of their influence,
28 although not in the same manner as we exercise free will and rule over other things, which only
29 concern temporary beings. I have been led to adopt this theory by certain passages in Scripture; e.g.,
30 an angel says to Lot: “For I cannot do anything,” etc. (Gen. xix. 21); and telling him to deliver
31 himself, the angel says: “Behold I have accepted thee concerning this thing” (ver. 21). [163] Again:
32 “Take heed before him, and listen to his voice,” etc. (Exod. xxiii. 21). These passages show that
33 angels are conscious of what they do, and have free will in the sphere of action intrusted to them,
34 just as we have free will within our province, and in accordance with the power given to us with our
35 very existence. The difference is that what we do is the lowest stage of excellence, and that our
36 influence and actions are preceded by nonaction; whilst the Intelligences and the spheres always
37 perform that which is good, they contain nothing except what is good and perfect, as will be shown
38 further on, and they have continually been active from the beginning.

39 CHAPTER VIII

1 IT is one of the ancient beliefs, both among the philosophers and other people, that the motions of
2 the spheres produced mighty and fearful sounds. They observed how little objects produced by rapid
3 motion a loud, shrilling, and terrifying noise, and concluded that this must to a far higher degree be
4 the case with the bodies of the sun, the moon and the stars, considering their greatness and their
5 velocity. The Pythagoreans believed that the sounds were pleasant, and, though loud, had the same
6 proportions to each other as the musical notes. They also explained why these mighty and
7 tremendous sounds are not heard by us. This belief is also widespread in our nation. Thus our Sages
8 describe the greatness of the sound produced by the sun in the daily circuit in its orbit. The same
9 description could be given of all heavenly bodies. Aristotle, however, rejects this, and holds that they
10 produce no sounds. You will find his opinion in the book *The Heavens and the World* (De Cœlo).
11 You must not find it strange that Aristotle differs here from the opinion of our Sages. The theory of
12 the music of the spheres is connected with the theory of the motion of the stars in a fixed sphere, and
13 our Sages have, in this astronomical question, abandoned their own theory in favour of the theory of
14 others. Thus, it is distinctly stated. “The wise men of other nations have defeated the wise men of
15 Israel.” It is quite right that our Sages have abandoned their own theory; for speculative matters
16 every one treats according to the results of his own study, and every one accepts that which appears
17 to him established by proof.

18 CHAPTER IX

19 WE have stated above that in the age of Aristotle the number of spheres was not accurately known;
20 and that those who at present count nine spheres consider a sphere containing several rotating circles
21 as one, a fact well known to all who have a knowledge of astronomy. We need, therefore, not reject
22 the opinion of those who assume two spheres in accordance with the words of Scripture: “Behold the
23 heaven and the heaven of heavens are the Lord’s” (Deut. x. 14). They reckon all the spheres with
24 stars, i.e., with all the circles in which the stars move, as one; the all-encompassing sphere in which
25 there are no stars, is regarded by them as the second; hence they maintain that there are two spheres.

26 I will here introduce an explanation which is necessary for the understanding of our view on the
27 present subject. There is a difference among [164] ancient astronomers whether the spheres of
28 Mercury and Venus are above or below the sun, because no proof can be given for the position of
29 these two spheres. At first it was generally assumed that they were above the sun—note this well;
30 later on Ptolemy maintained that they were below the sun; because he believed that in this manner
31 the whole arrangement of the spheres would be most reasonable; the sun would be in the middle,
32 having three stars below and three above itself. More recently some Andalusian scholars concluded,
33 from certain principles laid down by Ptolemy, that Venus and Mercury were above the sun. Ibn
34 Aflah of Seville, with whose son I was acquainted, has written a famous book on the subject; also the
35 excellent philosopher Abu-Bekr ibn-Alzaig, one of whose pupils was my fellow-student, has treated
36 of this subject and offered certain proofs—which we have copied—of the improbability of Venus
37 and Mercury being above the sun. The proofs given by Abu-Bekr show only the improbability, not
38 the impossibility. In short, whether it be so or not, the ancients placed Venus and Mercury above the
39 sun, and had, therefore, the following five spheres: that of the moon, which is undoubtedly the
40 nearest to us; that of the sun, which is, of course, above the former; then that of the five planets, the
41 sphere of the fixed stars, and the outermost sphere, which does not contain any star. Consequently

1 there are four spheres containing figures, i.e., stars, which were called figures by the ancients in their
2 well-known works—viz., the spheres of the fixed stars, of the five planets, of the sun, and of the
3 moon; above these there is one sphere which is empty, without any star. This number is for me of
4 great importance in respect to an idea which none of the philosophers clearly stated, though I was
5 led to it by various utterances of the philosophers and of our Sages. I will now state the idea and
6 expound it.

7 CHAPTER X

8 IT is a well-known fact that the philosophers, when they discuss in their works the order of the
9 Universe, assume that the existing order of things in this sublunary world of transient beings
10 depends on forces which emanate from the spheres. We have mentioned this several times. In like
11 manner our Sages say, “There is no single herb below without its corresponding star above, that
12 beats upon it and commands it to grow.” Comp. “Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst
13 thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?” (Job xxxviii. 33). The term *mazzal*, literally meaning a
14 constellation in the Zodiac, is also used of every star, as may be inferred from the following passage
15 in the beginning of *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. x.): “While one star (*mazzal*) completes its circuit in thirty
16 days, another completes it in thirty years.” They have thus clearly expressed it, that even each
17 individual being in this world has its corresponding star. Although the influences of the spheres
18 extend over all beings, there is besides the influence of a particular star directed to each particular
19 species; a fact noticed also in reference to the several forces in one organic body; for the whole
20 Universe is like one organic body, as we have stated above. Thus the philosophers speak of the
21 peculiar influence of the moon on the particular element water. That this is the case is proved by the
22 increase and decrease of the water in the seas and rivers according to the [165] increase and decrease
23 of the moon; also by the rising and the falling of the seas according to the advance or return of the
24 moon, i.e., her ascending and her descending in the several quarters of her course. This is clear to
25 every one who has directed his attention to these phenomena. The influence of the sun’s rays upon
26 fire may easily be noticed in the increase of heat or cold on earth, according as the sun approaches
27 the earth or recedes or is concealed from it. All this is so clear that I need not explain it further. Now
28 it occurred to my mind that the four spheres which contain stars exercise influence upon all beings
29 on earth that come into existence, and, in fact, are the cause of their existence; but each of the four
30 spheres is the exclusive source of the properties of one only of the four elements, and becomes by its
31 own motion the cause of the motion and changes of that element. Thus water is set in motion by the
32 moon-sphere, fire by the sun-sphere, air by the other planets, which move in many and different
33 courses with retrogressions, progressions, and stations, and therefore produce the various forms of
34 the air with its frequent changes, contractions, and expansions; the sphere of the other stars, namely,
35 the fixed stars, sets earth in motion; and it may be that on this account, viz., on account of the slow
36 motion of the fixed stars, earth is but slowly set in motion to change and to combine with other
37 elements. The particular influence which the fixed stars exercise upon earth is implied in the saying
38 of our Sages, that the number of the species of plants is the same as that of the individuals included
39 in the general term “stars.”

40 The arrangement of the Universe may therefore be assumed to be as follows: there are four spheres,
41 four elements set in motion by them, and also four principal properties which earthly beings derive

1 from them, as has been stated above. Furthermore, there are four causes of the motion of every
2 sphere, namely, the following four essential elements in the sphere; its spherical shape, its soul, its
3 intellect, by which the sphere is capable of forming ideas, and the Intelligence, which the sphere
4 desires to imitate. Note this well. The explanation of what I said is this: the sphere could not have
5 been continuously in motion, had it not this peculiar form; continuity of motion is only possible
6 when the motion is circular. Rectilinear motion, even if frequently repeated in the same moment,
7 cannot be continuous; for when a body moves successively in two opposite directions, it must pass
8 through a moment of rest, as has been demonstrated in its proper place. The necessity of a
9 continuous motion constantly repeated in the same path implies the necessity of a circular form. The
10 spheres must have a soul; for only animate beings can move freely. There must be some cause for the
11 motion, and as it does not consist in the fear of that which is injurious, or the desire of that which is
12 profitable, it must be found in the notion which the spheres form of a certain being, and in the
13 desire to approach that being. This formation of a notion demands, in the first place, that the
14 spheres possess intellect; it demands further that something exists which corresponds to that notion,
15 and which the spheres desire to approach. These are the four causes of the motion of the spheres. The
16 following are the four principal forces directly derived from the spheres: the nature of minerals, the
17 properties peculiar to plants, the animal faculties, and the intellect. An examination of these forces
18 shows that they have two functions, namely, to produce things and to perpetuate them; that is to
19 say, to preserve the species [166] perpetually, and the individuals in each species for a certain time.
20 These are also the functions ascribed to Nature, which is said to be wise, to govern the Universe, to
21 provide, as it were, by plan for the production of living beings, and to provide also for their
22 preservation and perpetuation. Nature creates formative faculties, which are the cause of the
23 production of living beings, and nutritive faculties as the source of their temporal existence and
24 preservation. It may be that by Nature the Divine Will is meant, which is the origin of these two
25 kinds of faculties through the medium of the spheres.

26 As to the number four, it is strange, and demands our attention. In *Midrash Tanhuma* the following
27 passage occurs: "How many steps were in Jacob's ladder?—Four." The question refers to the verse,
28 "And behold a ladder set upon the earth," etc. (Gen. xxviii. 12). In all the Midrashim it is stated that
29 there were four hosts of angels; this statement is frequently repeated. Some read in the above passage:
30 "How many steps were in the ladder?—Seven." But all readings and all Midrashim unanimously
31 express that the angels whom Jacob saw ascending the ladder, and descending, were only four; two of
32 whom were going up and two coming down. These four angels, the two that went up and the two
33 that came down, occupied one step of the ladder, standing in one line. Hence it has been inferred
34 that the breadth of the ladder in this vision was four-thirds of the world. For the breadth of an angel
35 in a prophetic vision is equal to one-third of the world; comp. "And his body was like *tarshish* (two-
36 sixths)" (Dan. x. 6); the four angels therefore occupied four-thirds of the world.—Zechariah, in
37 describing the allegorical vision of "the four chariots that came out from between two mountains,
38 which mountains were mountains of brass" (Zech. vi. 1), adds the explanation, "These are the four
39 spirits of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth" (*ibid.* ver. 5). By
40 these four spirits the causes are meant which produce all changes in the Universe. The term "brass"
41 (*nehoshet*), employed here, and the phrase "burnished brass" (*nehoshet kalal*), used by Ezekiel (i. 7),
42 are to some extent homonymous, and will be discussed further on.

1 The saying of our Sages, that the angel is as broad as the third part of the Universe, or, in the words
2 of *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. x.), that the angel is the third part of the world, is quite clear; we have
3 already explained it in our large work on the Holy Law. The whole creation consists of three parts,
4 (1) the pure intelligences, or angels; (2) the bodies of the spheres; and (3) the *materia prima*, or the
5 bodies which are below the spheres, and are subject to constant change.

6 In this manner may those understand the dark sayings of the prophets who desire to understand
7 them, who awake from the sleep of forgetfulness, deliver themselves from the sea of ignorance, and
8 raise themselves upward nearer the higher beings. But those who prefer to swim in the waters of their
9 ignorance, and to “go down very low,” need not exert the body or heart; they need only cease to
10 move, and they will go down by the law of nature. Note and consider well all we have said.

11 CHAPTER XI

12 WHEN a simple mathematician reads and studies these astronomical discussions, [167] he believes
13 that the form and the number of the spheres are facts established by proof. But this is not the case;
14 for the science of astronomy does not aim at demonstrating them, although it includes subjects that
15 can be proved; e.g., it has been proved that the path of the sun is inclined against the equator; this
16 cannot be doubted. But it has not yet been decided whether the sphere of the sun is excentric or
17 contains a revolving epicycle, and the astronomer does not take notice of this uncertainty, for his
18 object is simply to find an hypothesis that would lead to a uniform and circular motion of the stars
19 without acceleration, retardation, or change, and which is in its effects in accordance with
20 observation. He will, besides, endeavour to find such an hypothesis which would require the least
21 complicated motion and the least number of spheres; he will therefore prefer an hypothesis which
22 would explain all the phenomena of the stars by means of three spheres to an hypothesis which
23 would require four spheres. From this reason we adopt, in reference to the circuit of the sun, the
24 theory of excentricity, and reject the epicyclic revolution assumed by Ptolemy. When we therefore
25 perceive that all fixed stars move in the same way uniformly, without the least difference, we
26 conclude that they are all in one sphere. It is, however, not impossible that the stars should have each
27 its own sphere, with a separate centre, and yet move in the same way. If this theory be accepted, a
28 number of Intelligences must be assumed, equal to that of the stars, and therefore Scripture says in
29 reference to them, “Is there any number of his armies?” (Job xxv. 3); for the Intelligences, the
30 heavenly bodies, and the natural forces, are called the armies of God. Nevertheless the species of the
31 stars can be numbered, and therefore we would still be justified in counting the spheres of the fixed
32 stars collectively as one, just as the five spheres of the planets, together with the numerous spheres
33 they contain, are regarded by us as one. Our object in adopting this number is, as you have noticed,
34 to divide the influences which we can trace in the Universe according to their general character,
35 without desiring to fix the number of the Intelligences and the spheres. All we wish to point out is
36 this: in the first place, that the whole Creation is divided into three parts, viz. (1) the pure
37 Intelligences; (2) the bodies of the spheres endowed with permanent forms—(the forms of these
38 bodies do not pass from one substratum to another, nor do their substrata undergo any change
39 whatever); and (3) the transient earthly beings, all of which consist of the same substance.
40 Furthermore, we desire to show that the ruling power emanates from the Creator, and is received by
41 the Intelligences according to their order; from the Intelligences part of the good and the light

1 bestowed upon them is communicated to the spheres, and the latter, being in possession of the
2 abundance obtained of the Intelligences, transmit forces and properties unto the beings of this
3 transient world. We must, however, add that the part which benefits the part below it in the order
4 described does not exist for the sole purpose of producing that benefit. For if this were the case it
5 would lead to the paradox that the higher, better, and nobler beings existed for the sake of beings
6 lower in rank, whilst in reality the object should be of greater importance than the means applied for
7 attaining it. No intelligent person will admit that this is possible. The nature of the influence which
8 one part of the Creation exercises upon another must be explained as follows: A thing perfect in a
9 certain way is either perfect [168] only in itself, without being able to communicate that perfection to
10 another being, or it is so perfect that it is capable of imparting perfection to another being. A person
11 may possess wealth sufficient for his own wants without being able to spare anything for another, or
12 he may have wealth enough to benefit also other people, or even to enrich them to such an extent as
13 would enable them to give part of their property to others. In the same manner the creative act of
14 the Almighty in giving existence to pure Intelligences endows the first of them with the power of
15 giving existence to another, and so on, down to the Active Intellect, the lowest of the purely spiritual
16 beings. Besides producing other Intelligences, each Intelligence gives existence to one of the spheres,
17 from the highest down to the lowest, which is the sphere of the moon. After the latter follows this
18 transient world, i.e., the *materia prima*, and all that has been formed of it. In this manner the
19 elements receive certain properties from each sphere, and a succession of genesis and destruction is
20 produced.

21 We have already mentioned that these theories are not opposed to anything taught by our Prophets
22 or by our Sages. Our nation is wise and perfect, as has been declared by the Most High, through
23 Moses, who made us perfect: "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. iv.
24 6). But when wicked barbarians have deprived us of our possessions, put an end to our science and
25 literature, and killed our wise men, we have become ignorant; this has been foretold by the prophets,
26 when they pronounced the punishment for our sins: "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
27 and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isa. xxix. 14). We are mixed up with
28 other nations; we have learnt their opinions, and followed their ways and acts. The Psalmist,
29 deploring this imitation of the actions of other nations, says, "They were mingled among the
30 nations, and learned their works" (Ps. cvi. 35). Isaiah likewise complains that the Israelites adopted
31 the opinions of their neighbours, and says, "And they please themselves in the children of
32 strangers" (Isa. ii. 6); or, according to the Aramaic version of Jonathan, son of Uzziel, "And they
33 walk in the ways of the nations." Having been brought up among persons untrained in philosophy,
34 we are inclined to consider these philosophical opinions as foreign to our religion, just as uneducated
35 persons find them foreign to their own notions. But, in fact, it is not so.

36 Since we have repeatedly spoken of the influence emanating from God and the Intelligences, we will
37 now proceed to explain what is the true meaning of this influence, and after that I will discuss the
38 theory of the Creation.

39 CHAPTER XII

1 IT is clear that whenever a thing is produced, an efficient cause must exist for the production of the
2 thing that has not existed previously. This immediate efficient cause is either corporeal or
3 incorporeal; if corporeal, it is not the efficient cause on account of its corporeality, but on account of
4 its being an individual corporeal object, and therefore by means of its form. I will speak of this
5 subject later on. The immediate efficient cause of a thing may again be the effect of some cause, and
6 so on, but not *ad infinitum*. The series of causes for a certain product must necessarily conclude with
7 a First Cause, [169] which is the true cause of that product, and whose existence is not due to another
8 cause. The question remains, Why has this thing been produced now and not long before, since the
9 cause has always been in existence? The answer is, that a certain relation between cause and product
10 has been absent, if the cause be corporeal; or, that the substance has not been sufficiently prepared, if
11 the cause be incorporeal. All this is in accordance with the teachings of natural science. We ignore
12 for the present the question whether to assume the Eternity of the Universe, or the *Creatio ex*
13 *nihilo*. We do not intend to discuss the question here.

14 In Physics it has been shown that a body in acting upon another body must either directly be in
15 contact with it, or indirectly through the medium of other bodies. E.g., a body that has been heated
16 has been in contact with fire, or the air that surrounds the body has been heated by the fire, and has
17 communicated the heat to the body; the immediate cause of the heat in this body is the corporeal
18 substance of the heated air. The magnet attracts iron from a distance through a certain force
19 communicated to the air round the iron. The magnet does therefore not act at all distances, just as
20 fire does not act at every distance, but only as long as the air between the fire and the object is
21 affected by the fire. When the air is no longer affected by the fire which is under a piece of wax, the
22 latter does not melt. The same is the case with magnetism. When an object that has previously not
23 been warm has now become warm, the cause of its heat must now have been created; either some fire
24 has been produced, or the distance of the fire from the object has been changed, and the altered
25 relation between the fire and the object is the cause now created. In a similar manner we find the
26 causes of all changes in the Universe to be changes in the combination of the elements that act upon
27 each other when one body approaches another or separates from it. There are, however, changes
28 which are not connected with the combination of the elements, but concern only the forms of the
29 things; they require likewise an efficient cause; there must exist a force that produces the various
30 forms. This cause is incorporeal, for that which produces form must itself be abstract form, as has
31 been shown in its proper place. I have also indicated the proof of this theorem in previous chapters.
32 The following may, in addition, serve to illustrate it: All combinations of the elements are subject to
33 increase and decrease, and this change takes place gradually. It is different with forms; they do not
34 change gradually, and are therefore without motion; they appear and disappear instantaneously, and
35 are consequently not the result of the combination of corporeal elements. This combination merely
36 prepares matter for receiving a certain form. The efficient cause which produces the form is
37 indivisible, because it is of the same kind as the thing produced. Hence it may be concluded that the
38 agent that has produced a certain form, or given it to a certain substance, must itself be an abstract
39 form. The action of this incorporeal agent cannot depend on a certain relation to the corporeal
40 product; being incorporeal, it cannot approach a body, or recede from it; nor can a body approach
41 the incorporeal agent, or recede from it, because there is no relation of distance between corporeal
42 and incorporeal beings. The reason why the action has not taken place before must be sought in the
43 circumstance that the substance has not been prepared for the action of the abstract form.

1 [170]

2 It is now clear that the action of bodies upon each other, according to their forms, prepares the
3 substance for receiving the action of an incorporeal being, or Form. The existence of actions of
4 purely incorporeal beings, in every case of change that does not originate in the mere combination of
5 elements, is now firmly established. These actions do not depend on impact, or on a certain distance.
6 They are termed “influence” (or “emanation”), on account of their similarity to a water-spring. The
7 latter sends forth water in all directions, has no peculiar side for receiving or spending its contents; it
8 springs forth on all sides, and continually waters both neighbouring and distant places. In a similar
9 manner incorporeal beings, in receiving power and imparting it to others, are not limited to a
10 particular side, distance, or time. They act continually; and whenever an object is sufficiently
11 prepared, it receives the effect of that continuous action, called “influence” (or “emanation”). God
12 being incorporeal, and everything being the work of Him as the efficient cause, we say that the
13 Universe has been created by the Divine influence, and that all changes in the Universe emanate
14 from Him. In the same sense we say that He caused wisdom to emanate from Him and to come
15 upon the prophets. In all such cases we merely wish to express that an incorporeal Being, whose
16 action we call “influence,” has produced a certain effect. The term “influence” has been considered
17 applicable to the Creator on account of the similarity between His actions and those of a spring.
18 There is no better way of describing the action of an incorporeal being than by this analogy; and no
19 term can be found that would accurately describe it. For it is as difficult to form an idea of that
20 action as to form an idea of the incorporeal being itself. As we imagine only bodies or forces residing
21 in bodies, so we only imagine actions possible when the agent is near, at a certain distance, and on a
22 particular side. There are therefore persons who, on learning that God is incorporeal, or that He
23 does not approach the object of His action, believe that He gives commands to angels, and that the
24 latter carry them out by approach or direct contact, as is the case when we produce something. These
25 persons thus imagine also the angels as bodies. Some of them, further, believe that God commands
26 an action in words consisting, like ours, of letters and sound, and that thereby the action is done. All
27 this is the work of the imagination, which is, in fact, identical with “evil inclination.” For all our
28 defects in speech or in character are either the direct or the indirect work of imagination. This is not
29 the subject of the present chapter, in which we only intended to explain the term “influence” in so
30 far as it is applied to incorporeal beings, namely, to God and to the Intelligences or angels. But the
31 term is also applied to the forces of the spheres in their effects upon the earth; and we speak of the
32 “influence” of the spheres, although the spheres are corporeal, and the stars, being corporeal, only act
33 at certain distances, i.e., at a smaller or a greater distance from the centre, or at a definite distance
34 from each other, a circumstance which led to Astrology.

35 As to our assertion that Scripture applies the notion of “influence” to God, compare “They have
36 forsaken me, the fountain of living waters” (Jer. ii. 13), i.e., the Divine influence that gives life or
37 existence, for the two are undoubtedly identical. Further, “For with Thee is the fountain of life” (Ps.
38 xxxvi. 10), i.e., the Divine influence that gives existence. The [171] concluding words of this verse,
39 “in Thy light we see light,” express exactly what we said, namely, that by the influence of the
40 intellect which emanates from God we become wise, by it we are guided and enabled to comprehend
41 the Active Intellect. Note this.

1 CHAPTER XIII

2 AMONG those who believe in the existence of God, there are found three different theories as regards
3 the question whether the Universe is eternal or not.

4 *First Theory.*—Those who follow the Law of Moses, our Teacher, hold that the whole Universe, i.e.,
5 everything except God, has been brought by Him into existence out of non-existence. In the
6 beginning God alone existed, and nothing else; neither angels, nor spheres, nor the things that are
7 contained within the spheres existed. He then produced from nothing all existing things such as they
8 are, by His will and desire. Even time itself is among the things created; for time depends on motion,
9 i.e., on an accident in things which move, and the things upon whose motion time depends are
10 themselves created beings, which have passed from non-existence into existence. We say that
11 God *existed* before the creation of the Universe, although the verb *existed* appears to imply the notion
12 of time; we also believe that He existed an infinite space of time before the Universe was created; but
13 in these cases we do not mean time in its true sense. We only use the term to signify something
14 analogous or similar to time. For time is undoubtedly an accident, and, according to our opinion,
15 one of the created accidents, like blackness and whiteness; it is not a quality, but an accident
16 connected with motion. This must be clear to all who understand what Aristotle has said on time
17 and its real existence.

18 The following remark does not form an essential part of our present research; it will nevertheless be
19 found useful in the course of this discussion. Many scholars do not know what time really is, and
20 men like Galen were so perplexed about it that they asked whether time has a real existence or not;
21 the reason for this uncertainty is to be found in the circumstance that time is an accident of an
22 accident. Accidents which are directly connected with material bodies, e.g., colour and taste, are
23 easily understood, and correct notions are formed of them. There are, however, accidents which are
24 connected with other accidents, e.g., the splendour of colour, or the inclination and the curvature of
25 a line; of these it is very difficult to form a correct notion, especially when the accident which forms
26 the substratum for the other accident is not constant but variable. Both difficulties are present in the
27 notion of time: it is an accident of motion, which is itself an accident of a moving object; besides, it
28 is not a fixed property; on the contrary, its true and essential condition is, not to remain in the same
29 state for two consecutive moments. This is the source of ignorance about the nature of time.

30 We consider time a thing created; it comes into existence in the same manner as other accidents, and
31 the substances which form the substratum for the accidents. For this reason, viz., because time
32 belongs to the things created, it cannot be said that God produced the Universe *in the*
33 *beginning*. [172] Consider this well; for he who does not understand it is unable to refute forcible
34 objections raised against the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo*. If you admit the existence of time before the
35 Creation, you will be compelled to accept the theory of the Eternity of the Universe. For time is an
36 accident and requires a substratum. You will therefore have to assume that something [beside God]
37 existed before this Universe was created, an assumption which it is our duty to oppose.

38 This is the first theory, and it is undoubtedly a fundamental principle of the Law of our teacher
39 Moses; it is next in importance to the principle of God's unity. Do not follow any other theory.

1 Abraham, our father, was the first that taught it, after he had established it by philosophical research.
2 He proclaimed, therefore, “the name of the Lord the God of the Universe” (Gen. xxi. 33); and he
3 had previously expressed this theory in the words, “The Possessor of heaven and earth” (*ibid.* xiv.
4 22).

5 *Second Theory.*—The theory of all philosophers whose opinions and works are known to us is this: It
6 is impossible to assume that God produced anything from nothing, or that He reduces anything to
7 nothing; that is to say, it is impossible that an object consisting of matter and form should be
8 produced when that matter is absolutely absent, or that it should be destroyed in such a manner that
9 that matter be absolutely no longer in existence. To say of God that He can produce a thing from
10 nothing or reduce a thing to nothing is, according to the opinion of these philosophers, the same as
11 if we were to say that He could cause one substance to have at the same time two opposite
12 properties, or produce another being like Himself, or change Himself into a body, or produce a
13 square the diagonal of which be equal to its side, or similar impossibilities. The philosophers thus
14 believe that it is no defect in the Supreme Being that He does not produce impossibilities, for the
15 nature of that which is impossible is constant—it does not depend on the action of an agent, and for
16 this reason it cannot be changed, Similarly there is, according to them, no defect in the greatness of
17 God, when He is unable to produce a thing from nothing, because they consider this as one of the
18 impossibilities. They therefore assume that a certain substance has co-existed with God from eternity
19 in such a manner that neither God existed without that substance nor the latter without God. But
20 they do not hold that the existence of that substance equals in rank that of God; for God is the cause
21 of that existence, and the substance is in the same relation to God as the clay is to the potter, or the
22 iron to the smith; God can do with it what He pleases; at one time He forms of it heaven and earth,
23 at another time He forms some other thing. Those who hold this view also assume that the heavens
24 are transient, that they came into existence, though not from nothing, and may cease to exist,
25 although they cannot be reduced to nothing. They are transient in the same manner as the
26 individuals among living beings which are produced from some existing substance, and are again
27 reduced to some substance that remains in existence. The process of genesis and destruction is, in the
28 case of the heavens, the same as in that of earthly beings.

29 The followers of this theory are divided into different schools, whose opinions and principles it is
30 useless to discuss here; but what I have mentioned is common to all of them. Plato holds the same
31 opinion. Aristotle says in [173] his *Physics*, that according to Plato the heavens are transient. This
32 view is also stated in Plato’s *Timæus*. His opinion, however, does not agree with our belief; only
33 superficial and careless persons wrongly assume that Plato has the same belief as we have. For whilst
34 we hold that the heavens have been created from absolutely nothing, Plato believes that they have
35 been formed out of something.—This is the second theory.

36 *Third Theory.*—viz., that of Aristotle, his followers, and commentators. Aristotle maintains, like the
37 adherents of the second theory, that a corporeal object cannot be produced without a corporeal
38 substance. He goes, however, farther, and contends that the heavens are indestructible. For he holds
39 that the Universe in its totality has never been different, nor will it ever change: the heavens, which
40 form the permanent element in the Universe, and are not subject to genesis and destruction, have
41 always been so; time and motion are eternal, permanent, and have neither beginning nor end; the
42 sublunary world, which includes the transient elements, has always been the same, because

1 the *materia prima* is itself eternal, and merely combines successively with different forms; when one
2 form is removed, another is assumed. This whole arrangement, therefore, both above and here
3 below, is never disturbed or interrupted, and nothing is produced contrary to the laws or the
4 ordinary course of Nature. He further says—though not in the same terms—that he considers it
5 impossible for God to change His will or conceive a new desire; that God produced this Universe in
6 its totality by His will, but not from nothing. Aristotle finds it as impossible to assume that God
7 changes His will or conceives a new desire, as to believe that He is non-existing, or that His essence
8 is changeable. Hence it follows that this Universe has always been the same in the past, and will be
9 the same eternally.

10 This is a full account of the opinions of those who consider that the existence of God, the First
11 Cause of the Universe, has been established by proof. But it would be quite useless to mention the
12 opinions of those who do not recognize the existence of God, but believe that the existing state of
13 things is the result of accidental combination and separation of the elements, and that the Universe
14 has no Ruler or Governor. Such is the theory of Epicurus and his school, and similar philosophers, as
15 stated by Alexander [Aphrodisiensis]; it would be superfluous to repeat their views, since the
16 existence of God has been demonstrated whilst their theory is built upon a basis proved to be
17 untenable. It is likewise useless to prove the correctness of the followers of the second theory in
18 asserting that the heavens are transient, because they at the same time believe in the Eternity of the
19 Universe, and so long as this theory is adopted, it makes no difference to us whether it is believed
20 that the heavens are transient, and that only their substance is eternal, or the heavens are held to be
21 indestructible, in accordance with the view of Aristotle. All who follow the Law of Moses, our
22 Teacher, and Abraham, our Father, and all who adopt similar theories, assume that nothing is
23 eternal except God, and that the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo* includes nothing that is impossible,
24 whilst some thinkers even regard it as an established truth.

25 After having described the different theories, I will now proceed to show how Aristotle proved his
26 theory, and what induced him to adopt it.

27 [174]

28 CHAPTER XIV

29 IT is not necessary to repeat in every chapter that I write this treatise with the full knowledge of what
30 you have studied; that I therefore need not quote the exact words of the philosophers; it will suffice
31 to give an abstract of their views. I will, however, point out the methods which they employ, in the
32 same manner as I have done when I discussed the theories of the Mutakallemim. No notice will be
33 taken of the opinion of any philosopher but that of Aristotle; his opinions alone deserve to be
34 criticized, and if our objections or doubts with regard to any of these be well founded, this must be
35 the case in a far higher degree in respect to all other opponents of our fundamental principles.

36 I now proceed to describe the methods of the philosophers.

1 *First Method.*—According to Aristotle, motion, that is to say, motion *par excellence*, is eternal. For if
2 the motion had a beginning, there must already have been some motion when it came into existence,
3 for transition from potentiality into actuality, and from non-existence into existence, always implies
4 motion; then that previous motion, the cause of the motion which follows, must be eternal, or else
5 the series would have to be carried back *ad infinitum*. On the same principle he maintains that time
6 is eternal, for time is related to and connected with motion: there is no motion except in time, and
7 time can only be perceived by motion, as has been demonstrated by proof. By this argument
8 Aristotle proves the eternity of the Universe.

9 *Second Method.*—The First Substance common to the four elements is eternal. For if it had a
10 beginning it would have come into existence from another substance; it would further be endowed
11 with a form, as coming into existence is nothing but receiving Form. But we mean by “First
12 Substance” a formless substance; it can therefore not have come into existence from another
13 substance, and must be without beginning and without end; hence it is concluded that the Universe
14 is eternal.

15 *Third Method.*—The substance of the spheres contains no opposite elements; for circular motion
16 includes no such opposite directions as are found in rectilinear motion. Whatever is destroyed, owes
17 its destruction to the opposite elements it contains. The spheres contain no opposite elements; they
18 are therefore indestructible, and because they are indestructible they are also without beginning.
19 Aristotle thus assumes the axiom that everything that has had a beginning is destructible, and that
20 everything destructible has had a beginning; that things without beginning are indestructible, and
21 indestructible things are without beginning. Hence follows the Eternity of the Universe.

22 *Fourth Method.*—The actual production of a thing is preceded in time by its possibility. The actual
23 change of a thing is likewise preceded in time by its possibility. From this proposition Aristotle
24 derives the eternity of the circular motion of the spheres. The Aristotelians in more recent time
25 employ this proposition in demonstrating the Eternity of the Universe. They argue thus: When the
26 Universe did not yet exist, its existence was either possible or necessary, or impossible. If it was
27 necessary, the Universe could never have been non-existing; if impossible, the Universe could never
28 have been in existence; if possible, the question arises, What was the substratum [175] of that
29 possibility? for there must be in existence something of which that possibility can be predicated. This
30 is a forcible argument in favour of the Eternity of the Universe. Some of the later schools of the
31 Mutakallemim imagined that they could confute this argument by objecting that the possibility rests
32 with the agent, and not with the production. But this objection is of no force whatever; for there are
33 two distinct possibilities, viz., the thing produced has had the possibility of being produced before
34 this actually took place; and the agent has had the possibility of producing it before he actually did
35 so. There are, therefore, undoubtedly two possibilities—that of the substance to receive a certain
36 form, and that of the agent to perform a certain act.

37 These are the principal methods, based on the properties of the Universe, by which Aristotle proves
38 the Eternity of the Universe. There are, however, other methods of proving the Eternity of the
39 Universe. They are based on the notions formed of God, and philosophers after Aristotle derived
40 them from his philosophy. Some of them employed the following argument:—

1 *Fifth Method.*—If God produced the Universe from nothing, He must have been a potential agent
2 before He was an actual one, and must have passed from a state of potentiality into that of
3 actuality—a process that is merely possible, and requires an agent for effecting it. This argument is
4 likewise a source of great doubts, and every intelligent person must examine it in order to refute it
5 and to expose its character.

6 *Sixth Method.*—An agent is active at one time and inactive at another, according as favourable or
7 unfavourable circumstances arise. The unfavourable circumstances cause the abandonment of an
8 intended action. The favourable ones, on the other hand, even produce a desire for an action for
9 which there has not been a desire previously. As, however, God is not subject to accidents which
10 could bring about a change in His will, and is not affected by obstacles and hindrances that might
11 appear or disappear, it is impossible, they argue, to imagine that God is active at one time and
12 inactive at another. He is, on the contrary, always active in the same manner as He is always in actual
13 existence.

14 *Seventh Method.*—The actions of God are perfect; they are in no way defective, nor do they contain
15 anything useless or superfluous. In similar terms Aristotle frequently praises Him, when he says that
16 Nature is wise and does nothing in vain, but makes everything as perfect as possible. The
17 philosophers therefore contend that this existing Universe is so perfect that it cannot be improved,
18 and must be permanent; for it is the result of God's wisdom, which is not only always present in His
19 essence, but is identical with it.

20 All arguments in favour of the Eternity of the Universe are based on the above methods, and can be
21 traced to one or other of them. The following objection is also raised against *Creatio ex nihilo*: How
22 could God ever have been inactive without producing or creating anything in the infinite past? How
23 could He have passed the long infinite period which preceded the Creation without producing
24 anything, so as to commence, as it were, only yesterday, the Creation of the Universe? For even if
25 you said, e.g., that God created previously as many successive worlds as the outermost sphere could
26 contain grains of mustard, and that each of these worlds existed as [176] many years: considering the
27 infinite existence of God, it would be the same as if He had only yesterday commenced the Creation.
28 For when we once admit the beginning of the existence of things after their non-existence, it makes
29 no difference whether thousands of centuries have passed since the beginning, or only a short time.
30 Those who defend the Eternity of the Universe find both assumptions equally improbable.

31 *Eighth Method.*—The following method is based on the circumstance that the theory implies a belief
32 which is so common to all peoples and ages, and so universal, that it appears to express a real fact
33 and not merely an hypothesis. Aristotle says that all people have evidently believed in the
34 permanency and stability of the heavens; and thinking that these were eternal, they declared them to
35 be the habitation of God and of the spiritual beings or angels. By thus attributing the heavens to
36 God, they expressed their belief that the heavens are indestructible. Several other arguments of the
37 same kind are employed by Aristotle in treating of this subject in order to support the results of his
38 philosophical speculation by common sense.

39 CHAPTER XV

1 IN this chapter I intend to show that Aristotle was well aware that he had not proved the Eternity of
2 the Universe. He was not mistaken in this respect. He knew that he could not prove his theory, and
3 that his arguments and proofs were only apparent and plausible. They are the least objectionable,
4 according to Alexander; but, according to the same authority, Aristotle could not have considered
5 them conclusive, after having himself taught us the rules of logic, and the means by which arguments
6 can be refuted or confirmed.

7 The reason why I have introduced this subject is this: Later philosophers, disciples of Aristotle,
8 assume that he has proved the Eternity of the Universe, and most of those who believe that they are
9 philosophers blindly follow him in this point, and accept all his arguments as conclusive and
10 absolute proofs. They consider it wrong to differ from Aristotle, or to think that he was ignorant or
11 mistaken in anything. For this reason, taking their standpoint, I show that Aristotle himself did not
12 claim to have proved the Eternity of the Universe. He says in his book *Physics* (viii., chap. i.) as
13 follows: "All the Physicists before us believed that motion is eternal, except Plato, who holds that
14 motion is transient; according to his opinion the heavens are likewise transient." Now if Aristotle
15 had conclusive proofs for his theory, he would not have considered it necessary to support it by
16 citing the opinions of preceding Physicists, nor would he have found it necessary to point out the
17 folly and absurdity of his opponents. For a truth, once established by proof, does neither gain force
18 nor certainty by the consent of all scholars, nor lose by the general dissent. We further find that
19 Aristotle, in the book *The Heavens and the World*, introduces his theory of the Eternity of the
20 Universe in the following manner: "Let us inquire into the nature of the heavens, and see whether
21 they are the product of something or not, destructible or not." After this statement of the problem,
22 he proceeds to cite the views of those who hold that the heavens have had a beginning, and
23 continues thus: "By doing this, our theory will be most plausible and acceptable in the [177] opinion
24 of profound thinkers; and it will be the more so, when, as we propose, the arguments of our
25 opponents are first heard. For if we were to state our opinion and our arguments without
26 mentioning those of our opponents, our words would be received less favourably. He who desires to
27 be just must not show himself hostile to his opponent; he must have sympathy with him, and readily
28 acknowledge any truth contained in his words; he must admit the correctness of such of his
29 opponent's arguments as he would admit if they were in his own favour." This is the contents of the
30 words of Aristotle. Now, I ask you, men of intelligence, can we have any complaint against him after
31 this frank statement? Or can any one now imagine that a real proof has been given for the Eternity
32 of the Universe? Or can Aristotle, or any one else, believe that a theorem, though fully proved,
33 would not be acceptable unless the arguments of the opponents were fully refuted? We must also
34 take into consideration that Aristotle describes this theory as his *opinion*, and his proofs
35 as *arguments*. Is Aristotle ignorant of the difference between argument and proof? between opinions,
36 which may be received more or less favourably, and truths capable of demonstration? or would
37 rhetorical appeal to the impartiality of opponents have been required for the support of his theory if
38 a real proof had been given? Certainly not. Aristotle only desires to show that his theory is better
39 than those of his opponents, who hold that philosophical speculation leads to the conviction that the
40 heavens are transient, but have never been entirely without existence; or that the heavens have had a
41 beginning, but are indestructible; or to defend any of the other views mentioned by him. In this he is
42 undoubtedly right; for his opinion is nearer the truth than theirs, so far as a proof can be taken from
43 the nature of existing things; we differ from him, as will be explained. Passion, that exercises great
44 influence in most of the different sects, must have influenced even the philosophers who wished to

1 affirm that Aristotle demonstrated his theory by proof. Perhaps they really believe it, and assume that
2 Aristotle himself was not aware of it, as it was only discovered after his death! My conviction is, that
3 what Aristotle says on the Eternity of the Universe, the cause of the variety in the motion of the
4 spheres and the order of the Intelligences, cannot be proved, and that Aristotle never intended to
5 prove these things. I agree with him that the ways of proving this theory have their gates closed
6 before us, there being no foundation on which to build up the proof. His words on this subject are
7 well known. He says, “There are things concerning which we are unable to reason, or which we find
8 too high for us; to say why these things have a certain property is as difficult as to decide whether the
9 Universe is eternal or not.” So far Aristotle. The interpretation which Abu-nasr offers of this parallel
10 is well known. He denies that Aristotle had any doubt about the Eternity of the Universe, and is very
11 severe upon Galen, who maintains that this theory is still doubtful, and that no proof has been
12 offered. According to Abu-nasr, it is clear and demonstrable by proof that the heavens are eternal,
13 but all that is enclosed within the heavens is transient. We hold, that by none of the methods
14 mentioned in this chapter can a theory be established, refuted, or shaken.

15 We have mentioned these things only because we know that the majority of those who consider
16 themselves wise, although they know nothing of science, accept the theory of the Eternity of the
17 Universe on the authority [178] of famous scholars. They reject the words of the prophets, because
18 the latter do not employ any scientific method by which only a few persons would be instructed who
19 are intellectually well prepared, but simply communicate the truth as received by Divine inspiration.

20 In the chapters which follow we will expound the theory of the Creation in accordance with the
21 teaching of Scripture.

22 CHAPTER XVI

23 IN this chapter I will first expound my view on this question, and then support it by argument—not
24 by such arguments as those of the Mutakallemim, who believe that they have proved the *Creatio ex*
25 *nihilo*. I will not deceive myself, and consider dialectical methods as proofs; and the fact that a
26 certain proposition has been proved by a dialectical argument will never induce me to accept that
27 proposition, but, on the contrary, will weaken my faith in it, and cause me to doubt it. For when we
28 understand the fallacy of a proof, our faith in the proposition itself is shaken. It is therefore better
29 that a proposition which cannot be demonstrated be received as an axiom, or that one of the two
30 opposite solutions of the problem be accepted on authority. The methods by which the
31 Mutakallemim proved the *Creatio ex nihilo* have already been described by me, and I have exposed
32 their weak points. As to the proofs of Aristotle and his followers for the Eternity of the Universe,
33 they are, according to my opinion, not conclusive; they are open to strong objections, as will be
34 explained. I intend to show that the theory of the Creation, as taught in Scripture, contains nothing
35 that is impossible; and that all those philosophical arguments which seem to disprove our view
36 contain weak points which make them inconclusive, and render the attacks on our view untenable.
37 Since I am convinced of the correctness of my method, and consider either of the two theories—viz.,
38 the Eternity of the Universe, and the Creation—as admissible, I accept the latter on the authority of
39 Prophecy, which can teach things beyond the reach of philosophical speculation. For the belief in
40 prophecy is, as will be shown in the course of this treatise, consistent even with the belief in the

1 Eternity of the Universe. When I have established the admissibility of our theory, I will, by
2 philosophical reasoning, show that our theory of the Creation is more acceptable than that of the
3 Eternity of the Universe; and although our theory includes points open to criticism, I will show that
4 there are much stronger reasons for the rejection of the theory of our opponents.

5 I will now proceed to expound the method by which the proofs given for the Eternity of the
6 Universe can be refuted.

7 CHAPTER XVII

8 EVERYTHING produced comes into existence from non-existence; even when the substance of a thing
9 has been in existence, and has only changed its form, the thing itself, which has gone through the
10 process of genesis and development, and has arrived at its final state, has now different properties
11 from those which it possessed at the commencement of the transition from potentiality to reality, or
12 before that time. Take, e.g., the human ovum as [179] contained in the female's blood when still
13 included in its vessels; its nature is different from what it was in the moment of conception, when it
14 is met by the semen of the male and begins to develop; the properties of the semen in that moment
15 are different from the properties of the living being after its birth when fully developed. It is
16 therefore quite impossible to infer from the nature which a thing possesses after having passed
17 through all stages of its development, what the condition of the thing has been in the moment when
18 this process commenced; nor does the condition of a thing in this moment show what its previous
19 condition has been. If you make this mistake, and attempt to prove the nature of a thing in potential
20 existence by its properties when actually existing, you will fall into great confusion; you will reject
21 evident truths and admit false opinions. Let us assume, in our above instance, that a man born
22 without defect had after his birth been nursed by his mother only a few months; the mother then
23 died, and the father alone brought him up in a lonely island, till he grew up, became wise, and
24 acquired knowledge. Suppose this man has never seen a woman or any female being; he asks some
25 person how man has come into existence, and how he has developed, and receives the following
26 answer: "Man begins his existence in the womb of an individual of his own class, namely, in the
27 womb of a female, which has a certain form. While in the womb he is very small; yet he has life,
28 moves, receives nourishment, and gradually grows, till he arrives at a certain stage of development.
29 He then leaves the womb and continues to grow till he is in the condition in which you see him."
30 The orphan will naturally ask: "Did this person, when he lived, moved, and grew in the womb, eat
31 and drink, and breathe with his mouth and his nostrils? Did he excrete any substance?" The answer
32 will be, "No." Undoubtedly he will then attempt to refute the statements of that person, and to
33 prove their impossibility, by referring to the properties of a fully developed person, in the following
34 manner: "When any one of us is deprived of breath for a short time he dies, and cannot move any
35 longer: how then can we imagine that any one of us has been inclosed in a bag in the midst of a body
36 for several months and remained alive, able to move? If any one of us would swallow a living bird,
37 the bird would die immediately when it reached the stomach, much more so when it came to the
38 lower part of the belly; if we should not take food or drink with our mouth, in a few days we should
39 undoubtedly be dead: how then can man remain alive for months without taking food? If any person
40 would take food and would not be able to excrete it, great pains and death would follow in a short
41 time, and yet I am to believe that man has lived for months without that function! Suppose by

1 accident a hole were formed in the belly of a person, it would prove fatal, and yet we are to believe
2 that the navel of the foetus has been open! Why should the foetus not open the eyes, spread forth the
3 hands and stretch out the legs, if, as you think, the limbs are all whole and perfect.” This mode of
4 reasoning would lead to the conclusion that man cannot come into existence and develop in the
5 manner described.

6 If philosophers would consider this example well and reflect on it, they would find that it represents
7 exactly the dispute between Aristotle and ourselves. We, the followers of Moses, our Teacher, and of
8 Abraham, our Father, believe that the Universe has been produced and has developed in
9 a [180] certain manner, and that it has been created in a certain order. The Aristotelians oppose us,
10 and found their objections on the properties which the things in the Universe possess when in actual
11 existence and fully developed. We admit the existence of these properties, but hold that they are by
12 no means the same as those which the things possessed in the moment of their production; and we
13 hold that these properties themselves have come into existence from absolute non-existence. Their
14 arguments are therefore no objection whatever to our theory; they have demonstrative force only
15 against those who hold that the nature of things as at present in existence proves the Creation. But
16 this is not my opinion.

17 I will now return to our theme, viz., to the description of the principal proofs of Aristotle, and show
18 that they prove nothing whatever against us, since we hold that God brought the entire Universe
19 into existence from absolute non-existence, and that He caused it to develop into the present state.
20 Aristotle says that the *materia prima* is eternal, and by referring to the properties of transient beings
21 he attempts to prove this statement, and to show that the *materia prima* could not possibly have
22 been produced. He is right; we do not maintain that the *materia prima* has been produced in the
23 same manner as man is produced from the ovum, and that it can be destroyed in the same manner as
24 man is reduced to dust. But we believe that God created it from nothing, and that since its creation
25 it has its own properties, viz., that all things are produced of it and again reduced to it, when they
26 cease to exist; that it does not exist without Form; and that it is the source of all genesis and
27 destruction. Its genesis is not like that of the things produced from it, nor its destruction like theirs;
28 for it has been created from nothing, and if it should please the Creator, He might reduce it to
29 absolutely nothing. The same applies to motion. Aristotle founds some of his proofs on the fact that
30 motion is not subject to genesis or destruction. This is correct; if we consider motion as it exists at
31 present, we cannot imagine that in its totality it should be subject, like individual motions, to genesis
32 and destruction. In like manner Aristotle is correct in saying that circular motion is without
33 beginning, in so far as seeing the rotating spherical body in actual existence, we cannot conceive the
34 idea that that rotation has ever been absent. The same argument we employ as regards the law that a
35 state of potentiality precedes all actual genesis. This law applies to the Universe as it exists at present,
36 when everything produced originates in another thing; but nothing perceived with our senses or
37 comprehended in our mind can prove that a thing created from nothing must have been previously
38 in a state of potentiality. Again, as regards the theory that the heavens contain no opposites [and are
39 therefore indestructible], we admit its correctness; but we do not maintain that the production of the
40 heavens has taken place in the same way as that of a horse or ass, and we do not say that they are like
41 plants and animals, which are destructible on account of the opposite elements they contain. In
42 short, the properties of things when fully developed contain no clue as to what have been the
43 properties of the things before their perfection. We therefore do not reject as impossible the opinion

1 of those who say that the heavens were produced before the earth, or the reverse, or that the heavens
2 have existed without stars, or that certain species of animals have been in existence, and others not.
3 For the state of the whole Universe [181] when it came into existence may be compared with that of
4 animals when their existence begins; the heart evidently precedes the testicles, the veins are in
5 existence before the bones; although, when the animal is fully developed, none of the parts is missing
6 which is essential to its existence. This remark is not superfluous, if the Scriptural account of the
7 Creation be taken literally; in reality, it cannot be taken literally, as will be shown when we shall treat
8 of this subject.

9 The principle laid down in the foregoing must be well understood; it is a high rampart erected round
10 the Law, and able to resist all missiles directed against it. Aristotle, or rather his followers, may
11 perhaps ask us how we know that the Universe has been created; and that other forces than those it
12 has at present were acting in its Creation, since we hold that the properties of the Universe, as it
13 exists at present, prove nothing as regards its creation? We reply, there is no necessity for this
14 according to our plan; for we do not desire to prove the Creation, but only its possibility; and this
15 possibility is not refuted by arguments based on the nature of the present Universe, which we do not
16 dispute. When we have established the admissibility of our theory, we shall then show its superiority.
17 In attempting to prove the inadmissibility of *Creatio ex nihilo*, the Aristotelians can therefore not
18 derive any support from the nature of the Universe; they must resort to the notion our mind has
19 formed of God. Their proofs include the three methods which I have mentioned above, and which
20 are based on the notion conceived of God. In the next chapter I will expose the weak points of these
21 arguments, and show that they really prove nothing.

22 CHAPTER XVIII

23 THE first method employed by the philosophers is this: they assume that a transition from
24 potentiality to actuality would take place in the Deity itself, if He produced a thing only at a certain
25 fixed time. The refutation of this argument is very easy. The argument applies only to bodies
26 composed of substance—the element that possesses the possibility [of change]—and form; for when
27 such a body does not act for some time, and then acts by virtue of its form, it must undoubtedly
28 have possessed something *in potentia* that hath now become actual, and the transition can only have
29 been effected by some external agent. As far as corporeal bodies are concerned, this has been fully
30 proved. But that which is incorporeal and without substance does not include anything merely
31 possible; everything it contains is always in existence. The above argument does not apply to it, and
32 it is not impossible that such a being acts at one time and does not act at another. This does not
33 imply a change in the incorporeal being itself nor a transition from potentiality to actuality. The
34 Active Intellect may be taken as an illustration. According to Aristotle and his school, the Active
35 Intellect, an incorporeal being, acts at one time and does not act at another, as has been shown by
36 Abu-nasr in his treatise on the Intellect. He says there quite correctly as follows: “It is an evident fact
37 that the Active Intellect does not act continually, but only at times.” And yet he does not say that the
38 Active Intellect is changeable, or passes from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, although it
39 produces at one time something which it has not produced [182] before. For there is no relation or
40 comparison whatever between corporeal and incorporeal beings, neither in the moment of action nor
41 in that of inaction. It is only by homonymity that the term “action” is used in reference to the forms

1 residing in bodies, and also in reference to absolutely spiritual beings. The circumstance that a purely
2 spiritual being does not effect at one time that which it effects at another, does not necessitate a
3 transition from potentiality to actuality; such a transition is necessary in the case of forces connected
4 with bodies. It might, perhaps, be objected that our argument is, to some extent, a fallacy; since it is
5 not due to anything contained in the Active Intellect itself, but to the absence of substances
6 sufficiently prepared for its action, that at times it does not act; it does act always when substances
7 sufficiently prepared are present, and, when the action does not continue, it is owing to the absence
8 of substance sufficiently prepared, and not to any change in the Intellect. I answer that it is not our
9 intention to state the reason why God created at one time and not at another; and, in referring to the
10 Active Intellect as a parallel, we do not mean to assert that God acts at one time and not at another,
11 in the same manner as the Active Intellect, an absolutely spiritual being, acts intermittently. We do
12 not make this assertion, and, if we did, the conclusion would be fallacious. What we infer, and what
13 we are justified in inferring, is this: the Active Intellect is neither a corporeal object nor a force
14 residing in a body; it acts intermittently, and yet whatever the cause may be why it does not always
15 act, we do not say that the Active Intellect has passed from a state of potentiality to that of actuality;
16 or that it implies the possibility [of change], or that an agent must exist that causes the transition
17 from potentiality to actuality. We have thus refuted the strong objection raised by those who believe
18 in the Eternity of the Universe; since we believe that God is neither a corporeal body nor a force
19 residing in a body, we need not assume that the Creation, after a period of inaction, is due to a
20 change in the Creator Himself.

21 The second method employed in proving the Eternity of the Universe is based on the theory that all
22 wants, changes, and obstacles are absent from the Essence of God. Our refutation of this proof,
23 which is both difficult and profound, is this. Every being that is endowed with free will and performs
24 certain acts in reference to another being, necessarily interrupts those acts at one time or another, in
25 consequence of some obstacles or changes. E.g., a person desires to have a house, but he does not
26 build one, because he meets with some obstacles: he has not the material, or he has the material, but
27 it is not prepared for the purpose on account of the absence of proper instruments; or he has
28 material and instruments, and yet does not build a house, because he does not desire to build it;
29 since he feels no want for a refuge. When changed circumstances, as heat or cold, impel him to seek
30 a refuge, then he desires to build a house. Thus changed circumstances change his will, and the will,
31 when it meets with obstacles, is not carried into effect. This, however, is only the case when the
32 causes of the actions are external; but when the action has no other purpose whatever than to fulfil
33 the will, then the will does not depend on the existence of favourable circumstances. The being
34 endowed with this will need not act continually even in the absence of all obstacles, because there
35 does not exist anything for [183] the sake of which it acts, and which, in the absence of all obstacles,
36 would necessitate the action: the act simply follows the will. But, some might ask, even if we admit
37 the correctness of all this, is not change imputed in the fact that the will of the being exists at one
38 time and not at another? I reply thus: The true essence of the will of a being is simply the faculty of
39 conceiving a desire at one time and not conceiving it at another. In the case of corporeal beings, the
40 will which aims at a certain external object changes according to obstacles and circumstances. But
41 the will of an absolutely spiritual being which does not depend on external causes is unchangeable,
42 and the fact that the being desires one thing one day and another thing another day, does not imply
43 a change in the essence of that being, or necessitate the existence of an external cause [for this change
44 in the desire]. Similarly it has been shown by us that if a being acted at one time and did not act at

1 another, this would not involve a change in the being itself. It is now clear that the term “will” is
2 homonymously used of man’s will and of the will of God, there being no comparison whatever
3 between God’s will and that of man. The objection is refuted, and our theory is not shaken by it.
4 This is all we desire to establish.

5 The third method employed in proving the Eternity of the Universe is this: whatever the wisdom of
6 God finds necessary to produce is produced *eo ipso*; but this wisdom, being His Essence, is eternal,
7 and that which results from His wisdom must be eternal. This is a very weak argument. As we do
8 not understand why the wisdom of God produced nine spheres, neither more nor less, or why He
9 fixed the number and size of the stars exactly as they are; so we cannot understand why His wisdom
10 at a certain time caused the Universe to exist, whilst a short time before it had not been in existence.
11 All things owe their existence to His eternal and constant wisdom, but we are utterly ignorant of the
12 ways and methods of that wisdom, since, according to our opinion [that God has no attributes], His
13 will is identical with His wisdom, and all His attributes are one and the same thing, namely, His
14 Essence or Wisdom. More will be said on this question in the section on Providence. Thus this
15 objection to our theory falls likewise to the ground.

16 There is no evidence for the theory of the Eternity of the Universe, neither in the fact cited by
17 Aristotle of the general consent of the ancient peoples when they describe the heavens as the
18 habitation of the angels and of God, nor in the apparent concurrence of Scriptural texts with this
19 belief. These facts merely prove that the heavens lead us to believe in the existence of the
20 Intelligences, i.e., ideals and angels, and that these lead us to believe in the existence of God; for He
21 sets them in motion, and rules them. We will explain and show that there is no better evidence for
22 the existence of a Creator, as we believe, than that furnished by the heavens; but also according to
23 the opinion of the philosophers, as has been mentioned by us, they give evidence that a being exists
24 that sets them in motion, and that this being is neither a corporeal body nor a force residing in a
25 body.

26 Having proved that our theory is admissible, and not impossible, as those who defend the Eternity of
27 the Universe assert, I will, in the chapters which follow, show that our theory is preferable from a
28 philosophical point of view, and expose the absurdities implied in the theory of Aristotle.

29 [184]

30 CHAPTER XIX

31 IT has been shown that according to Aristotle, and according to all that defend his theory, the
32 Universe is inseparable from God; He is the cause, and the Universe the effect; and this effect is a
33 necessary one; and as it cannot be explained why or how God exists in this particular manner,
34 namely, being One and incorporeal, so it cannot be asked concerning the whole Universe why or
35 how it exists in this particular way. For it is necessary that the whole, the cause as well as the effect,
36 exist in this particular manner, it is impossible for them not to exist, or to be different from what
37 they actually are. This leads to the conclusion that the nature of everything remains constant, that
38 nothing changes its nature in any way, and that such a change is impossible in any existing thing. It

1 would also follow that the Universe is not the result of design, choice, and desire; for if this were the
2 case, they would have been non-existing before the design had been conceived.

3 We, however, hold that all things in the Universe are the result of design, and not merely of
4 necessity; He who designed them may change them when He changes His design. But not every
5 design is subject to change; for there are things which are impossible, and their nature cannot be
6 altered, as will be explained. Here, in this chapter, I merely wish to show by arguments almost as
7 forcible as real proofs, that the Universe gives evidence of design; but I will not fall into the error in
8 which the Mutakallemim have so much distinguished themselves, namely, of ignoring the existing
9 nature of things or assuming the existence of atoms, or the successive creation of accidents, or any of
10 their propositions which I have tried to explain, and which are intended to establish the principle of
11 Divine selection. You must not, however, think that they understood the principle in the same sense
12 as we do, although they undoubtedly aimed at the same thing, and mentioned the same things
13 which we also will mention, when they treated of Divine Selection. For they do not distinguish
14 between selection in the case of a plant to make it red and not white, or sweet and not bitter, and
15 determination in the case of the heavens which gave them their peculiar geometrical form and did
16 not give them a triangular or quadrilateral shape. The Mutakallemim established the principle of
17 determination by means of their propositions, which have been enumerated above (Part I., chap.
18 lxxiii.). I will establish this principle only as far as necessary, and only by philosophical propositions
19 based on the nature of things. But before I begin my argument, I will state the following facts:
20 Matter is common to things different from each other; there must be either one external cause which
21 endows this matter partly with one property, partly with another, or there must be as many different
22 causes as there are different forms of the matter common to all things. This is admitted by those who
23 assume the Eternity of the Universe. After having premised this proposition, I will proceed with the
24 discussion of our theme from an Aristotelian point of view, in form of a dialogue.

25 We.—

26 You have proved that all things in the sublunary world have one common substance;
27 why then do the species of things vary? why are the *individuals* in each species different
28 from each other?

29 [185]

30 Aristotelian.—

31 Because the composition of the things formed of that substance varies. For the common
32 substance at first received four different forms, and each form was endowed with two
33 qualities, and through these four qualities the substance was turned into the elements of
34 which all things are formed. The composition of the elements takes place in the
35 following manner:—First they are mixed in consequence of the motion of the spheres,
36 and then they combine together; a cause for variation arises then in the variation of the
37 degree of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness of the elements which form the constituent
38 parts of the things. By these different combinations things are variously predisposed to
39 receive different forms; and these in their turn are again prepared to receive other forms,
40 and so on. Each generic form finds a wide sphere in its substance both as regards quality
41 and quantity; and the individuals of the classes vary accordingly. This is fully explained

1 in Natural Science. It is quite correct and clear to every one that readily acknowledges
2 the truth, and does not wish to deceive himself.

3 *We.—*

4 Since the combination of the elements prepares substances and enables them to receive
5 different forms, what has prepared the first substance and caused one part of it to
6 receive the form of fire, another part the form of earth, and the parts between these two
7 the forms of water and of air, since one substance is common to all? Through what has
8 the substance of earth become more fit for the form of earth, and the substance of fire
9 more fit for that of fire?

10 *Ar.—*

11 The difference of the elements was caused by their different position; for the different
12 places prepared the same substance differently, in the following way: the portion nearest
13 the surrounding sphere became more rarified and swifter in motion, and thus
14 approaching the nature of that sphere, it received by this preparation the form of fire.
15 The farther the substance is away from the surrounding sphere towards the centre, the
16 denser, the more solid, and the less luminous it is; it becomes earth; the same is the
17 cause of the formation of water and air. This is necessarily so; for it would be absurd to
18 deny that each part of the substance is in a certain place; or to assume that the surface is
19 identical with the centre, or the centre with the surface. This difference in place
20 determined the different forms, i.e., predisposed the substance to receive different
21 forms.

22 *We.—*

23 Is the substance of the surrounding sphere, i.e., the heavens, the same as that of the
24 elements?

25 *Ar.—*

26 No; the substance is different, and the forms are different. The term “body” is
27 homonymously used of these bodies below and of the heavens, as has been shown by
28 modern philosophers. All this has been demonstrated by proof.

29 But let now the reader of this treatise hear what I have to say. Aristotle has proved that the
30 difference of forms becomes evident by the difference of actions. Since, therefore, the motion of the
31 elements is rectilinear, and that of the spheres circular, we infer that the substances are different.
32 This inference is supported by Natural Science. When we further notice that substances with
33 rectilinear motion differ in their directions, that some move upward, some downward, and that
34 substances which move in the same direction have different velocities, we infer that their forms must
35 be different. [186] Thus we learn that there are four elements. In the same way we come to the
36 conclusion that the substance of all the spheres is the same, since they all have circular motion. Their
37 forms, however, are different, since one sphere moves from east to west, and another from west to
38 east; and their motions have also different velocities. We can now put the following question to
39 Aristotle: There is one substance common to all spheres; each one has its own peculiar form. Who

1 thus determined and predisposed these spheres to receive different forms? Is there above the spheres
2 any being capable of determining this except God? I will show the profundity and the extraordinary
3 acumen which Aristotle displayed when this question troubled him. He strove very hard to meet this
4 objection with arguments, which, however, were not borne out by facts. Although he does not
5 mention this objection, it is clear from his words that he endeavours to show the nature of the
6 spheres, as he has shown that of the things in the sublunary world. Everything is, according to him,
7 the result of a law of Nature, and not the result of the design of a being that designs as it likes, or the
8 determination of a being that determines as it pleases. He has not carried out the idea consistently,
9 and it will never be done. He tries indeed to find the cause why the sphere moves from east and not
10 from west; why some spheres move with greater velocity, others with less velocity, and he finds the
11 cause of these differences in their different positions in reference to the uppermost sphere. He further
12 attempts to show why there are several spheres for each of the seven planets, while there is only one
13 sphere for the large number of fixed stars. For all this he endeavours to state the reason, so as to show
14 that the whole order is the necessary result of the laws of Nature. He has not attained his object. For
15 as regards the things in the sublunary world, his explanations are in accordance with facts, and the
16 relation between cause and effect is clearly shown. It can therefore be assumed that everything is the
17 necessary result of the motions and influences of the spheres. But when he treats of the properties of
18 the spheres, he does not clearly show the causal relation, nor does he explain the phenomena in that
19 systematic way which the hypothesis of natural laws would demand. For let us consider the spheres:
20 in one case a sphere with greater velocity is above a sphere with less velocity, in another case we
21 notice the reverse; in a third case there are two spheres with equal velocities, one above the other.
22 There are, besides, other phenomena which speak strongly against the hypothesis that all is regulated
23 by the laws of Nature, and I will devote a special chapter to the discussion of these phenomena. In
24 short, there is no doubt that Aristotle knew the weakness of his arguments in tracing and describing
25 the cause of all these things, and therefore he prefaces his researches on these things as follows:—
26 “We will now thoroughly investigate two problems, which it is our proper duty to investigate and to
27 discuss according to our capacity, wisdom, and opinion. This our attempt must not be attributed to
28 presumption and pride, but to our extraordinary zeal in the study of philosophy; when we attempt
29 the highest and grandest problems, and endeavour to offer some proper solution, every one that
30 hears it should rejoice and be pleased.” So far Aristotle. This shows that he undoubtedly knew the
31 weakness of his theory. How much weaker must it appear when we bear in mind that the science of
32 Astronomy was not yet fully developed, and that in the days of Aristotle the motions of
33 the [187] spheres were not known so well as they are at present. I think that it was the object of
34 Aristotle in attributing in his *Metaphysics* one Intelligence to every sphere, to assume the existence of
35 something capable of determining the peculiar course of each sphere. Later on I will show that he
36 has not gained anything thereby; but now I will explain the words, “according to our capacity,
37 wisdom, and opinion,” occurring in the passage which we quoted. I have not noticed that any of the
38 commentators explain them. The term “our opinion” refers to the principle that everything is the
39 result of natural laws, or to the theory of the Eternity of the Universe. By “our wisdom” he meant
40 the knowledge of that which is clear and generally accepted, viz., that the existence of every one of
41 these things is due to a certain cause, and not to chance. By “our capacity” he meant the
42 insufficiency of our intellect to find the causes of all these things. He only intended to trace the
43 causes for a few of them; and so he did. For he gives an excellent reason why the sphere of the fixed
44 stars moves slowly, while the other spheres move with greater velocity, namely, because its motion is

1 in a different direction [from the uppermost sphere]. He further says that the more distant a sphere
2 is from the eighth sphere the greater is its velocity. But this rule does not hold good in all cases, as I
3 have already explained (p. 174). More forcible still is the following objection: There are spheres
4 below the eighth that move from east to west. Of these each upper one, according to this rule, would
5 have a greater velocity than the lower one; and the velocity of these spheres would almost equal that
6 of the ninth sphere. But Astronomy had, in the days of Aristotle, not yet developed to the height it
7 has reached at present.

8 According to our theory of the Creation, all this can easily be explained; for we say that there is a
9 being that determines the direction and the velocity of the motion of each sphere; but we do not
10 know the reason why the wisdom of that being gave to each sphere its peculiar property. If Aristotle
11 had been able to state the cause of the difference in the motion of the spheres, and show that it
12 corresponded as he thought to their relative positions, this would have been excellent, and the variety
13 in their motions would be explained in the same way as the variety of the elements, by their relative
14 position between the centre and the surface; but this is not the case, as I said before.

15 There is a phenomenon in the spheres which more clearly shows the existence of voluntary
16 determination; it cannot be explained otherwise than by assuming that some being designed it: this
17 phenomenon is the existence of the stars. The fact that the sphere is constantly in motion, while the
18 stars remain stationary, indicates that the substance of the stars is different from that of the spheres.
19 Abu-nasr has already mentioned the fact in his additions to the *Physics* of Aristotle. He says: "There
20 is a difference between the stars and the spheres; for the spheres are transparent, the stars are opaque;
21 and the cause of this is that there is a difference, however small it may be, between their substances
22 and forms." So far Abu-nasr. But I do not say that there is a small difference, but a very great
23 difference; because I do not infer it from the transparency of the spheres, but from their motions. I
24 am convinced that there are three different kinds of substance, with three different forms, namely:—
25 (1) Bodies which never move of their own accord; such are [188] the bodies of the stars; (2) bodies
26 which always move, such are the bodies of the spheres; (3) bodies which both move and rest, such
27 are the elements. Now, I ask, what has united these two bodies, which, according to my opinion,
28 differ very much from each other, though, according to Abu-nasr, only a little? Who has prepared
29 the bodies for this union? In short, it would be strange that, without the existence of design, one of
30 two different bodies should be joined to the other in such a manner that it is fixed to it in a certain
31 place but does not combine with it. It is still more difficult to explain the existence of the numerous
32 stars in the eighth sphere; they are all spherical; some of them are large, some small; here we notice
33 two stars apparently distant from each other one cubit; there a group of ten close together; whilst in
34 another place there is a large space without any star. What determined that the one small part should
35 have ten stars, and the other portion should be without any star? and the whole body of the sphere
36 being uniform throughout, why should a particular star occupy the one place and not another? The
37 answer to these and similar questions is very difficult, and almost impossible, if we assume that all
38 emanates from God as the necessary result of certain permanent laws, as Aristotle holds. But if we
39 assume that all this is the result of design, there is nothing strange or improbable; and the only
40 question to be asked is this: What is the cause of this design? The answer to this question is that all
41 this has been made for a certain purpose, though we do not know it; there is nothing that is done in
42 vain, or by chance. It is well known that the veins and nerves of an individual dog or ass are not the
43 result of chance; their magnitude is not determined by chance; nor is it by chance, but for a certain

1 purpose, that one vein is thick, another thin; that one nerve has many branches, another has none;
2 that one goes down straight, whilst another is bent; it is well known that all this must be just as it is.
3 How, then, can any reasonable person imagine that the position, magnitude, and number of the
4 stars, or the various courses of their spheres, are purposeless, or the result of chance? There is no
5 doubt that every one of these things is necessary and in accordance with a certain design; and it is
6 extremely improbable that these things should be the necessary result of natural laws, and not that of
7 design.

8 The best proof for design in the Universe I find in the different motions of the spheres, and in the
9 fixed position of the stars in the spheres. For this reason you find all the prophets point to the
10 spheres and stars when they want to prove that there must exist a Divine Being. Thus Abraham
11 reflected on the stars, as is well known; Isaiah (xl. 26) exhorts to learn from them the existence of
12 God, and says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things?" Jeremiah
13 [calls God] "The Maker of the heavens"; Abraham calls Him "The God of the heavens" (Gen. xxiv.
14 7); [Moses], the chief of the Prophets, uses the phrase explained by us (Part I., chap. lxx.), "He who
15 rideth on the heavens" (Deut. xxxiii. 26). The proof taken from the heavens is convincing; for the
16 variety of things in the sublunary world, though their substance is one and the same, can be
17 explained as the work of the influences of the spheres, or the result of the variety in the position of
18 the substance in relation to the spheres, as has been shown by Aristotle. But who has determined the
19 variety in the spheres and the stars, if not the Will of God? To say that the Intelligences have
20 determined it [189] is of no use whatever; for the Intelligences are not corporeal, and have no local
21 relation to the spheres. Why then should the one sphere in its desire to approach the Intelligence,
22 move eastward, and another westward? Is the one Intelligence in the east, the other in the west? or
23 why does one move with great velocity, another slowly? This difference is not in accordance with
24 their distances from each other, as is well known. We must then say that the nature and essence of
25 each sphere necessitated its motion in a certain direction, and in a certain manner, as the
26 consequence of its desire to approach its Intelligence. Aristotle clearly expresses this opinion. We
27 thus have returned to the part from which we started; and we ask, Since the substance of all things is
28 the same, what made the nature of one portion different from another? Why has this sphere a desire
29 which produces a motion different from that which the desire of another sphere produces? This
30 must have been done by an agent capable of determining. We have thus been brought to examine
31 two questions:—(1) Is it necessary to assume that the variety of the things in the Universe is the
32 result of Design, and not of fixed laws of Nature, or is it not necessary? (2) Assuming that all this is
33 the result of Design, does it follow that it has been created after not having existed, or does *Creatio ex*
34 *nihilo* not follow, and has the Being which has determined all this done always so? Some of those
35 who believe in the Eternity of the Universe hold the last opinion. I will now begin the examination
36 of these two questions, and explain them as much as necessary in the following chapters.

37 CHAPTER XX

38 ACCORDING to Aristotle, none of the products of Nature are due to chance. His proof is this: That
39 which is due to chance does not reappear constantly nor frequently, but all products of Nature
40 reappear either constantly or at least frequently. The heavens, with all that they contain, are
41 constant; they never change, as has been explained, neither as regards their essence nor as regards

1 their place. But in the sublunary world we find both things which are constant and things which
2 reappear frequently [though not constantly]. Thus, e.g., the heat of fire and the downward tendency
3 of a stone are constant properties, whilst the form and life of the individuals in each species are the
4 same in most cases. All this is clear. If the parts of the Universe are not accidental, how can the whole
5 Universe be considered as the result of chance? Therefore the existence of the Universe is not due to
6 chance. The following is, in short, the objection which Aristotle raises against one of the earlier
7 philosophers who assumed that the Universe is the result of chance, and that it came into existence
8 by itself, without any cause. Some assume that the heavens and the whole Universe came into
9 existence spontaneously, as well as the rotation and motion [of the spheres], which has produced the
10 variety of things and established their present order. This opinion implies a great absurdity. They
11 admit that animals and plants do not owe their existence or production to chance, but to a certain
12 cause, be that cause Nature, or reason, or the like; e.g., they do not assume that everything might be
13 formed by chance of a certain seed or semen, but that of a certain seed only an olive-tree is produced,
14 and of a certain semen only [190] a human being is developed. And yet they think that the heavens,
15 and those bodies which appear divine among the rest of bodies, came into existence spontaneously,
16 without the action of any such cause as produces plants and animals. Having thus examined this
17 theory, Aristotle then proceeds to refute it at greater length. It is therefore clear that Aristotle believes
18 and proves that things in real existence are not accidental; they cannot be accidental, because they are
19 essential, i.e., there is a cause which necessitates that they should be in their actual condition, and on
20 account of that cause they are just as they in reality are. This has been proved, and it is the opinion
21 of Aristotle. But I do not think that, according to Aristotle, the rejection of the spontaneous origin
22 of things implies the admission of Design and Will. For as it is impossible to reconcile two
23 opposites, so it is impossible to reconcile the two theories, that of necessary existence by causality,
24 and that of Creation by the desire and will of a Creator. For the necessary existence assumed by
25 Aristotle must be understood in this sense, that for everything that is not the product of work there
26 must be a certain cause that produces it with its properties; for this cause there is another cause, and
27 for the second a third, and so on. The series of causes ends with the Prime Cause, from which
28 everything derives existence, since it is impossible that the series should continue *ad infinitum*. He
29 nevertheless does not mean to say that the existence of the Universe is the necessary product of the
30 Creator, i.e., the Prime Cause, in the same manner as the shadow is caused by a body, or heat by fire,
31 or light by the sun. Only those who do not comprehend his words attribute such ideas to him. He
32 uses here the term necessary in the same sense as we use the term when we say that the existence of
33 the *intellectus* necessarily implies that of the *intellectum*, for the former is the efficient cause of the
34 latter in so far as *intellectum*. Even Aristotle holds that the Prime Cause is the highest and most
35 perfect Intellect; he therefore says that the First Cause is pleased, satisfied, and delighted with that
36 which necessarily derives existence from Him, and it is impossible that He should wish it to be
37 different. But we do not call this “design,” and it has nothing in common with design. E.g., man is
38 pleased, satisfied, and delighted that he is endowed with eyes and hands, and it is impossible that he
39 should desire it to be otherwise, and yet the eyes and hands which a man has are not the result of his
40 design, and it is not by his own determination that he has certain properties and is able to perform
41 certain actions. The notion of design and determination applies only to things not yet in existence,
42 when there is still the possibility of their being in accordance with the design or not. I do not know
43 whether the modern Aristotelians understood his words to imply that the existence of the Universe
44 presupposes some cause in the sense of design and determination, or whether, in opposition to him,

1 they assumed design and determination, in the belief that this does not conflict with the theory of
2 the Eternity of the Universe.

3 Having explained this, I will now proceed to examine the opinions of the modern philosophers.

4 CHAPTER XXI

5 SOME of the recent philosophers who adhere to the theory of the Eternity of [191] the Universe hold
6 that God produces the Universe, that He by His will designs and determines its existence and form;
7 they reject, however, the theory that this act took place at one certain time, and assume that this
8 always has been the case, and will always be so. The circumstance that we cannot imagine an agent
9 otherwise than preceding the result of its action, they explain by the fact that this is invariably the
10 case in all that *we* produce; because for agents of the same kind as we are, there are some moments in
11 which they are not active, and are only agents *in potentia*; they become agents when they act. But as
12 regards God there are no moments of non-action, or of potentiality in any respect; He is not before
13 His work, He is always an actual agent. And as there is a great difference between His essence and
14 ours, so is also a great difference between the relation of His work to Him and the relation of our
15 work to us. They apply the same argument to will and determination; for there is no difference in
16 this respect whether we say He acts, wills, designs, or determines. They further assume that change
17 in His action or will is inadmissible. It is therefore clear that these philosophers abandoned the term
18 “necessary result,” but retained the theory of it; they perhaps sought to use a better expression, or to
19 remove an objectionable term. For it is the same thing, whether we say in accordance with the view
20 of Aristotle that the Universe is the result of the Prime Cause, and must be eternal as that Cause is
21 eternal, or in accordance with these philosophers that the Universe is the result of the act, design,
22 will, selection, and determination of God, but it has always been so, and will always be so; in the
23 same manner as the rising of the sun undoubtedly produces the day, and yet it does not precede it.
24 But when we speak of design we do not mean it in this sense; we mean to express by it that the
25 Universe is not the “necessary result” of God’s existence, as the effect is the necessary result of the
26 efficient cause; in the latter case the effect cannot be separated from the cause; it cannot change
27 unless the cause changes entirely, or at least in some respect. If we accept this explanation we easily
28 see how absurd it is to say that the Universe is in the same relation to God as the effect is to the
29 efficient cause, and to assume at the same time that the Universe is the result of the action and
30 determination of God.

31 Having fully explained this subject, we come to the question whether the cause, which must be
32 assumed for the variety of properties noticed in the heavenly beings, is merely an efficient cause, that
33 must necessarily produce that variety as its effect, or whether that variety is due to a determining
34 agent, such as we believe, in accordance with the theory of Moses our Teacher. Before I discuss this
35 question I will first explain fully what Aristotle means by “necessary result”; after that I will show by
36 such philosophical arguments as are free from every fallacy why I prefer the theory of *Creatio ex*
37 *nihilo*. It is clear that when he says that the first Intelligence is the necessary result of the existence of
38 God, the second Intelligence the result of the existence of the first, the third of the second [and so
39 on], and that the spheres are the necessary result of the existence of the Intelligences, and so forth, in
40 the well-known order which you learnt from passages dealing with it, and of which we have given

1 a *résumé* in this part (ch. iv.)—he does not mean that the one thing was first in existence, and then
2 the second came as the necessary result of the first; he denies that [192] any one of these beings has
3 had a beginning. By “necessary result” he merely refers to the causal relation; he means to say that
4 the first Intelligence is the cause of the existence of the second; the second of the third, and so on to
5 the last of the Intelligences; and the same is also the case as regards the spheres and the *materia*
6 *prima*; none of these preceded another, or has been in existence without the existence of that other.
7 We say, e.g., that the necessary result of the primary qualities are roughness [and] smoothness,
8 hardness [and] softness, porosity and solidity; and no person doubts that heat, cold, moisture, and
9 dryness are the causes of smoothness and roughness, of hardness and softness, porosity and solidity,
10 and similar qualities, and that the latter are the necessary result of those four primary qualities. And
11 yet it is impossible that a body should exist with the primary qualities without the secondary ones;
12 for the relation between the two sets of qualities is that of causality, not that of agent and its product.
13 Just in the same way the term “necessary result” is used by Aristotle in reference to the whole
14 Universe, when he says that one portion is the result of the other, and continues the series up to the
15 First Cause as he calls it, or first Intellect, if you prefer this term. For we all mean the same, only
16 with this difference, that according to Aristotle everything besides that Being is the necessary result
17 of the latter, as I have already mentioned; whilst, according to our opinion, that Being created the
18 whole Universe with design and will, so that the Universe which had not been in existence before,
19 has by His will come into existence. I will now begin in the following chapters my proofs for the
20 superiority of our theory, that of *Creatio ex nihilo*.

21 CHAPTER XXII

22 ARISTOTLE and all philosophers assume as an axiom that a simple element can only produce one
23 simple thing, whilst a compound can produce as many things as it contains simple elements; e.g., fire
24 combines in itself two properties, heat and dryness; it gives heat by the one property, and produces
25 dryness by the other: an object composed of matter and form produces certain things on account of
26 its matter, and others on account of its form, if [both matter and form] consist of several elements.
27 In accordance with this axiom, Aristotle holds that the direct emanation from God must be one
28 simple Intelligence, and nothing else.

29 A second axiom assumed by him is this: Things are not produced by other things at random; there
30 must be some relation between cause and effect. Thus accidents are not produced by accidents
31 promiscuously; quality cannot be the origin of quantity, nor quantity that of quality; a form cannot
32 emanate from matter, nor matter from form.

33 A third axiom is this: A single agent that acts with design and will, and not merely by the force of the
34 laws of Nature, can produce different objects.

35 A fourth axiom is as follows: An object, whose several elements are only connected by juxtaposition,
36 is more properly a compound than an object whose different elements have entirely combined; e.g.,
37 bone, flesh, veins, or nerves, are more simple than the hand or the foot, that are a combination of
38 bone, flesh, veins, and nerves. This is very clear, and requires no further explanation.

1 [193]

2 Having premised these axioms, I ask the following question: Aristotle holds that the first Intelligence
3 is the cause of the second, the second of the third, and so on, till the thousandth, if we assume a
4 series of that number. Now the first Intellect is undoubtedly simple. How then can the compound
5 form of existing things come from such an Intellect by fixed laws of Nature, as Aristotle assumes?
6 We admit all he said concerning the Intelligences, that the further they are away from the first, the
7 greater is the variety of their compounds, in consequence of the larger number of the objects
8 comprehensible by the Intelligences; but even after admitting this, the question remains, By what
9 law of Nature did the spheres emanate from the Intelligences? What relation is there between
10 material and immaterial beings? Suppose we admit that each sphere emanates from an Intelligence of
11 the form mentioned; that the Intelligence, including, as it were, two elements, in so far as it
12 comprehends itself and another thing, produces the next Intelligence by the one element, and a
13 sphere by the other; but the question would then be, how the one simple element could produce the
14 sphere, that contains two substances and two forms, namely, the substance and the form of the
15 sphere, and also the substance and the form of the star fixed in that sphere. For, according to the
16 laws of Nature, the compound can only emanate from a compound. There must therefore be one
17 element, from which the body of the sphere emanates, and another element, from which the body of
18 the star emanates. This would be necessary even if the substance of all stars were the same; but it is
19 possible that the luminous stars have not the same substance as the non-luminous stars; it is besides
20 well known that each body has its own matter and its own form. It must now be clear that this
21 emanation could not have taken place by the force of the laws of Nature, as Aristotle contends. Nor
22 does the difference of the motions of the spheres follow the order of their positions; and therefore it
23 cannot be said that this difference is the result of certain laws of Nature. We have already mentioned
24 this (ch. xix.).

25 There is in the properties of the spheres another circumstance that is opposed to the assumed laws of
26 Nature; namely, if the substance of all spheres is the same, why does it not occur that the form of
27 one sphere combines with the substance of another sphere, as is the case with things on earth, simply
28 because their substance is fit [for such changes]? If the substance of all spheres is the same, if it is not
29 assumed that each of them has a peculiar substance, and if, contrary to all principles, the peculiar
30 motion of each sphere is no evidence for the special character of its substance, why then should a
31 certain form constantly remain united with a certain substance? Again, if the stars have all one
32 substance, by what are they distinguished from each other? is it by forms? or by accidents?
33 Whichever be the case, the forms or the accidents would interchange, so that they would successively
34 unite with every one of the stars, so long as their substance [being the same] admits the
35 combinations [with every one of the forms or the accidents]. This shows that the term substance,
36 when used of the spheres or the stars, does not mean the same as it signifies when used of the
37 substance of earthly things, but is applied to the two synonymously. It further shows that every one
38 of the bodies of the spheres has its own peculiar form of existence different from that of all
39 other [194] beings. Why then is circular motion common to all spheres, and why is the fixed position
40 of the stars in their respective spheres common to all stars? If we, however, assume design and
41 determination of a Creator, in accordance with His incomprehensible wisdom, all these difficulties
42 disappear. They must arise when we consider the whole Universe, not as the result of free will, but as
43 the result of fixed laws of Nature: a theory which, on the one hand, is not in harmony with the

1 existing order of things, and does not offer for it a sufficient reason or argument; and, on the other
2 hand, implies many and great improbabilities. For, according to this theory, God, whose perfection
3 in every respect is recognised by all thinking persons, is in such a relation to the Universe that He
4 cannot change anything; if He wished to make the wing of a fly longer, or to reduce the number of
5 the legs of a worm by one, He could not accomplish it. According to Aristotle, He does not try such
6 a thing, and it is wholly impossible for Him to desire any change in the existing order of things; if
7 He could, it would not increase His perfection; it might, on the contrary, from some point of view,
8 diminish it.

9 Although I know that many partial critics will ascribe my opinion concerning the theory of Aristotle
10 to insufficient understanding, or to intentional opposition, I will not refrain from stating in short the
11 results of my researches, however poor my capacities may be. I hold that the theory of Aristotle is
12 undoubtedly correct as far as the things are concerned which exist between the sphere of the moon
13 and the centre of the earth. Only an ignorant person rejects it, or a person with preconceived
14 opinions of his own, which he desires to maintain and to defend, and which lead him to ignore clear
15 facts. But what Aristotle says concerning things above the sphere of the moon is, with few
16 exceptions, mere imagination and opinion; to a still greater extent this applies to his system of
17 Intelligences, and to some of his metaphysical views; they include great improbabilities, [promote]
18 ideas which all nations consider as evidently corrupt, and cause views to spread which cannot be
19 proved.

20 It may perhaps be asked why I have enumerated all the doubts which can be raised against the theory
21 of Aristotle; whether by mere doubts a theory can be overthrown, or its opposite established? This is
22 certainly not the case. But we treat this philosopher exactly as his followers tell us to do. For
23 Alexander stated that when a theory cannot be established by proof, the two most opposite views
24 should be compared as to the doubts entertained concerning each of them, and that view which
25 admits of fewer doubts should be accepted. Alexander further says that this rule applies to all those
26 opinions of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* for which he offered no proof. For those that followed Aristotle
27 believed that his opinions are far less subject to doubt than any other opinion. We follow the same
28 rule. Being convinced that the question whether the heavens are eternal or not cannot be decided by
29 proof, neither in the affirmative nor in the negative, we have enumerated the objections raised to
30 either view, and shown how the theory of the Eternity of the Universe is subject to stronger
31 objections, and is more apt to corrupt the notions concerning God [than the other]. Another
32 argument can be drawn from the fact that the theory of the Creation was held by our Father
33 Abraham, and by our Teacher Moses.

34 Having mentioned the method of testing the two theories by the objections [195] raised against
35 them, I find it necessary to give some further explanation of the subject.

36 CHAPTER XXIII

37 IN comparing the objections raised against one theory with those raised against the opposite theory,
38 in order to decide in favour of the least objectionable, we must not consider the number of the
39 objections, but the degree of improbability and of deviation from real facts [pointed out by the

1 objections]; for one objection may sometimes have more weight than a thousand others. But the
2 comparison cannot be trustworthy unless the two theories be considered with the same interest, and
3 if you are predisposed in favour of one of them, be it on account of your training or because of some
4 advantage, you are too blind to see the truth. For that which can be demonstrated you cannot reject,
5 however much you may be inclined against it; but in questions like those under consideration you
6 are apt to dispute [in consequence of your inclination]. You will, however, be able to decide the
7 question, as far as necessary, if you free yourself from passions, ignore customs, and follow only your
8 reason. But many are the conditions which must be fulfilled. First you must know your mental
9 capacities and your natural talents; you will find this out when you study all mathematical sciences,
10 and are well acquainted with Logic. Secondly, you must have a thorough knowledge of Natural
11 Science, that you may be able to understand the nature of the objections. Thirdly, you must be
12 morally good. For if a person is voluptuous or passionate, and, loosening the reins, allows his anger
13 to pass the just limits, it makes no difference whether he is so from nature or from habit, he will
14 blunder and stumble in his way, he will seek the theory which is in accordance with his inclinations.
15 I mention this lest you be deceived; for a person might some day, by some objection which he raises,
16 shake your belief in the theory of the Creation, and then easily mislead you; you would then adopt
17 the theory [of the Eternity of the Universe] which is contrary to the fundamental principles of our
18 religion, and leads to “speaking words that turn away from God.” You must rather have suspicion
19 against your own reason, and accept the theory taught by two prophets who have laid the foundation
20 for the existing order in the religious and social relations of mankind. Only demonstrative proof
21 should be able to make you abandon the theory of the Creation; but such a proof does not exist in
22 Nature.

23 You will not find it strange that I introduce into this discussion historical matter in support of the
24 theory of the Creation, seeing that Aristotle, the greatest philosopher, in his principal works,
25 introduces histories in support of the theory of the Eternity of the Universe. In this regard we may
26 justly quote the saying: “Should not our perfect Law be as good as their gossip?” (B. T. Baba batra,
27 115 b). When he supports his view by quoting Sabeian stories, why should we not support our view
28 by that which Moses and Abraham said, and that which follows from their words?

29 I have before promised to describe in a separate chapter the strong objections which must occur to
30 him who thinks that human wisdom comprehends fully the nature of the spheres and their motions;
31 that these are subject to fixed laws, and capable of being comprehended as regards order and relation.
32 I will now explain this.

33 [196]

34 CHAPTER XXIV

35 YOU know of Astronomy as much as you have studied with me, and learnt from the book *Almagest*;
36 we had not sufficient time to go beyond this. The theory that [the spheres] move regularly, and that
37 the assumed courses of the stars are in harmony with observation, depends, as you are aware, on two
38 hypotheses: we must assume either epicycles, or excentric spheres, or a combination of both. Now I
39 will show that each of these two hypotheses is irregular, and totally contrary to the results of Natural

1 Science. Let us first consider an epicycle, such as has been assumed in the spheres of the moon and
2 the five planets, rotating on a sphere, but not round the centre of the sphere that carries it. This
3 arrangement would necessarily produce a revolving motion; the epicycle would then revolve, and
4 entirely change its place; but that anything in the spheres should change its place is exactly what
5 Aristotle considers impossible. For that reason Abu-bekr ibn-Alzaig, in an astronomical treatise
6 which he wrote, rejects the existence of epicycles. Besides this impossibility, he mentions others,
7 showing that the theory of epicycles implies other absurd notions. I will here explain them:—(1) It is
8 absurd to assume that the revolution of a cycle has not the centre of the Universe for its centre; for it
9 is a fundamental principle in the order of the Universe that there are only three kinds of motion—
10 from the centre, towards the centre, and round the centre; but an epicycle does not move away from
11 the centre, nor towards it, nor round it. (2) Again, according to what Aristotle explains in Natural
12 Science, there must be something fixed round which the motion takes place; this is the reason why
13 the earth remains stationary. But the epicycle would move round a centre which is not stationary. I
14 have heard that Abu-bekr discovered a system in which no epicycles occur; but excentric spheres are
15 not excluded by him. I have not heard it from his pupils; and even if it be correct that he discovered
16 such a system, he has not gained much by it; for excentricity is likewise as contrary as possible to the
17 principles laid down by Aristotle. For it seems to me that an excentric sphere does not move round
18 the centre of the Universe, but round an imaginary point distant from the centre, and therefore
19 round a point which is not fixed. A person ignorant of astronomy might think that the motion of
20 the excentric spheres may still be considered as taking place round something fixed, since their centre
21 is apparently within the sphere of the moon. I would admit this if the centre were situated in the
22 region of fire or air, although the spheres would not move round a stable point. But I will show that
23 the amount of excentricity has, in a certain way, been described in the *Almagest*; and later scholars
24 have calculated the exact amount of excentricity in terms of radii of the earth, and have proved the
25 result. The same measure has been used in astronomy in describing all distances and magnitudes. It
26 has thus been shown that the point round which the sun moves lies undoubtedly beyond the sphere
27 of the moon, and below the superficies of the sphere of Mercury. The centre for the circuit of Mars,
28 that is, the centre of the excentric sphere of Mars, is beyond the sphere of Mercury, and below the
29 sphere of Venus. The centre of Jupiter has the same distance; it lies between the sphere of Venus and
30 that of Mercury, whilst the centre of Saturn lies between the spheres of Mars and Jupiter. Now,
31 consider how improbable all this appears according to the laws of Natural Science. You
32 will [197] find it out when you consider the known distances and magnitudes of each sphere and
33 each star, all expressed in terms of the radii of the earth. There is a uniform measure for all, and the
34 excentricity of each sphere is not determined by units proportionate to its own magnitude.

35 It is still more improbable and more objectionable to assume that there are two spheres, the one
36 within the other; that these are closely joined from all sides, and have, nevertheless, different centres.
37 For in this case the smaller sphere might move whilst the larger be at rest; but the smaller cannot be
38 at rest when the larger moves, and must move with the larger when the latter rotates round any other
39 axis than that which passes through the two centres. Now we have this proposition which can be
40 proved; and, further, the established theory that there is no vacuum, and also the assumed
41 excentricity of the spheres; from all this it follows that in every two spheres the motion of the upper
42 one should cause the lower sphere to move in the same way, and round the same centre. But this is
43 not the case; the outer and the inner spheres do not move in the same way, and not round the same
44 centre or the same axis; each of them has its peculiar motion. For this reason it has been assumed

1 that between every two spheres there are substances different from those of the spheres. It may be
2 very much doubted whether this is the case; for where should the centres of these intermediate
3 substances be placed? have these substances likewise their own peculiar motion? Thabith has
4 explained the above-mentioned theory in one of his treatises, and proved that we must assume a
5 substance of a spherical form intermediate between one sphere and the other. All this is part of that
6 which I have not explained to you when you studied with me, for I was afraid you might become
7 confused and would not understand even those things which I wished to show you. But as to the
8 inclination and the deviation assumed in respect to the latitude of the paths of Venus and Mercury, I
9 have already clearly shown you *vivâ voce* that it is impossible to imagine material beings under such
10 conditions. You have seen that Ptolemy has already pointed out this difficulty. He says as follows:
11 “Let no one think that these and similar principles are improbable. If any one considers what we
12 have here expounded in the same light as he considers things produced by skill and subtle work, he
13 will find it improbable; but it is not right to compare human things to divine things.” This is, as you
14 know, what Ptolemy says, and I have already pointed out to you the passages by which you can
15 verify all I said, except what I stated about the position of the centres of the excentric spheres; for I
16 have not heard that any one has paid attention to this question. But you will understand it when you
17 know the length of the diameter of each sphere, and the extent of its excentricity in terms of radii of
18 the earth, according to the facts which Kabici has established in his treatise on the distances. When
19 you notice these distances you will confirm my words.

20 Consider, therefore, how many difficulties arise if we accept the theory which Aristotle expounds in
21 Physics. For, according to that theory, there are no epicycles, and no excentric spheres, but all
22 spheres rotate round the centre of the earth! How then can the different courses of the stars be
23 explained? how is it possible to assume a uniform perfect rotation with the phenomena which we
24 perceive, except by admitting one of the two hypotheses [198] or both of them? The difficulty is still
25 more apparent when we find that admitting what Ptolemy said as regards the epicycle of the moon,
26 and its inclination towards a point different both from the centre of the Universe and from its own
27 centre, the calculations according to these hypotheses are perfectly correct, within one minute; that
28 their correctness is confirmed by the most accurate calculation of the time, duration, and extent of
29 the eclipses, which is always based on these hypotheses. Furthermore, how can we reconcile, without
30 assuming the existence of epicycles, the apparent retrogression of a star with its other motions? How
31 can rotation or motion take place round a point which is not fixed? These are real difficulties.

32 I have explained to you already *vivâ voce*, that these difficulties do not concern the astronomer; for
33 he does not profess to tell us the existing properties of the spheres, but to suggest, whether correctly
34 or not, a theory in which the motion of the stars is circular and uniform, and yet in agreement with
35 our observation. You know that Abu-bekr al-Zaig, in his treatise on Physics, expresses a doubt
36 whether Aristotle knew the excentricity of the sun but ignored it, and only discussed the effect of the
37 inclination, because he saw that the effect of the excentricity was identical with that of the
38 inclination; or whether he did not perceive it. The truth is that he did not notice it or hear of it; the
39 science was not perfect in his age. If he had heard of it, he would have strongly opposed it; if he had
40 been convinced of its correctness, he would have been greatly embarrassed as regards all that he said
41 on the question. What I said before (ch. xxii.) I will repeat now, namely, that the theory of Aristotle,
42 in explaining the phenomena in the sublunary world, is in accordance with logical inference; here we
43 know the causal relation between one phenomenon and another; we see how far science can

1 investigate them, and the management of nature is clear and intelligible. But of the things in the
2 heavens man knows nothing except a few mathematical calculations, and you see how far these go. I
3 say in the words of the poet, "The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth He hath given to the sons of
4 man" (Ps. cxv. 16); that is to say, God alone has a perfect and true knowledge of the heavens, their
5 nature, their essence, their form, their motions, and their causes; but He gave man power to know
6 the things which are under the heavens; here is man's world, here is his home, into which he has
7 been placed, and of which he is himself a portion. This is in reality the truth. For the facts which we
8 require in proving the existence of heavenly beings are withheld from us; the heavens are too far
9 from us, and too exalted in place and rank. Man's faculties are too deficient to comprehend even the
10 general proof the heavens contain for the existence of Him who sets them in motion. It is in fact
11 ignorance or a kind of madness to weary our minds with finding out things which are beyond our
12 reach, without having the means of approaching them. We must content ourselves with that which
13 is within our reach, and that which cannot be approached by logical inference let us leave to him
14 who has been endowed with that great and divine influence, expressed in the words: "Mouth to
15 mouth do I speak with Him" (Num. xii. 8).

16 This is all I can say on this question; another person may perhaps be able to establish by proof what
17 appears doubtful to me. It is on account of my great love of truth that I have shown my
18 embarrassment in these matters, [199] and I have not heard, nor do I know that any of these theories
19 have been established by proof.

20 CHAPTER XXV

21 WE do not reject the Eternity of the Universe, because certain passages in Scripture confirm the
22 Creation; for such passages are not more numerous than those in which God is represented as a
23 corporeal being; nor is it impossible or difficult to find for them a suitable interpretation. We might
24 have explained them in the same manner as we did in respect to the Incorporeality of God. We
25 should perhaps have had an easier task in showing that the Scriptural passages referred to are in
26 harmony with the theory of the Eternity of the Universe if we accepted the latter, than we had in
27 explaining the anthropomorphisms in the Bible when we rejected the idea that God is corporeal. For
28 two reasons, however, we have not done so, and have not accepted the Eternity of the Universe.
29 First, the Incorporeality of God has been demonstrated by proof; those passages in the Bible, which
30 in their literal sense contain statements that can be refuted by proof, must and can be interpreted
31 otherwise. But the Eternity of the Universe has not been proved; a mere argument in favour of a
32 certain theory is not sufficient reason for rejecting the literal meaning of a Biblical text, and
33 explaining it figuratively, when the opposite theory can be supported by an equally good argument.

34 Secondly, our belief in the Incorporeality of God is not contrary to any of the fundamental
35 principles of our religion; it is not contrary to the words of any prophet. Only ignorant people
36 believe that it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture; but we have shown that this is not the case; on
37 the contrary, Scripture teaches the Incorporeality of God. If we were to accept the Eternity of the
38 Universe as taught by Aristotle, that everything in the Universe is the result of fixed laws, that
39 Nature does not change, and that there is nothing supernatural, we should necessarily be in
40 opposition to the foundation of our religion, we should disbelieve all miracles and signs, and

1 certainly reject all hopes and fears derived from Scripture, unless the miracles are also explained
2 figuratively. The Allegorists amongst the Mohammedans have done this, and have thereby arrived at
3 absurd conclusions. If, however, we accepted the Eternity of the Universe in accordance with the
4 second of the theories which we have expounded above (ch. xxiii.), and assumed, with Plato, that the
5 heavens are likewise transient, we should not be in opposition to the fundamental principles of our
6 religion; this theory would not imply the rejection of miracles, but, on the contrary, would admit
7 them as possible. The Scriptural text might have been explained accordingly, and many expressions
8 might have been found in the Bible and in other writings that would confirm and support this
9 theory. But there is no necessity for this expedient, so long as the theory has not been proved. As
10 there is no proof sufficient to convince us, this theory need not be taken into consideration, nor the
11 other one; we take the text of the Bible literally, and say that it teaches us a truth which we cannot
12 prove; and the miracles are evidence for the correctness of our view.

13 Accepting the Creation, we find that miracles are possible, that Revelation [200] is possible, and that
14 every difficulty in this question is removed. We might be asked, Why has God inspired a certain
15 person and not another? why has He revealed the Law to one particular nation, and at one particular
16 time? why has He commanded this, and forbidden that? why has He shown through a prophet
17 certain particular miracles? what is the object of these laws? and why has He not made the
18 commandments and the prohibitions part of our nature, if it was His object that we should live in
19 accordance with them? We answer to all these questions: He willed it so; or, His wisdom decided so.
20 Just as He created the world according to His will, at a certain time, in a certain form, and as we do
21 not understand why His will or His wisdom decided upon that peculiar form, and upon that
22 peculiar time, so we do not know why His will or wisdom determined any of the things mentioned
23 in the preceding questions. But if we assume that the Universe has the present form as the result of
24 fixed laws, there is occasion for the above questions; and these could only be answered in an
25 objectionable way, implying denial and rejection of the Biblical texts, the correctness of which no
26 intelligent person doubts. Owing to the absence of all proof, we reject the theory of the Eternity of
27 the Universe; and it is for this very reason that the noblest minds spent and will spend their days in
28 research. For if the Creation had been demonstrated by proof, even if only according to the Platonic
29 hypothesis, all arguments of the philosophers against us would be of no avail. If, on the other hand,
30 Aristotle had a proof for his theory, the whole teaching of Scripture would be rejected, and we
31 should be forced to other opinions. I have thus shown that all depends on this question. Note it.

32

Questions on the **Incoherence of the Philosophers** and **The Decisive Treatise**

Averroes has great admiration for Greek philosophy (the “Ancients” or “Peripatetics”) and insists that it is valuable for Muslims seeking to understand God. God gives Law in the form of special revelation, but did He also give *general* revelation, especially to the Greeks, prior to the arrival of Islam (pp. 3-5, para’s 5-9)? Is Greek philosophy only the effort of the human mind, or was there some divine guidance through it all?

Aristotle taught that the universe had always existed and was dismissive of any belief in creation by a deity. Averroes, like so many medieval philosophers, sought to reconcile Aristotle and the **Qur’an** (pp. 5-6, para’s 10-12). But was that attempt satisfactory? How does he understand God's act of creation?

Averroes is concerned about the clear distinction between the multitude and the intellectual elites -- between those who accept the Law simply as it is and those “adept in science,” who can search its depths and interpret it using demonstration. Is Averroes right in pointing out that Al Ghazali’s own writings can be dangerous in exposing too much, such that his writings should be banned (pp. 16-17, para’s 33-36)?

Al Ghazali's polemic against "the philosophers" seems to have as a premise the reality of Creation Ex Nihilo. Yet the **Qur'an** does not, in its literal translation, support this premise. Does that make Al Ghazali's argument against the philosophers' view any less valid?

One of Al Ghazali's charges is that the philosophers' use of key religious terms is "metaphorical." Yet Al Ghazali only quotes the **Qur’an** once (pp. 70-71, para 58, 18:51) while Averroes quotes it at least twenty times. Is Al Ghazali’s a literary charge only or one that has substance, that is, one that should lead Muslims to condemn the teachings of philosophers?

Giving our “assent” to religious revelation may require different approaches to religious texts and traditions. Do Al Ghazali and Averroes provide a basis for a common approach when it comes to distinguishing theoretical from “practical matters” of faith? (**Decisive Treatise**, pp. 8-9, para 15).

[Third] Discussion

*On showing their obfuscation in saying that
God is the world's enactor and maker,
that the world is His handiwork and act; showing
that with them this is metaphor, not reality*

(1) The philosophers, with the exception of the materialists, have agreed that the world has a maker, that God is the maker and enactor of the world, that the world is His act and handiwork. This, however, is obfuscation in terms of their principle. Indeed, it is inconceivable, in
5 accordance with their principle, for the world to be the work of God, in three respects: with respect to the agent, with respect to the act, and with respect to a relationship common to act and agent.

(2) Regarding [the aspect pertaining to] the agent, it is incumbent that He should be a willer, a chooser, and a knower of what He wills, so
10 as to be the agent of what He wills. But, according to [the philosophers], God, exalted be He, is not one who wills, but has no attribute at all. Whatever proceeds from Him proceeds by compulsory necessity. [As for] the second [aspect, which pertains to the act], the world [for the philosophers] is eternal, whereas the act is the temporally originated. [Regarding] the
15 third [aspect], God for them is one in every respect; and from the One, according to them, nothing but that which is one in all respects proceeds. But the world is composed of various [things]; how does it then proceed from Him?

(3) Let us, then, ascertain each one of these three aspects, together
20 with [showing] their insanity in defending it.

Regarding the first [aspect]

(4) We say: “‘Agent’ is an expression [referring] to one from whom the act proceeds, together with the will to act by way of choice and the knowledge of what is willed.” But, according to you [philosophers], the world [proceeds] from God [exalted be He] as the effect from the cause,
 5 as a necessary consequence, inconceivable for God to prevent, in the way the shadow is the necessary consequence of the individual and light [the necessary consequence] of the sun. And this does not pertain to action in anything. Indeed, whoever says that the lamp enacts the light and the individual enacts the shadow has ventured excessively into metaphor
 10 and stretched it beyond [its] bound, being satisfied with the occurrence of one common description between the expression borrowed for one thing and that from which it is borrowed, [as in this instance, where] the agent is cause in a general sense, whereas the lamp is the cause of illumination and the sun the cause of light. The agent, however, is not called
 15 an agent and a maker by simply being a cause, but by being a cause in a special respect—namely, by way of will and choice—so that if one were to say, “The wall is not an agent; the stone is not an agent; the inanimate is not an agent, action being confined to animals,” this would not be denied and the statement would not be false. But [according to the
 20 philosophers] the stone has an action—namely, falling due to heaviness and an inclination toward [the earth’s] center—just as fire has an action, which is heating, and the wall has an action—namely, the inclination toward the center and the occurrence of the shadow—for all [these latter things] proceed from [the wall]. But this is impossible.

25 (5) [The philosophers, however, may] say:

(6) [In the case of] every existent whose existence is not in itself necessary, but which exists through another, we call that thing an enacted thing and its cause an agent. We do not care whether the cause acts by nature or voluntarily, just as you do not care whether it acts by an
 30 instrument or without an instrument. Rather, [for you] action is a genus that divides into that which occurs through an instrument and that which occurs without an instrument. Similarly, it is a genus and divides into that which occurs naturally and that which occurs by choice. Proof of this is

that, if we say, "He acted by nature," our saying "by nature" would not be contrary to our saying "he acted," neither repelling nor contradicting it. Rather, it would be a clarification of the kind of action, just as, when we say, "He acted directly, without an instrument," this would not be a contradiction, but an indication of [the] kind [of action] and a clarification. If we say, "He acted by choice," this would not be repetition as [when we repeat ourselves] in our statement, "animal, human," but an explication of the kind of action, as [in] our statement, "He acted [using] an instrument." Had our statement, "He acted," entailed will, will being essential to the action inasmuch as it is action, then our statement, "He acted by nature," would be [as] contradictory as our statement, "He acted and he has not acted."

(7) We say:

(8) This naming is false. It is not permissible to call any cause, in whatever aspect, an agent, nor any effect an enacted thing. Had this been the case, it would not then be correct to say that the inanimate has no action, action belonging only to animals, when these are among the well-known, true universals. If the inanimate is called an agent, then this is as metaphor, just as it is called a seeker and willer by way of figurative speech. For it is said that the stone falls because it wills [to move to] the center and seeks it, when seeking and willing in reality are only conceivable in conjunction with the knowledge of what is willed and sought after and are [thus] conceivable only of animals.

(9) As for your statement that our saying, "He acts," is a general statement and divides into what is by nature and what is by will, this is not admitted. It is akin to someone saying that our statement, "He willed," is a general expression and divides [in its reference] into one who wills and knows what he wills and one who wills and does not know what he wills. And this is false, since will necessarily entails knowledge. Similarly, action necessarily entails will. Regarding your statement that [the second part of] our saying, "He acted by nature," does not contradict the first, this is not the case. For it contradicts it in terms of what is real. But the contradiction does not impress itself immediately on the understanding, and [our] nature's repulsion to it does not become intense because it remains a metaphor. For, since it is in some respect a cause, the agent also being a cause, ["the action by nature"] is called an action metaphorically. If one

says, "He acted by choice," this is ascertainable as repetition, as when one says, "He willed, knowing what he willed." But, since it is conceivable to say "he acted" when this is metaphor and "he acted" when this is real, the soul is not repelled by the statement, "He acted by choice," the meaning being that he performed a real action not [in the] metaphorical [sense], as when one says [in the real sense], "He spoke with his tongue," or, "He saw with his eye." For, since it is [linguistically] permissible to use [the expression] "seeing with the heart" metaphorically and "speaking" with reference to one's moving the head and the hand, such that one would say, "He spoke with his head," meaning [that he said], "Yes," it is not deemed repugnant to say, "He spoke with his tongue" and "saw with his eye," where the intention is to remove the possibility of [taking these expressions as] metaphor. This, then, is where the foot will slip. Let one then be alerted to [the place] where these naïve people are deceived.

15 (10) [The philosophers may] say:

(11) Naming the agent "agent" is known from linguistic usage. Otherwise, it is evident to the mind that what is a cause for a thing divides into that which is voluntary and that which is not. The dispute, hence, pertains to whether or not the term "action" is truly applicable to both divisions. There is no way to deny [its applicability to both], since the Arabs say, "Fire burns," "The sword cuts," "Snow cools," "Scammony moves the bowels," "Bread satiates," and "Water quenches." Our saying, "He strikes," means, "He enacts the striking"; our saying, "It burns," means, "It enacts the burning"; and our saying, "It cuts," means, "It enacts the cutting." If you say, "All of this is metaphor," you would be arbitrary about it, without support.

(12) [To this we] answer:

(13) All this is by way of metaphor. Real action is that which comes about only through will. Proof of this is that, if we suppose that a temporal event depends for its occurrence on two things, one voluntary and the other not, reason relates the act to the voluntary. [It is] the same with language. For, if someone throws another into the fire and [the latter] dies, it is said that [the former], not the fire, is the killer, so that if it is said, "None

other than So-and-so killed him," the speaker of this would have said the truth. For if the term "agent" is [applicable to both] willer and nonwiller in the same way, not by way of one of them being the basis [and] the other derived as a metaphor from it, why is it, then, that, on the basis of

5 language, custom, and reason, killing is related to the willer, even though fire is the proximate cause of the killing? [Here the opponent is speaking] as though the one who throws [the victim] would have only undertaken bringing [the victim] and the fire together. But, since the joining [of victim and fire] came about through will, whereas the efficacy of fire is without will, [the willer] is called the killer and the fire is not called a

10 killer except through some kind of metaphor. This shows that the agent is the one from whom the act proceeds through his will. Hence, if God, according to [the philosophers], has neither will nor choice, He would be neither an agent nor a maker except in a metaphorical [sense].

15 (14) [The philosophers may] say:

(15) We mean by God's being an agent that He is the cause of every other existent; and that the world's subsistence is through Him; and that, had it not been for the existence of the Creator, the existence of the world would be inconceivable. And, should the nonexistence of God be

20 supposed, then [in terms of such a supposition] the world would cease to exist—just as, if the nonexistence of the sun is supposed, light [in terms of such a supposition] would cease to exist. This is what we mean by His being an agent. If the opponent refuses to call this meaning "action," there is no need to squabble about names, once the meaning is clear.

25 (16) We say:

(17) Our [whole] purpose is to show that this meaning is not [properly] termed "action" and "handiwork." Rather, that which is meant by "action" and "handiwork" is that which truly proceeds from the will. You [philosophers] have denied the true meaning of "action" and have uttered its

30 expression to endear yourselves to Muslims. Religion is not fulfilled by uttering expressions devoid of [their real] meaning. Declare openly, then, that God has no action, so that it becomes clear that your belief is contrary to the religion of Muslims. Do not confuse matters by [stating] that God is the maker of the world and that the world is His doing. For this is

an expression which you have uttered, but [you have] denied its reality. The purpose of this discussion is only to clear this deceptive beclouding.

The second aspect

(18) [This is] concerned with refuting [the idea] that the world, according to their principle, is the act of God. [The refutation] pertains to a condition regarding the act—namely, that the act means temporal creation, whereas the world, according to them, is pre-eternal and not temporally created. The meaning of “action” is the bringing forth of the thing from nonexistence to existence by creating it. But this is inconceivable of the pre-eternal, since what [already] exists cannot be brought into existence. Hence, the condition of the act [to be something enacted] is for it to be temporally created. But the world, according to [the philosophers], is pre-eternal. How could it, then, be the act of God?

(19) [The philosophers] may say:¹

(20) The meaning of “the created” is “an existent after nonexistence.” Let us, then, investigate the case when the agent creates: is that which proceeds from Him, that relates to Him, pure existence, pure nonexistence, or both? It is false to say that what relates to Him is the prior nonexistence, since the agent has no influence on nonexistence. And it is false to say that both [relate to Him], since it has become clear that nonexistence basically does not relate to Him and that nonexistence, in being nonexistence, does not require an agent at all. It remains, then, that it relates to Him inasmuch as it exists and that what proceeds from Him is pure existence and that there is no relation to Him except existence. If existence is supposed to be permanent, the relation would be supposed permanent. And if the relation is permanent, then the one to whom it relates would be the more efficacious and more permanent in influence because nonexistence did not attach to the agent in any state. It [then] remains to say that [the world] relates to [the agent] inasmuch as it is created. There is no meaning for its being created except that it exists after nonexistence but that nonexistence is not related to it. If, then, the

precedence of nonexistence is made a description of existence and it is said that what relates [to the agent] is a special [kind of] existence, not all existence—namely, existence preceded by nonexistence—it would be said:

5 (21) Its being preceded by nonexistence is not an act of an agent and the work of a maker. For the proceeding of this existence from its agent is only conceivable with nonexistence preceding it. But the precedence of nonexistence is not the enactment of the agent—thus, its being preceded by nonexistence is not through the act of the agent. It thus has no connection with it. Hence, having [the previous nonexistence] as a condition for [the act] to be an act is to set as a condition that over which 10 the agent in no circumstance has any influence. As for your statement that the existent cannot be brought into existence, if you mean by this that an existence does not commence for it after nonexistence, this would be correct. If [on the other hand] you mean by this that in the state of its being existent it would not be [something] brought into existence, we have shown that it is [something] brought into existence in the state of its being existent, not in the state of its being nonexistent. For a thing is only brought into existence if the agent brings about existence; 15 and the agent is not an enactor of existence in a state of [a thing's] nonexistence, but in the state of a thing's [being in] existence [due to it]. Bringing into existence is concomitant with the agent's being that which brings about existence and the thing enacted being that which is brought into existence. [This is] because it is an expression of the relation of the thing that brings about existence to the thing whose existence is brought about. All [this obtains] with existence, not before it. Hence, there is no bringing about of existence except for an existent, if by "bringing into existence" is meant the relation through which the agent is that which brings about existence and the thing enacted that which is brought into existence.

20 (22) [The philosophers] say [further]:

(23) For this reason we have ruled that the world is the act of God from eternity and everlastingly and that there is no time wherein He is not the Enactor of it. For what is connected with the agent is existence. Hence, if the connection continues, existence continues; and if it is severed, [existence] is severed. It is not what you [theologians] imagine— 35 namely, that, if one supposes the Creator's existence to cease, the world would [still] endure, since you have thought Him to be akin to the builder [in relation to] the building. For [the builder] would cease to exist, whereas the building would remain. The continued endurance of the building is

not due to the builder, but to the dryness that holds its structure together, since, if it did not have the sustaining power—like water, for example, does not—the endurance of the original shape brought about by the act of the agent would be inconceivable.²

5 (24) [To this we] answer:

(25) The act attaches to the agent in terms of its temporal origination, not in terms of its previous nonexistence, nor in terms of its being an existent only. For, according to us, it does not attach to it in the subsequent state after origination when it [already] exists, but attaches to
10 it at the moment of its temporal origination, inasmuch as [this] is temporal origination and an exodus from nonexistence to existence. If the meaning of temporal existence is denied it, then neither its being an act nor its being attached to an agent would be intelligible. Your statement that its being temporally originated reduces to its being preceded by
15 nonexistence and [that] its being preceded by nonexistence is not the act of the agent and the deed of the maker [expresses what, in fact,] is the case. But its being preceded by nonexistence is a condition for existence to be the act of the agent. Thus, existence which is not preceded by nonexistence, but is perpetual, is not fit to be the act of the agent. Not
20 everything that is made a condition for the act to be an act should [come about] through the act of the agent. Thus, the agent's essence, his power, his will, and his knowledge are a condition for his being [an agent]. But this is not the effect of the agent. But one cannot comprehend an act unless [it proceeds] from an existent. Hence, the agent's existence, his
25 will, his power, and his knowledge [constitute] a condition for his being an agent, although these are not the effects of the agent.

(26) [To this the philosophers may] say:

(27) If you have acknowledged the possibility of the act's coexistence with the agent [rather than] its being posterior to him, then it follows
30 necessarily from this that the act would be temporally originated if the agent is temporally originated, and [the act would be] pre-eternal if [the agent] is pre-eternal. If you make it a condition that the act should be temporally posterior to the agent, this would be impossible, since, if someone moves his hand in a glass of water, the water moves with the
35 movement of the hand, neither before nor after it. For if it moved after it,

then, before [the water] gives way, the hand would be with the water in one and the same space; and if it moved before it, then the water would be separated from the hand—this with its being [simultaneous] with it [as] its effect and an act proceeding from its direction. If, then, we suppose
 5 the hand to be pre-eternal in the water, [ever] moving, then the movement of the water would also be perpetual, being, despite its perpetuity, an effect and an enacted thing. This [latter] is not prevented by supposing perpetuity. The case is similar with the relation of the world to God.

(28) [To this] we say:

10 (29) We do not deem it impossible that the act [should coexist] with the agent, [provided that] the act is created, as with the movement of the water. For it is created out of nonexistence. It is, hence, possible [for something] to be an act, regardless of whether it is posterior to the essence of the agent or concomitant with it. We only deem impossible the eternal
 15 act. For naming that which is not created out of nothing an “act” is pure metaphor, having no reality. As regards the effect with the cause, it is possible for both to be created or to be eternal, as [when] it is said that eternal knowledge is a cause for the Eternal to be a knower. This is not what is being discussed. The discussion is only concerned with what is
 20 termed an “act.” The effect of the cause is not called an act of the cause except metaphorically. Rather, what is called an act has as a condition its being created out of nothing. If someone allows himself to call the Eternal, the Permanently Existent, an³ act of another, he would be indulging in metaphor. Your statement, “If we suppose the movement of the finger
 25 and the finger to be eternal, this would not remove the movement of the water from being an act,” is obfuscation. This is because the finger has no act; rather, the agent is only the one who has the finger, and he is the one who wills [the act]. If we suppose him to be eternal, the movement of the finger would [still] be an act of his, inasmuch as each part of the movement is a temporal creation out of nothing. Considered in this way, it
 30 would be an act. As for the movement of the water, we might not say that it is a result of his action, but of the action of God. But in whatever way we take [the water’s movement in the supposition to be caused], it is an act inasmuch as it is created, except that it is eternally being created—
 35 it being an act inasmuch as it is created.

(30) [The philosophers] may say:

(31) You have, hence, acknowledged that the relation of the act to the agent, inasmuch as it exists, is akin to the relation of the effect to the cause, and then admitted that the permanence of the relation between cause [and effect] is conceivable. We do not mean by the world's being an
 5 "act" anything other than its being an effect whose relation to God, exalted be He, is permanent. If you do not call this an "act," there is no need for conflict over naming once the meanings are clear.

(32) We say:

(33) Our sole purpose in this question is to show that you have used
 10 these terms as an affectation, without [the proper] ascertaining of their real meaning; that God, according to you, is not an agent in the real sense nor the world His act in a real sense; and that the application of such a term on your part is metaphorical, having no basis in reality. And this has become manifest.

The third aspect

(34) [This is concerned with showing] the impossibility of the
 15 world's being an act of God according to their principle, due to a condition common to agent and act—namely, in that they said, "From the one only one thing proceeds." But the First Principle [they hold] is one in every respect. The world, however, is composed of varied things. Hence,
 20 as necessarily demanded by their own principle, it is inconceivable for it to be an act of God.

(35) [The philosophers] may say:

(36) The world as a whole does not proceed from God without an
 25 intermediary. Rather, what proceeds from Him is one existent which is the first of the created things. It is a pure intellect—that is, it is a substance that is self-subsisting; that has no position in space; that knows itself and knows its principle; and, in the language of the revealed law, is referred to as an "angel." A third existent proceeds from it and from
 30 the third a fourth, the existents becoming multiple through mediation. For the variance in the act and its multiplicity are due either: [(a)] to the differences in the acting powers—just as we enact with the appetitive

power that which is different from what we enact with irascible power; [(b)] to the different materials—just as the sun whitens the washed garments, darkens the face of man, melts some substances, and solidifies some; [(c)] to differences in the instruments [used]—as with the one
 5 carpenter who saws with the saw, chisels with the adz, and bores holes with the drill; or [(d)] the multiplicity in the act comes about through mediation where one act is performed, then that act enacts another, the act *thereby becoming multiple*.

(37) All these divisions are impossible with respect to the First Principle, since there is neither difference, nor duality, nor multiplicity in His
 10 essence, as will be shown in the proofs of divine unity. Moreover, there is no difference in materials. For the discussion would [then] pertain to the first effect and that which is first matter, for example.⁴ And, moreover, there is no difference in instrument, since there is no existent having the same
 15 rank as God. The discussion would then pertain [only] to the origination of the first instrument. Thus, there only remains for the multiplicity in the world to proceed from God by way of mediation, as mentioned earlier.

(38) We say:

(39) It follows necessarily from this that there will be no one thing in
 20 the world that is composed of individuals. Rather, all the existents would be ones, each one the effect of another one above it and the cause of another below it, until an effect without an effect is reached, just as [this chain] terminates in the direction of ascent with a cause that has no
 25 cause. But this is not the case. For body, according to them, is composed of form and matter, becoming by their combination one thing. [Again,] man is composed of body and soul, the existence of neither being from the other, the existence of both being through another cause. The heavenly sphere, according to them, is likewise. For it is a body with a soul
 30 where neither is the soul caused by the body nor the body by the soul, both proceeding from a cause other than both. How, then, did these composites come into existence? [Did they come about] from one [simple] cause—in which case their statement that from the one only one proceeds becomes false—or from a composite cause? [If the latter,] then the

question becomes directed to the composition of the cause [and is pursued] until one arrives at [the conclusion that] a composite necessarily meets a simple. For the principle is simple, whereas in [all] other [things] there is composition. This is inconceivable unless [the simple and the complex] meet; and, inasmuch as a meeting takes place, [the philosophers'] statement that from the one only one proceeds becomes false.

(40) [The philosophers may] say:

(41) Once our doctrine is [properly] known, the difficulty is resolved. Existents divide into those that are in receptacles, such as accidents and forms, and those that are not in receptacles. These [latter] divide into those, like bodies, that are receptacles for others and those that are not receptacles, such as the existents that are self-subsisting substances. These [in turn] divide into those that exert influence on bodies—and these we call souls—and those that do not exert influence on bodies, but only on souls, which we call pure intellects. As for the existents, such as accidents, that indwell in receptacles, these are temporal and have temporal causes that terminate in a principle that is in one respect temporal and in one respect permanent—namely, the circular [celestial] motion, which, however, is not the object of the discussion. The discussion is only concerned with the principles that are self-subsistent that do not [inhere] in receptacles. These are three: [(1)] bodies, which are the lowliest; [(2)] pure intellects that do not relate to bodies, either through the relation of action or by being impressed [in them], these being the noblest; [(3)] souls, which hold the middle ground. For these [souls] attach to bodies in some manner of attachment—namely, the exertion of influence and action on them. They are, hence, medial in the rank of value. For they are influenced by the intellects and exert influence on bodies.

(42) Moreover, the bodies are ten: nine heavens and a tenth which [consists of] the matter which is the filling of the concavity of the sphere of the moon. The nine heavens are animals that have bodies and souls and have an order in existence, which we will [now] mention.

(43) From the existence of the First Principle the first intellect emanated, it being a self-subsisting existent, neither body nor imprinted in body, that knows itself and knows its principle. (We have named it “the first intellect,” but there is no need for dispute about names—
 5 whether it is called “angel,” “intellect,” or whatever one wishes). From its existence three things are rendered necessary: an intellect; the soul of the most distant [that is, the outermost] sphere, which is the ninth heaven; and the body of the most distant sphere. Then, from the second intellect, there necessarily [comes into existence] a third intellect: the
 10 soul of the sphere of the [fixed] stars, and its body. Then, from the third intellect there necessarily [proceeds] a fourth intellect: the soul of Saturn and its body. From the fourth intellect there necessarily [comes into existence] a fifth intellect: the soul of the sphere of Jupiter and its body. [The process continues] in this manner until it reaches the intellect
 15 from which proceeds [the existence] of the [last] intellect: the soul of the sphere of the moon and its body. The last intellect is the one termed “the active intellect.” That which fills the sphere of the moon—namely, matter subject to generation and corruption—[proceeds] necessarily from the active intellect and the natures of the spheres. The matters intermix due to the motion of the stars in various combinations from which the minerals, plants, and animals come about. It does not follow necessarily that from each intellect another intellect would ensue without end. For these intellects are of different species,⁵ so that what holds for one does not necessarily hold for the other.

(44) From [all] this, it comes out that the intellects, after the First Principle, are ten in number, and the spheres nine. The sum of these noble principles, after the First [Principle], is nineteen. From this it [also] comes out that under each of the first intellects there are three things: an intellect, the soul of a sphere, and its body. Hence, there must necessarily be a trinity in the principle [of each of these intellects]. No multiplicity is conceivable in the first effect except in one respect—namely, in that it intellectually apprehends its principle and intellectually apprehends itself. [Now,] with respect to itself, it is [only] possible of existence because the necessity of its existence is through another, not itself. These,
 30 then, are three different meanings, and the noblest of the three effects

ought to be related to the noblest of these meanings. Thus, an intellect proceeds from it inasmuch as it intellectually apprehends its principle. The soul of the sphere proceeds from it inasmuch as it intellectually apprehends itself, whereas the body of the sphere proceeds from it inasmuch as it in itself is [only] possible of existence.

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(45) It remains [for the opponent] to say, “Whence did this trinity in the first effect come about when its principle is one?” We say:

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(46) Nothing proceeded from the First Principle except one [thing]: namely, the essence of this intellect by which it apprehends itself intellectually. It has as a necessary consequence—not, however, from the direction of the Principle—that it apprehends the Principle intellectually.⁶ In itself it is possible of existence; but it does not derive [this] possibility from the First Principle, but [has it] due to itself. We do not deem it improbable that, from the one, one comes into existence, where the [latter] effect would have as a necessary concomitant—[but] not from the direction of the First Principle—necessary matters, relative or non-relative, because of which multiplicity comes about, [this effect] becoming thereby the principle for the existence of plurality. In this manner, then, it becomes possible for the composite to meet the simple, since such a meeting is inevitable; and it can only happen in this way. This, then, is the way the [matter] must be adjudged. This, then, is the discourse explaining their doctrine.

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(47) [To this] we say:

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(48) What you have mentioned are arbitrary assertions which, when truly ascertained, constitute [nothing but] darkness atop darkness. If a human were to relate this as something seen in sleep, one would infer from it the illness of his temperament; or, if its kind were brought about in legal matters, where the most one can hope for is conjecture, it would be said that these are trifles that bestow no likely suppositions. The [possible] openings in objecting to such [statements] are limitless. We will, however, bring forth aspects that are limited in number.

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(49) The first is to say: “You have claimed that one of the meanings of plurality in the first effect is that it is possible of existence.” [To this we] say: “Is its being possible of existence identical with its existence or other than it? If identical, then no plurality would arise from it; and, if other than it, then why would you not say that there is plurality in the First Principle because He exists and, in addition to this, He is necessary of existence?” For the necessity of existence is other than existence itself. Let one then

allow the proceeding of various things from Him due to this plurality. If it is said, "There is no meaning to the necessary of existence except existence," then [we would say that] there is no meaning to the possibility of existence except existence. If you then say, "It is possible to know its being an existent without knowing its being possible; hence, [being possible] is other than it," [we would say that,] similarly with the Necessary Existent, it is possible to know His existence without knowing its necessity except after another proof; hence, let [the necessity] be other than Him.

(50) In sum, existence is a general thing that divides into the necessary and the contingent. If, then, the differentia in one of the two divisions is additional to the general [meaning], the same applies to the second differentia. There is no difference [between the two].

(51) If it is then said, "The possibility of existence belongs to it from itself, whereas its existence derives from another; then how would that which belongs to it from itself and that which it has from another be the same?" we say:

(52) How can the necessity of existence be identical with existence, when the necessity of existence can be denied and existence affirmed?⁷ The true one⁸ in every respect is the one not subject to [simultaneous] affirmation and negation, since it cannot be said of it that it exists and does not exist and that it is necessary of existence and not necessary of existence. But it is possible to say that [something] exists but is not necessary of existence, just as it can be said that it exists and is not possible of existence. It is through this that unity is known. Hence, it would be incorrect to suppose this [identity of the necessity of existence and existence] in the case of the First, if what they say—namely, that the possibility of existence is other than existence that is possible—is true.

(53) The second objection is to say: "Is [the first intellect's] intellectual apprehension of its Principle identical with its existence and identical with its apprehension of itself, or is it another?" If identical, then there is no plurality in its essence—only in the verbal expression about its essence. If another, then this plurality exists in the First. For He intellectually apprehends His essence and intellectually apprehends [what is] other. If they claim [(a)] that His intellectual apprehension of Himself is His very self, [(b)] that He only apprehends Himself if He apprehends that He is a principle for another, [and (c)] that [this is] because the act of intellectual apprehension⁹ coincides with the apprehended intelligible, whereby [His apprehending another] reverts to [being] His [very] essence, we say:

(54) The [first] effect's intellectual apprehension of itself is identical with itself. For it is intellect in its substance, and thus it intellectually apprehends itself. Intellect, that which intellectually apprehends, and that of it which is intellectually apprehended are also one. Moreover, if
 5 its intellectual apprehension of itself is identical with itself, then let it apprehend itself as an effect of a cause. For this is the case. Intellect and intelligible coincide, all thus reverting to the essence [of the first effect]. Hence, there is no multiplicity. If this were to constitute plurality, then it would exist in the First. Let, then, the varied things proceed from Him.
 10 And let us then forsake the claim of His unity in every respect, if unity ceases with this kind of plurality.

(55) If it is then said, "The First does not apprehend intellectually [that which is] other than Himself. His intellectual apprehension of Himself is identical with Himself, intellect, intellectual apprehension,
 15 and what is apprehended being one [and the same]; and [thus] He does not intellectually apprehend another," we answer in two ways:

(56) One is that because of the repugnancy of this doctrine Avicenna and the rest of the exacting [philosophers] abandoned it. They claimed that the First knows Himself as the source for what emanates from Him and intellectually apprehends all the existents in their [various] kinds by
 20 a universal, not particular, intellectual apprehension, since they deemed it reprehensible for one to say that from the First Principle only an intellect proceeds and then that He does not intellectually apprehend what proceeds from Him. And His effect [those who hold that the First knows only Himself then maintain]¹⁰ is an intellect from which another intellect, the soul of a sphere, and a body of a sphere emanate. [This other intel-
 25 lect] apprehends itself, its three effects, its [own] cause, and its principle.

(57) The effect [it should be pointed out] would thus be nobler than the cause, inasmuch as from the cause only one [existent] emanated,
 30 whereas from this one three emanated. Moreover, the First apprehends intellectually only Himself, whereas this [effect] apprehends itself, the Principle itself, and the effects themselves. Whoever is content [with holding] that what he says about God reduces to this level would have rendered Him lower than every existent that apprehends itself and Him.
 35 For that which apprehends Him and apprehends itself is nobler than He, since He apprehends only Himself.

(58) Hence, their endeavor to go deep into magnifying [God] has ended up in their negating everything that is understood by greatness. They have rendered His state approximating that of the dead person who

has no information of what takes place in the world, differing from the dead, however, only in His self-awareness. This is what God does with those who are deviators from His path and destroyers of the way of guidance; who deny His saying, “I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor the creation of themselves” [Qurʿān 18:51]; who think of God in evil terms; who believe that the depth of the “lordly” things is grasped by the human faculties; who are full of conceit about their minds, claiming that they have in them a [better] alternative to the tradition of imitating the apostles and following them. No wonder, then, that they are forced to acknowledge that the substance of their intellectual apprehensions reduces to that which would be astonishing [even] if it were uttered in a slumber.

(59) The second answer is that whoever upholds that the First intellectually apprehends only Himself [has done so] to avoid plurality as a necessary consequence. For, if he were to uphold [the doctrine that He knows other than Himself], then it would follow necessarily that one must say that His apprehending another is other than His apprehending Himself. But this is [also] necessary with the first effect, and, hence, it ought to apprehend [nothing] but itself. For, if it apprehends the First or another, then this act of intellectual apprehension would be other than itself; and it would require a cause other than the cause of itself when there is no cause other than the cause of itself—namely, the First Principle. Hence, it ought to know only itself, and the plurality that ensues in [the] way [the philosophers hold] ceases.

(60) If it is said, “When it came into existence and apprehended itself, it became necessary for it to apprehend the Principle,” we say:

(61) Did this become necessary for it by a cause or without a cause? If by a cause, there is no cause except the First Principle. He is one, and it is inconceivable that anything but one should proceed from Him. And this [one thing] has [already] proceeded—namely, the effect. How, then, did the second [thing, the necessity of the first effect to apprehend Him,] proceed from Him? If [on the other hand] it became necessary without a cause, let, then, the existence of the First [Principle] be followed necessarily by numerous existents without a cause, and let plurality be their resultant consequence. If this is incomprehensible—inasmuch as necessary existence cannot be but one, that which is more than one being [only] possible, the possible requiring a cause—then this thing which is necessary in terms of the [first] effect [—namely, that it must apprehend the First Principle—would have to be either necessary in itself or possible]. But if [it is] necessary in itself, then [the philosophers’] statement that the Necessary Existent is one becomes false. If possible, then it must require a cause. But it has no

cause. Its existence is, hence, incomprehensible. Nor is [this necessity of apprehending the First] a necessity [required] by the first effect by reason of its being possible of existence. For the possibility of existence is necessary in every effect. As for an effect's having knowledge of its cause, this is not necessary for its existence, just as the cause's being cognizant of its effect is not necessary for its existence. Rather, the concomitance [of a cause] and the knowledge of [its] effect is more evident than the concomitance [of an effect] and the knowledge of [its] cause. It becomes clear, then, that the plurality resulting from [the first effect's] knowledge of its principle is impossible. For there is no initiating principle for this [knowledge], and it is not a necessary consequence of the existence of the effect itself. This also is inescapable.

(62) The third objection is [to ask]: "Is the first effect's intellectual apprehension of its own essence identical with its essence or other than it?" If it is identical, this would be impossible, because knowledge is other than the object known. If it is other, then let this be the same with the First Principle: plurality would then necessarily ensue from Him. Moreover, there would necessarily proceed from [the first effect] a quadruplication and not, as they claim, a trinity [of existents]. For this would consist of [the first effect] itself, its apprehension of itself, its apprehension of its Principle, and its being in itself possible of existence. One could also add that it is necessary of existence through another, wherewith a quintuplicating would appear. By this one gets to know the deep delving of these [philosophers] into lunacy.

(63) The fourth objection is for us to say: "Trinity in the first effect does not suffice." For the body of the first heaven, according to them, proceeds necessarily from one idea in the essence of [its] principle. [But] in it there is composition in three respects.

(64) One of them is that it is composed of form and matter—this, according to them, being applicable to every body. It is incumbent, then, that each of the two should have a [different] principle, since form differs from matter. Neither one of them, according to their doctrine, is an independent cause of the other, whereby one of them would come about through the mediation of the other without another additional cause.

(65) The second is that the outermost body is of a specific extent in size. Its having this specific quantity from among the rest of quantities is something additional to the existence of itself, since it can be smaller

or larger than it is. It must have, then, something that specifies that quantity—[something] which is additional to the simple idea that necessitates its existence and which is unlike the existence of the intellect. For [the latter] is pure existence, unspecified with a quantity contrary to all
 5 other quantities, so that one can say that [the intellect] needs only a simple cause. If it is said, “The reason for this is that, if it were larger than it is, it would not be needed for realizing the universal order; and, if smaller, it would not be suitable for the intended order,” we say:

(66) Is the assigning of the mode of the order sufficient for the existence of that through which the order comes to be, or does it need a cause that brings about [the latter’s] existence? If sufficient, then you would not need to posit causes. Rule, then, that the existence of order in these existents decreed these existents without an additional cause. If not sufficient, but requiring a cause, then this also would not be sufficient to specify
 10 quantities, but would also require a cause for composition.

(67) The third is that the outermost heaven divides along two points, these being the two poles. These two are of fixed positions, never departing from their positions, while the parts of the zone differ in position. For then it follows either [(a)] that all parts of the outermost heaven are similar, [and hence it can be asked,] “Why was the assigning of two points from among the rest of the points to be the two poles rendered necessary?” or [(b)] their parts are different. In some, then, there would be special characteristics not [found] in others. What, then, is the principle of these differences, when the outermost body proceeded only from one simple idea, and when the simple necessitates only what is simple in shape (namely, the spherical) and what is similar in idea (namely, one devoid of differentiated characteristics)? From this, also, there is no escape [for them].
 15 20 25

(68) It may be said: “Perhaps there are in the principle [of these differences] kinds of multiplicity that are necessary, [but] not from the direction of the [First] Principle, of which only three or four have become apparent to us and of the rest [of which] we have no knowledge. Our not coming across [the rest] in the concrete does not make us doubt that the principle of multiplicity is multiple and that from the one the many do not proceed.” [To this] we say:
 30

(69) If you allow this, then say that all the existents, with all their great number—and they are in the thousands—have proceeded from the first effect, and there is no need to restrict [what proceeds from it] to the body of the outermost heaven and its soul. Rather, it is possible that all celestial and human souls, all terrestrial and celestial bodies, have proceeded from it with many kinds of multiplicity necessary in them [that] they have not known. Hence, there would be no need for the first effect. Furthermore, from this there follows the absence of [any] need for the First Cause. For, if the generation of plurality that is said to be necessary without a cause, even though not necessary for the existence of the first effect, is permitted, it becomes allowed to suppose this with the First Cause and [to suppose] that their existence would be without a cause. It would then be said that these are necessary, but their number is not known. Whenever their existence without a cause with the First [Cause] is imagined, this [existence] without a cause is imagined with the second [cause]. Indeed, there is no meaning to our saying “[their being] with the First [Cause]” and “[with] the second,” since there is no difference between them in either time or space. For that which does not differ from the two in space and time and can exist without a cause will not have one of the two [rather than the other] specifically related to it.

(70) If it is said, “Things have become numerous so as to exceed a thousand, and it is unlikely that multiplicity in the first effect should reach this extent, and for this reason we have increased the [number of] intermediaries,” we say:

(71) Someone’s saying, “This is unlikely,” is sheer supposition in terms of which no judgment is made in rational [arguments], unless he says, “It would be impossible,” in which case we would then say:

(72) Why would it be impossible? What prevents it, and what [operative] deciding criterion is there, once we go beyond the one and believe that it is possible [that there may] follow necessarily from the first effect—not by way of the [First] Cause—one, two, or three concomitants? What would render four, five, and so on up to a thousand impossible? Otherwise, [when] anyone arbitrarily decides on one quantity rather than another, then, after going beyond the one, there is nothing to prevent [greater numbers]. This [answer] is also conclusive.

(73) We further say: "This is false with respect to the second effect. For from it proceeded the sphere of the fixed stars, which includes over twelve hundred stars. These vary in size, shape, position, color, influence— in being bad omens and in being omens of bliss. Some have the figure
 5 of the ram, [some] of the bull, [some] of the lion, [some] the figure of a human. Their influence in one place in the lower world differs in terms of cooling [or] heating [or] bringing about good and bad luck. Moreover, their sizes differ in themselves. Thus, with all these differences, it cannot be said that the whole constitutes one species. If this were possible, it
 10 would be possible to say that all the bodies of the world are one in corporeality, and, hence, it would be sufficient for them to have one cause. If, then, the differences in the qualities [of the bodies of the world], their substances, and [their] natures indicate their differences, then likewise the fixed stars are necessarily different, each requiring a cause for its form;
 15 a cause for its matter; a cause for its having a particular nature that either heats [or] cools, brings about a good omen or a bad omen; [a cause] for its belonging specifically to its place; and [a cause] for [the resemblance of] their groups to specific figures of different beasts. And, if the intellectual apprehension of this multiplicity is conceivable in the second effect, it is conceivable in the first effect, wherewith there comes about the dispensing [with the second effect]."

(74) The fifth objection is that we say:

(75) We will concede these insipid postulates and false arbitrary [assertions]. But how is it that you are not embarrassed by your statement
 25 that the first effect, being possible of existence, required the existence from it of the outermost sphere, [that] its intellectual apprehension of itself required the existence from it of the soul of the sphere, and [that] its apprehension of the First requires the existence from it of an intellect? What is the difference between this and someone who—knowing
 30 the existence of a man who is absent, [knowing] that [such a man] is possible of existence, [knowing] that he apprehends himself and his Maker—then [goes on to] say: "The existence of a celestial sphere follows necessarily from [this man's] being possible of existence"? To this it would then be said: "What relationship is there between his being
 35 possible of existence and the existence from him of a celestial sphere?" Similarly, from his intellectual apprehension of himself and of his Maker, two things would have to follow necessarily. This, when spoken of in

terms of a human, evokes [nothing but] laughter, and it would [evoke] the same [when said of any] other existent. For the possibility of existence is a proposition that does not differ with the difference of that which is possible, be this a human, an angel, or a celestial sphere. I do not know how [even] a madman would in himself be satisfied by the likes of such postulates, to say nothing of [those] rational people who split hairs in what they claim in matters intellectual.

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(76) It may be said:

(77) If you have refuted their doctrine, what do you yourselves say?

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Do you claim that, from the thing that is one in every respect, two different things proceed, thereby affronting what is intelligible; would you say that the First Principle possesses multiplicity, thereby abandoning divine unity; would you say that there is no plurality in the world, denying thereby [the evidence of] the senses; or, would you say that [plurality] is necessitated through intermediaries, being compelled thereby to acknowledge what [the philosophers] say?

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(78) We say:

(79) We have not plunged into this book in the manner of one who is introducing [doctrine], our purpose being to disrupt their claims—and this has been effected. Nonetheless, we say: “Whoever claims that what-
 20 ever leads to the proceeding of two things from one is an affront to reason, or that describing the First Principle as having eternal, everlasting attributes contradicts [the doctrine of] divine unity, [should note] that these two claims are false and [that the philosophers] have no demonstration to prove them.” For the impossibility of the proceeding of two
 25 things from one is not known in the way the impossibility of an individual’s being in two places is known. In brief, this is known neither through [rational] necessity nor through theoretical reflection. What is there to prevent one from saying that the First Principle is knowing, powerful,
 30 willing; that He enacts as He wishes, governs what He wills, creates things that are varied and things that are homogeneous as He wills and in the way He wills? The impossibility of this is known neither through rational necessity nor through theoretical reflection. [That this is the
 35 case] has been conveyed by the prophets, [and the veracity of their prophethood has been] supported by miracles. Hence, it must be accepted. Investigating the manner of the act’s proceeding from God through will is presumption and a coveting of what is unattainable. The end product of the reflection of those who have coveted seeking [this]

relationship and knowing it reduces to [the notion] that the first effect, inasmuch as it is possible of existence, [results in the] procession from it of a celestial sphere; and, inasmuch as it intellectually apprehends itself, the soul of the sphere proceeds from it. This is stupidity, not the showing
5 of a relationship.

(80) Let, then, the principles of these things be accepted from the prophets, and let [the philosophers] believe in them, since reason does not render [these principles] impossible. Let investigating quality, quantity, and quiddity be abandoned. For this is not something which the human
10 faculties can encompass. And, for this reason, the one who conveyed the religious law has said: "Think on the creation of God and do not think on the essence of God."

AVERROES

*THE BOOK OF THE DECISIVE TREATISE,
DETERMINING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE LAW AND WISDOM*

Translated, with introduction and notes, by

Charles E. Butterworth

In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate; may God be prayed to for Muhammad and his family and may they be accorded peace.

[I. INTRODUCTION]

1. The jurist, imam, judge, and uniquely learned Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd, may God be pleased with him, said: Praise be to God with all praises and a prayer for Muhammad, His chosen servant and messenger. Now the goal of this statement is for us to investigate, from the perspective of Law-based¹ reflection, whether reflection upon philosophy and the sciences of logic is permitted, prohibited, or commanded -- and this as a recommendation or as an obligation -- by the Law.

[II. THAT PHILOSOPHY AND LOGIC ARE OBLIGATORY]

[A. THAT PHILOSOPHY IS OBLIGATORY]

2. So we say: If the activity of philosophy is nothing more than reflection upon existing things and consideration of them insofar as they are an indication of the Artisan -- I mean, insofar as they are artifacts, for existing things indicate the Artisan only through cognizance² of the art in them, and the more complete cognizance of the art in them is, the more complete is cognizance of the Artisan -- and if the Law has recommended and urged consideration of existing things, then it is evident that what this name indicates is either obligatory or recommended by the Law.

That the Law calls for consideration of existing things by means of the intellect and for pursuing cognizance of them by means of it is evident from various [2] verses in the Book of God, may He be blessed and exalted.³ There is His statement, may He be exalted, "Consider, you who have sight" (59:2); this is a text for the obligation of using both intellectual and Law-based syllogistic reasoning.⁴ And there is His statement, may He be exalted, "Have they not reflected upon the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth and what things God has created?" (7:185); this is a text urging reflection upon all existing things. And God, may He be exalted, has made it known that one of those whom He selected and venerated by means of this knowledge was Abraham, peace upon him; thus He, may He be exalted, said: "And in this way we made Abraham see the kingdoms of the heavens and the

earth, that he might be . . ." [and so on to the end of] the verse (6:75).⁵ And He, may He be exalted, said: "Do they not reflect upon the camels, how they have been created, and upon the heaven, how it has been raised up?" (88:17). And He said: "And they ponder the creation of the heavens and the earth" (3:191), and so on in innumerable other verses.

[B. THE CASE FOR SYLLOGISTIC REASONING]

3. Since it has been determined that the Law makes it obligatory to reflect upon existing things by means of the intellect and to consider them; and consideration is nothing more than inferring and drawing out the unknown from the known; and this is syllogistic reasoning or by means of syllogistic reasoning; therefore, it is obligatory that we go about reflecting upon the existing things by means of intellectual syllogistic reasoning. And it is evident that this manner of reflection the Law calls for and urges is the most complete kind of reflection by means of the most complete kind of syllogistic reasoning and is the one called "demonstration."

4. Since the Law has urged cognizance of God, may He be exalted, and of all of the things existing through Him by means of demonstration; and it is preferable or even necessary that anyone who wants to know God, may He be blessed and exalted, and all of the existing things by means of demonstration set out first to know the kinds of demonstrations, their conditions, and in what [way] demonstrative syllogistic reasoning differs from dialectical, rhetorical, and sophistical syllogistic reasoning; and that is not possible unless, prior to that, he sets out to become cognizant of what unqualified syllogistic reasoning is, how many kinds of it there are, and which of them is syllogistic reasoning and which not; and that is not possible either unless, prior to that, he sets out to become cognizant of the parts of which syllogistic reasoning is composed -- I mean, the premises and their kinds; therefore, the one who has faith⁶ in the Law and follows its command to reflect upon existing things perhaps comes under the obligation to set out, before reflecting, to become cognizant of these things whose status [3] with respect to reflection is that of tools to work.

For just as the jurist infers from the command to obtain juridical understanding of the statutes the obligation to become cognizant of the kinds of juridical syllogistic reasoning and which of them is syllogistic reasoning and which not, so, too, is it obligatory for the one cognizant [of God] to infer from the command to reflect upon the beings the obligation to become cognizant of intellectual syllogistic reasoning and its kinds. Nay, it is even more fitting that he do so, for if the jurist infers from His statement, may He be exalted, "Consider,

you who have sight" (59:2), the obligation to become cognizant of juridical syllogistic reasoning, then how much more fitting is it that the one cognizant of God infer from that the obligation to become cognizant of intellectual syllogistic reasoning.

It is not for someone to say: "Now this kind of reflection about intellectual syllogistic reasoning is a heretical innovation since it did not exist in the earliest days [of Islam]." For reflection upon juridical syllogistic reasoning and its kinds is also something inferred after the earliest days; yet it is not opined to be a heretical innovation. So it is obligatory to believe the same about reflection upon intellectual syllogistic reasoning -- and for this there is a reason, but this is not the place to mention it. Moreover, most of the adherents to this religion support intellectual syllogistic reasoning except for a small group of strict literalists, and they are refuted by the texts [of the Quran].

5. Since it has been determined that the Law makes reflection upon intellectual syllogistic reasoning and its kinds obligatory, just as it makes reflection upon juridical syllogistic reasoning obligatory; therefore, it is evident that, if someone prior to us has not set out to investigate intellectual syllogistic reasoning and its kinds, it is obligatory for us to begin to investigate it and for the one who comes after to rely upon the one who preceded⁷ so that cognizance of it might be perfected. For it is difficult or impossible for one person to grasp all that he needs of this by himself and from the beginning, just as it is difficult for one person to infer all he needs to be cognizant of concerning the kinds of juridical syllogistic reasoning. Nay, this is even more the case with being cognizant of intellectual syllogistic reasoning.

6. If someone other than us has already investigated that, it is evidently obligatory for us to rely on what the one who has preceded us says about what we are pursuing, regardless of whether that other person shares our religion or not. For when a valid sacrifice is performed by means of a tool, [4] no consideration is given, with respect to the validity of the sacrifice, as to whether the tool belongs to someone who shares in our religion or not so long as it fulfills the conditions for validity. And by "not sharing [in our religion]," I mean those Ancients who reflected upon these things before the religion of Islam.

7. Since this is the case; and all that is needed with respect to reflection about the matter of intellectual syllogistic reasonings has been investigated by the Ancients in the most complete manner; therefore, we ought perhaps to seize

their books in our hands and reflect upon what they have said about that. And if it is all correct, we will accept it from them; whereas if there is anything not correct in it, we will alert [people] to it.

8. Since we have finished with this type of reflection and have acquired the tools by which we are able to consider existing things and the indication of artfulness in them -- for one who is not cognizant of the artfulness is not cognizant of what has been artfully made, and one who is not cognizant of what has been artfully made is not cognizant of the Artisan -- therefore, it is perhaps obligatory that we start investigating existing things according to the order and manner we have gained from the art of becoming cognizant about demonstrative syllogisms. It is evident, moreover, that this goal is completed for us with respect to existing things only when they are investigated successively by one person after another and when in doing so the one coming after makes use of the one having preceded -- along the lines of what occurs in the mathematical sciences.

For, if we were to assume the art of geometry and likewise the art of astronomy to be non-existent in this time of ours, and if a single man wished to discern on his own the sizes of the heavenly bodies, their shapes, and their distances from one another, that would not be possible for him -- for example, to become cognizant of the size of the sun with respect to the earth and other things about the sizes of the planets -- not even if he were by nature the most intelligent person, unless it were by means of revelation or something resembling revelation. Indeed, if it were said to him that the sun is about 150 or 160 times greater than the earth, he would count this statement as madness on the part of the one who makes it.⁸ And this is something for which a demonstration has been brought forth in astronomy and which no one adept in that science doubts.

There is hardly any need to use an example from the art of mathematics, for reflection upon this art [5] of the roots of jurisprudence, and jurisprudence itself, has been perfected only over a long period of time. If someone today wished to grasp on his own all of the proofs inferred by those in the legal schools who reflect upon the controversial questions debated⁹ in most Islamic countries, even excepting the Maghrib,¹⁰ he would deserve to be laughed at because that would be impossible for him -- in addition to having already been done. This is a self-evident matter not only with respect to the scientific arts, but also with respect to the practical ones. For there is not an art among them that a single person can bring about on his own. So how can this be done with the art of arts, namely, wisdom?¹¹

9. Since this is so, if we find that our predecessors in

former nations have reflected upon existing things and considered them according to what is required by the conditions of demonstration, it is perhaps obligatory for us to reflect upon what they say about that and upon what they establish in their books. Thus we will accept, rejoice in, and thank them for whatever agrees with the truth; and we will alert to, warn against, and excuse them for whatever does not agree with the truth.

10. From this it has become evident that reflection upon the books of the Ancients is obligatory according to the Law, for their aim and intention in their books is the very intention to which the Law urges us. And [it has become evident] that whoever forbids reflection upon them by anyone suited to reflect upon them -- namely, anyone who unites two qualities, the first being innate intelligence and the second Law-based justice and moral virtue -- surely bars people from the door through which the Law calls them to cognizance of God, namely, the door of reflection leading to true cognizance of Him. That is extreme ignorance and estrangement from God, may He be exalted.

If someone goes astray in reflection and stumbles -- due either to a deficiency in his innate disposition, poor ordering of his reflection, his being overwhelmed by his passions, his not finding a teacher to guide him to an understanding of what is in them, or because of a combination of all or more than one of these reasons -- it does not follow that they¹² are to be forbidden to the one [6] who is suited to reflect upon them. For this manner of harm coming about due to them is something that attaches to them by accident, not by essence. It is not obligatory to renounce something useful in its nature and essence because of something harmful existing in it by accident. That is why he [i.e., the Prophet], peace upon him, said to the one who complained about having been ordered to give his brother honey to drink for his diarrhea because the diarrhea increased when he was given the honey to drink: "God spoke the truth, whereas your brother's stomach lied."¹³

Indeed, we say that anyone who prevents someone suited to reflect upon the books of wisdom from doing so on the grounds that it is supposed some vicious people became perplexed due to reflecting upon them is like one who prevents thirsty people from drinking cool, fresh water until they die of thirst because some people choked on it and died. For dying by choking on water is an accidental matter, whereas [dying] by thirst is an essential, necessary matter. And what occurred through this art is something accidental [occurring] through the rest of the arts. To how many jurists has jurisprudence been a cause of diminished devoutness and immersion in this world! Indeed, we find most jurists to be like this, yet what their art requires in essence

is practical virtue. Therefore, it is not strange that there occurs with respect to the art requiring scientific virtue what occurs with respect to the art requiring practical virtue.

[III. THAT DEMONSTRATION ACCORDS WITH THE LAW]

[A. THE LAW CALLS TO HUMANS BY THREE METHODS]

11. Since all of this has been determined; and we, the Muslim community, believe that this divine Law of ours is true and is 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 the method of assent his temperament and nature require.

That is because people's natures vary in excellence with respect to assent. Thus, some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of 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 [7] called to people by means of these three methods, assent to it was extended to every human being -- except to the one who denies it obstinately in speech or for whom no methods have been determined in it for summoning to God, may He be exalted, due to his own neglect of that. Therefore, he [i.e., the Prophet], peace upon him, was selected to be sent to "the red and the black"¹⁴ -- I mean, because of his Law containing [different] methods of calling to God, may He be exalted. And that is manifest in His statement: "Call to the path of your Lord by wisdom, fine preaching, and arguing with them by means of what is finest" (16:125).

[B. DEMONSTRATION DOES NOT DIFFER FROM THE LAW]

12. Since this Law is true and calls to the reflection leading to cognizance of the truth, we the Muslim community know firmly that demonstrative reflection does not lead to differing with what is set down in the Law. For truth does not oppose truth; rather, it agrees with and bears witness to it.

13. Since this is so, if demonstrative reflection leads to any manner of cognizance about any existing thing, that existing thing cannot escape either being passed over in silence in the Law or being made cognizant in it. If it is passed over in silence, there is no contradiction here; it has the status of the statutes passed over in silence that the jurist infers by means of Law-based syllogistic reasoning. If the Law does pronounce

about it, the apparent sense of the pronouncement cannot escape either being in agreement with what demonstration leads to or being different from it. If it is in agreement, there is no argument here. And if it is different, that is where an interpretation is pursued. The meaning of interpretation is: drawing out the figurative significance of an utterance from its true significance¹⁵ without violating the custom of the Arabic language with respect to figurative speech in doing so -- such as calling a thing by what resembles it, its cause, its consequence, what compares to it, or another of the things enumerated in making the sorts of figurative discourse cognizable.

14. Since the jurist does this with respect to many of the Law-based statutes, how much more fitting is it for the one adhering to demonstrative science to do so. The jurist has only a syllogism based on supposition, whereas the one who is cognizant has a syllogism based on certainty. And we firmly affirm that whenever demonstration leads to something differing from the apparent sense of the Law, [8] that apparent sense admits of interpretation according to the rule of interpretation in Arabic.

No Muslim doubts this proposition, nor is any faithful person suspicious of it. Its certainty has been greatly increased for anyone who has pursued this idea, tested it, and has as an intention this reconciling of what is intellected with what is transmitted. Indeed, we say that whenever the apparent sense of a pronouncement about something in the Law differs from what demonstration leads to, if the Law is considered and all of its parts scrutinized, there will invariably be found in the utterances of the Law something whose apparent sense bears witness, or comes close to bearing witness, to that interpretation.

Because of this idea Muslims have formed a consensus¹⁶ that it is not obligatory for all the utterances of the Law to be taken in their apparent sense nor for all of them to be drawn out from their apparent sense by means of interpretation, though they disagree about which ones are to be interpreted and which not interpreted. The Ash'arites,¹⁷ for example, interpret the verse about God's directing Himself (2:29) and the Tradition about His descent,¹⁸ whereas the Hanbalites¹⁹ take them in their apparent sense.

The reason an apparent and an inner sense are set down in the Law is the difference in people's innate dispositions and the variance in their innate capacities for assent. The reason contradictory apparent senses are set down in it is to alert "those well-grounded in science" to the interpretation that reconciles them. This idea is pointed to in His statement, may He be exalted, "He it is who has sent down to you the book; in

it, there are fixed verses . . ." on to His statement "and those well-grounded in science" (3:7).²⁰

15. If someone were to say: "Muslims have formed a consensus that in the Law are things to be taken in their apparent sense and things to be interpreted, and there are things about which they disagree. So, is it permissible for demonstration to lead to interpreting what they have formed a consensus to take in its apparent sense or to taking in its apparent sense what they have formed a consensus to interpret?" We would say: If the consensus were established by a method of certainty, it would not be valid [to do so]; but if the consensus about them were suppositional, then it would be valid [to do so]. That is why Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī], Abū al-Ma'ālī,²¹ and others from among the leading thinkers²² said that unbelief is to be affirmed of no one for going against consensus by interpreting things like these.

What may indicate to you that consensus is not to be determined with certainty about theoretical matters²³ as it is possible for it to be determined about practical matters is that it is not possible [9] for consensus to be determined about a particular question at a particular epoch unless: that epoch is delimited by us; all the learned men existing in that epoch are known to us, I mean, known as individuals and in their total number; the doctrine of each one of them on the question is transmitted to us by means of an uninterrupted transmission;²⁴ and, in addition to all this, it has been certified to us that the learned men existing at that time agreed that there is not an apparent and an inner sense to the Law, that it is obligatory that knowledge of every question be concealed from no one, and that there is only one method for people to know the Law.

It has been transmitted that many in the earliest days [of Islam] used to be of the opinion that the Law has both an apparent and an inner sense and that it is not obligatory for someone to know about the inner sense if he is not an adept in knowledge of it nor capable of understanding it. There is, for example, what al-Bukhārī relates about 'Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, saying: "Speak to the people concerning what they are cognizant of. Do you want God and His messenger to be accused of lying?"²⁵ And there is, for example, what is related of that about a group of the early followers [of Islam]. So how is it possible to conceive of consensus about a single theoretical question being transmitted to us when we firmly know that no single epoch has escaped having learned men who are of the opinion that there are things in the Law not all of the people ought to know in their true sense? That differs from what occurs with practical matters, for everybody is of the opinion that they are to be disclosed to all people alike; and for

consensus about them to be reached we deem it sufficient that the question be widely diffused and that no difference [of opinion] about it be transmitted to us. Now this is sufficient for reaching consensus about practical matters, but the case with scientific matters is different.

[C. WHETHER THE PHILOSOPHERS ARE GUILTY OF UNBELIEF]

16. If you were to say: "If it is not obligatory to charge with unbelief one who goes against consensus with respect to interpretation, since consensus with respect to that is not conceivable, what do you say about the philosophers among the adherents of Islam like Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] and Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna]? For in his book known as the *Incoherence [of the Philosophers]* Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] has firmly charged both of them as unbelievers with respect to three questions: the argument about the eternity of the world, that the Exalted does not know particulars -- may He be exalted above that -- and [10] the interpretation of what is set forth about the resurrection of bodies and the way things are in the next life."²⁶ We would say: The apparent sense of what he says about that is that he does not firmly charge them with unbelief about that, for he has declared in the book *The Distinction* that charging someone with unbelief for going against consensus is tentative.²⁷ And it has become evident from our argument that it is not possible for consensus to be determined with respect to questions like these, because of what is related about many of the first followers [of Islam] as well as others holding that there are interpretations that it is not obligatory to expound except to those adept in interpretation.

These are "those well-grounded in science," for we choose to place the stop after His statement, may He be exalted "and those well-grounded in science" (3:7).²⁸ Now if those adept in science did not know the interpretation, there would be nothing superior in their assent obliging them to a faith in Him not found among those not adept in science. Yet God has already described them as those who have faith in Him, and this refers only to faith coming about from demonstration. And it comes about only along with the science of interpretation.

Those faithful not adept in science are people whose faith in them²⁹ is not based on demonstration. So if this faith by which God has described the learned is particular to them, then it is obligatory that it come about by means of demonstration. And if it is by means of demonstration, then it comes about only along with the science of interpretation. For God, may He be exalted, has already announced that there is an interpretation of them that is the truth, and demonstration is only of the truth. Since that is the case, it is not possible for an exhaustive consensus to be determined with respect to the

interpretations by which God particularly characterized the learned. This is self-evident to any one who is fair-minded.

17. In addition to all of this, we are of the opinion that Abū Hāmid [al-Ghazālī] was mistaken about the Peripatetic sages when he accused them of saying that He, Holy and Exalted, does not know particulars at all. Rather, they are of the opinion that He knows them, may He be exalted, by means of a knowledge that is not of the same kind as our knowledge of them. That is because our knowledge of them is an effect of what is known, so that it is generated when the known thing is generated and changes when it changes. And God's, Glorious is He, knowledge about existence is the opposite of this: it is the cause of the thing known, which is the existing thing.

So whoever likens [11] the two kinds of knowledge to one another sets down two opposite essences and their particular characteristics as being one, and that is the extreme of ignorance. If the name "knowledge" is said of knowledge that is generated and of knowledge that is eternal, it is said purely as a name that is shared, just as many names are said of opposite things -- for example *al-jalal* said of great and small, and *al-ṣarīm* said of light and darkness.³⁰ Thus there is no definition embracing both kinds of knowledge as the dialectical theologians of our time fancy.

Prompted by one of our friends, we have devoted a statement to this question.³¹ How is it to be fancied that the Peripatetics would say that He, Glorious is He, does not know particulars with eternal knowledge, when they are of the opinion that true dream-visions contain premonitions of particular things that are to be generated in the future and that this premonitional knowledge reaches human beings in sleep due to the everlasting knowledge governing the whole and having mastery over it? Moreover, it is not only particulars that they are of the opinion He does not know in the way we know them, but universals as well. For the universals known to us are also effects of the nature of the existing thing, whereas with that knowledge [of His] it is the reverse. Therefore, that knowledge [of His] has been demonstrated to transcend description as "universal" or "particular." So there is no reason for disagreement about this question -- I mean, about charging them with unbelief or not charging them with unbelief.

18. As for the question whether the world is eternal or has been generated, the disagreement between the Ash'arite dialectical theologians and the ancient sages almost comes back, in my view, to a disagreement about naming, especially with respect to some of the Ancients. That is because they agree that there are three sorts of existing things, two extremes and one

intermediate between the extremes. And they agree about naming the two extremes, but disagree about the intermediate.

One extreme is an existent thing that exists from something other than itself and by something -- I mean, by an agent cause³² and from matter. And time precedes it -- I mean, its existence. This is the case of bodies whose coming into being is apprehended [12] by sense perception, for example, the coming into being of water, air, earth, animals, plants, and so forth. The Ancients and the Ash'arites both agree in naming this sort of existing things "generated."

The extreme opposed to this is an existent thing that has not come into existence from something or by something and that time does not precede. About this, too, both factions agree in naming it "eternal." This existent thing is apprehended by demonstration: it is God, may He be blessed and exalted, who is the Agent³³ of the whole, its Giver of Existence, and its Sustainer, glorious is He and may His might be exalted.

The sort of being between these two extremes is an existent thing that has not come into existence from something and that time does not precede, but that does come into existence by something -- I mean, by an agent. This is the world as a whole.

Now all of them agree on the existence of these three attributes with respect to the world. For the dialectical theologians admit that time does not precede it -- or, rather, that is a consequence of their holding that time is something joined to motions and bodies. They also agree with the Ancients about future time being infinite and likewise future existence. And they disagree only about past time and past existence. For the dialectical theologians are of the opinion that it is limited, which is the doctrine of Plato and his sect, while Aristotle and his faction are of the opinion that it is infinite, as is the case with the future.

19. So it is evident that this latter existent thing has been taken as resembling the existing thing that truly comes into being and the eternally existing thing. Those overwhelmed by its resemblance to the eternal rather than to what is generated name it "eternal," and those overwhelmed by its resemblance to what is generated name it "generated." But in truth it is not truly generated nor is it truly eternal. For what is truly generated is necessarily corruptible, and what is truly eternal has no cause. Among them are those who name it "everlastingly generated," namely, Plato and his sect, because time according to them is finite with respect to the past.

20. Thus the doctrines about the world are not all so far apart from one another that some of them should be charged as

unbelief and others not. Indeed, for opinions [13] to be such that this should happen, it is obligatory that they be excessively far apart -- I mean, that they be opposites of each other, as the dialectical theologians suppose they are with respect to this question, that is, that the name "eternity" and that of "generated" with respect to the world as a whole are opposites of each other. And it has already become evident from our statement that the matter is not like that.

21. In addition to all this, these opinions about the world do not conform to the apparent sense of the Law. For if the apparent sense of the Law is scrutinized, it will become apparent from the verses comprising a communication about the coming into existence of the world that, in truth, its form is generated, whereas being itself and time extend continuously at both extremes -- I mean, without interruption. That is because, His statement, may He be exalted, "and He is the one Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and His throne was on the water" (11:7), requires in its apparent sense an existence before this existence -- namely, the throne and water -- and a time before this time -- I mean, the one joined to the form of this existence, which is the number of the movement of the heavenly sphere. And His statement, may He be exalted, "on the day the earth shall be changed into other than earth, and the heavens also" (14:48) in its apparent sense also requires a second existence after this existence. And His statement, may He be exalted, "then He directed Himself toward the heaven, and it was smoke" (41:11) requires in its apparent sense that the heavens were created from something.

22. Nor do the dialectical theologians conform to the apparent sense of the Law in what they say about the world, but interpret it. For it is not [said] in the Law that God was existing along with sheer nothingness; no text whatever to this effect is to be found. So how is it to be conceived that the dialectical theologians' interpretation of these verses would meet with consensus when the apparent sense of the Law with respect to the existence of the world, which we have stated, has already been stated by a faction among the sages?

23. It seems that those who disagree about the interpretation of these recondite questions have either hit the mark and are to be rewarded or have erred and are to be excused. For assent to something due to an indication arising in the soul is compulsory, not voluntary -- I mean that it is not up to us not to assent or to assent as it is up to us to stand up or not to stand up. Since a condition of responsibility is having choice, the one who assents to error because of vagueness

occurring in it is excused if he is an adept of science. [14] Therefore he [i.e., the Prophet] said, peace upon him, "if the judge hits the mark after exerting himself, he will be rewarded two-fold; and if he errs, he will have a single reward."

Now what judge is greater than the one who makes judgments about existence, as to whether it is thus or not thus? These judges are the learned ones whom God has selected for interpretation, and this error that is forgiven according to the Law is only the error occasioned by learned men when they reflect upon the recondite things that the Law makes them responsible for reflecting upon.

24. The error occasioned by any other sort of people is sheer sin, whether it is an error about theoretical or practical matters. Just as the judge who is ignorant of Tradition³⁴ is not excused when he errs about a judgment, neither is the judge about existing things in whom the conditions for judgment do not exist excused; indeed, he is either a sinner or an unbeliever. And if it is stipulated with respect to the judge about what is allowed and what is proscribed that he combine within himself the reasons for exercising personal judgment³⁵ -- namely, cognizance of the roots and cognizance of what is inferred from these roots by means of syllogistic reasoning -- then how much more fitting is it for this to be stipulated with respect to the one who is to judge about existing things -- I mean, that he be cognizant of the primary intellectual notions and how to infer from them!

25. In general, error with respect to the Law is of two types.

There is error that is excused for one who is adept in reflection about that thing concerning which error occurs, just as the skillful physician is excused if he errs with respect to the art of medicine and the skillful judge if he errs with respect to a judgment. But one who is not adept in that concern is not excused.

And there is error that is not excused for anyone whatsoever. Rather, it is unbelief if it occurs with respect to the principles of the Law and heretical innovation if it occurs with respect to what is subordinate to the principles.

26. This error is the very one that comes about concerning the things that all the sorts of methods of indications steer to cognizance of. Thus, cognizance of that thing is in this manner possible for everyone. Such, for example, is affirmation of [the existence of] God, may He be blessed and exalted, of the prophetic missions, and of happiness in the hereafter and misery in the hereafter. That is because the three sorts of indications [15] due to which no one is exempted from assenting to what he is

responsible for being cognizant of -- I mean, the rhetorical, dialectical, and demonstrative indications -- lead to these three roots.

So the one who denies things like these, when they are one of the roots of the Law, is an unbeliever who resists obstinately with his tongue but not his heart or [who resists obstinately] due to his neglecting to expose himself to cognizance of what indicates them. For if he is an adept of demonstration, a path to assenting to them has been placed before him by demonstration; and if he is an adept of dialectic, then by dialectic; and if he is an adept of preaching, then by preaching. Therefore, he [the Prophet], peace upon him, said: "I was ordered to combat people until they say 'there is no god but God' and have faith in me" -- he means by whatever one of the three methods of bringing about faith that suits them.

27. Concerning the things that are known only by demonstration due to their being hidden, God has been gracious to His servants for whom there is no path by means of demonstration -- either due to their innate dispositions, their habits, or their lack of facilities³⁶ for education -- by coining for them likenesses and similarities of these [hidden things] and calling them to assent by means of those likenesses, since it is possible for assent to those likenesses to come about by means of the indications shared by all -- I mean, the dialectical and the rhetorical. This is the reason for the Law being divided into an apparent sense and an inner sense. For the apparent sense is those likenesses coined for those meanings, and the inner sense is those meanings that reveal themselves only to those adept in demonstration. These [likenesses and meanings] are the four or five sorts of existing things that Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] mentioned in the book *The Distinction*.³⁷

28. If it happens -- as we have said -- that we know something in itself by means of the three methods, there is no need for us to coin a likeness for it; and as long as it is in its apparent sense, it does not admit of interpretation. If this manner of apparent sense refers to the roots [of the Law], the one who interprets it would be an unbeliever -- like someone believing that there is no happiness or misery in the hereafter and that such a statement is intended only to safeguard people from one another in what pertains to their bodies and physical senses, that it is a stratagem, and that a human being has no end other than sensual existence.

29. If this has been determined for you, [16] then it is apparent to you from our statement that there is an apparent sense of the Law that it is not permissible to interpret. To

interpret it is unbelief when it has to do with principles and heretical innovation when it has to do with what is subordinate to principles. There is also an apparent sense that it is obligatory for those adept in demonstration to interpret, it being unbelief for them to take it in its apparent sense. Yet for those not adept in demonstration to interpret it and draw it away from its apparent sense is unbelief or heretical innovation on their part.

30. Of this sort is the verse about God's directing Himself (2:29) and the Tradition about His descent.³⁸ Therefore, he [the Prophet] said, peace upon him, with respect to the black woman, when she announced that God was in heaven: "Set her free, for she is one of the faithful." For she was not one of those adept in demonstration. The reason for that is that for the sort of people who come to assent only due to the imagination -- I mean, those who assent to something only insofar as they can imagine it -- it is difficult to come to assent to an existing thing that is not linked with something imaginable.

This also applies to those who understand the link only as [God having] a place -- they are the ones who in their reflection have moved somewhat beyond the rank of the first sort's belief in corporeality. Therefore, the answer to these people about verses and Traditions like these is that they pertain to the verses that resemble one another and that the stop is at His saying, may He be exalted, "none knows their interpretation but God" (3:7).³⁹ Even though there is consensus among the people of demonstration that this sort admits of interpretation, they disagree about its interpretation. And that is according to each one's rank with respect to cognizance of demonstration.

31. There is a third sort [of verses and Traditions] with respect to the Law, one wavering between these [other] two sorts and about which there is doubt. One group of those who occupy themselves with reflection attach this sort to the apparent sense that it is not permissible to interpret, and others attach it to the inner sense that it is not permissible for the learned to take according to its apparent sense. That is because this sort [of verses and Traditions] is recondite and abstruse. One who commits an error with respect to this is to be excused -- I mean, one of the learned.

32. If it were said: "Since it has become evident that in this respect there are three ranks in the Law, then in which of these three ranks according to you belongs what is set forth with respect to descriptions of the next life and its conditions?" We would say: with respect to this question, it is an evident

matter that they belong to the sort about which there is disagreement. That is because we see [17] a group who pretend to demonstration saying that it is obligatory to take these descriptions in their apparent sense since there is no demonstration rendering that apparent sense preposterous, and this is the method of the Ash'arites. Yet another group, who also occupy themselves with demonstration, interpret these descriptions; and they disagree greatly among themselves in their interpretation. Among this sort are to be counted Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] and many of the Sufis. And some combine both interpretations, as Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] does in some of his books.

33. It seems that the learned person who commits an error with respect to this question is to be excused and the one who hits the mark is to be thanked or rewarded. That is, if he acknowledges the existence [of the next life] and gives a manner of interpretation of it not leading to the disavowal of its existence. With respect to this [question], denying its existence is what is unbelief, because it is one of the roots of the Law and something to which assent comes about by the three methods shared by "the red and the black."

34. For anyone not adept in science, it is obligatory to take them [the descriptions of the next life] in their apparent sense; for him, it is unbelief to interpret them because it leads to unbelief. That is why we are of the opinion that for anyone among the people whose duty it is to have faith in the apparent sense, interpretation is unbelief because it leads to unbelief. Anyone adept in interpretation who divulges that to him calls him to unbelief, and the one who calls to unbelief is an unbeliever.

35. This is why it is obligatory that interpretations be established only in books using demonstrations: for if they are in books using demonstrations, no one but those adept in demonstration will get at them. Whereas if they are established in other than demonstrative books with poetical and rhetorical or dialectical methods used in them, as Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] does, that is an error against the Law and against wisdom.

Yet the man intended only good. That is, he wished thereby to make those adept in science more numerous. But he actually made those adept in wickedness more numerous, yet not without some increase among those adept in science. In that way, one group came to slander wisdom, another group to slander the Law, and another group to reconcile the two. It seems that this was one of the intentions of [18] his books.

An indication that he wished thereby to alert people's minds⁴⁰ is that he adhered to no single doctrine in his books.

Rather, with the Ash'arites he was an Ash'arite, with the Sufis a Sufi, and with the philosophers a philosopher -- so that he was, as it is said:

One day a Yamanī, if I meet a man from Yaman
And if I meet a Ma'addī, then I'm of Adnān.⁴¹

36. What is obligatory upon the imams of the Muslims is that they ban those of his books that contain science from all but those adept in science, just as it is obligatory upon them to ban demonstrative books from those not adept in them. Yet the harm befalling people from demonstrative books is lighter, because for the most part only those with superior innate dispositions take up demonstrative books. And this sort [of people] is misled only through a lack of practical virtue, reading in a disorderly manner, and turning to them without a teacher.

Still, totally forbidding demonstrative books bars from what the Law calls to, because it is a wrong to the best sort of people and to the best sort of existing things. For justice with respect to the best sort of existing things is for them to be cognized to their utmost degree by those prepared to be cognizant of them to their utmost degree, and these are the best sort of people. Indeed, the greater the worth of the existing thing, the greater is the injustice with respect to it -- namely, ignorance of it. Therefore He, may He be exalted, said: "Associating [other gods with God] is surely a major wrong" (31:13).⁴²

[IV. SUMMARY]

37. So this is what we were of the opinion we should establish with respect to this type of reflection -- I mean, the discussion between the Law and wisdom and the statutes for interpreting the Law. If it were not for this being so wide-spread among people and these questions we have mentioned being so wide-spread, we would not have deemed it permissible to write a single letter about it; nor would we have to excuse ourselves to those adept in interpretation for doing so, because these questions are such as to be mentioned in demonstrative books. God is the Guide to and the Successful Giver of what is correct!

[V. ON WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE LAW AND ITS METHODS]

[A. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE LAW]

38. You ought to know that what is intended by the Law is only to teach true science and true practice. True science is cognizance of God, may He be blessed and exalted, and of all the existing things as they are, especially the venerable ones among them; and cognizance of happiness [19] in the hereafter and of misery in the hereafter. True practice is to follow the actions that promote happiness and to avoid the actions that promote

misery, and cognizance of these actions is what is called "practical science."

They are divided into two divisions. One is the apparent, bodily actions, and the science of these is what is called "jurisprudence." The second division is actions of the soul -- like gratitude, patience, and other moral habits that the Law calls to or bans. And the science of these is what is called "asceticism" and "the sciences of the hereafter."

Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] directed himself to this in his book. Since people had turned away from this type and become immersed in the other type -- even though this type is more involved with piety, which is the cause of happiness -- he called his book *The Revival of the Sciences of Religion*.

But we have digressed from the path we were on, so let us come back.

39. We say: since what is intended by the Law is teaching true science and true practice; and teaching is of two sorts, forming a concept and bringing about assent, as those adept in dialectical theology have explained; and there are three methods of bringing about assent for people -- demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical -- and two methods of forming concepts, either by means of the thing itself or by means of a likeness of it; and not all people have natures such as to accept demonstrations or dialectical arguments, let alone demonstrative arguments, given the difficulty in teaching demonstrative arguments and the lengthy time needed by someone adept at learning them; and since what is intended by the Law is, indeed, to teach everyone; therefore, it is obligatory that the Law comprise all the manners of the methods of bringing about assent and all the manners of the methods of forming a concept.

[B. THE METHODS IN THE LAW FOR ASSENT AND CONCEPT]

40. Since some of the methods for bringing about assent -- I mean, assent taking place because of them -- are common to most people, namely, the rhetorical and the dialectical, the rhetorical being more common than the dialectical; and some of them are particular to fewer people, namely, the demonstrative; and what is primarily intended by the Law is taking care of the greater number without neglecting to alert the select [few]; therefore, most of the methods declared in the Law are the methods shared [20] by the greater number with respect to concept or assent taking place.

41. There are four sorts of these methods in the Law.

One, even though it is shared, is particular⁴³ in both respects -- I mean, that with respect to forming a concept and bringing about assent it is certain, even though it is rhetorical

or dialectical. These syllogisms are the ones whose premises happen to be certain, even though they are generally accepted or suppositional, and whose conclusions happen to be matters taken in themselves rather than as likenesses. For this sort of Law-based statements there is no interpretation, and the one who denies or interprets it is an unbeliever.

The premises in the second sort are certain, even though they are generally accepted or suppositional, and the conclusions are likenesses of the matters intended to be brought forth. This [sort of Law-based statements] -- I mean, its conclusions -- admits of interpretation.

The third is the reverse of this, namely, that the conclusions are the very matters intended to be brought forth, while the premises are generally accepted or suppositional without happening to be certain. For this [sort of Law-based statements] -- I mean, its conclusions -- interpretation is not admitted either, but its premises may admit of it.

The premises in the fourth are generally accepted or suppositional without happening to be certain, and its conclusions are likenesses of the matter intended to be brought forth. With respect to these [Law-based statements], the duty of the select is to interpret them; and the duty of the multitude is to let them stand in their apparent sense.

42. In general, with respect to everything in these [Law-based statements] admitting of an interpretation apprehended only by demonstration, the duty of the select is that interpretation, whereas the duty of the multitude is to take them in their apparent sense in both respects -- I mean, with respect to concept and assent -- for there is nothing more than that in their natures.

43. Interpretations may occur to those who reflect upon the Law due to the superiority some of these shared methods have over others with respect to bringing about assent -- I mean, when the indication of the interpretation is more completely persuasive than the indication of the apparent sense. Interpretations such as these are for the multitude, and it is possible that they become a duty for those whose reflective powers reach that of dialectic. Into this type enter [21] some of the interpretations of the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites,⁴⁴ although for the most part the statements of the Mu'tazilites are more reliable. The duty of those within the multitude who are not capable of more than rhetorical statements is to let them stand in their apparent sense, and it is not permissible for them to know that interpretation at all.

[C. THE THREE SORTS OF PEOPLE AND THE LAW'S PROVISION FOR THEM]

44. For people are of three sorts with respect to the Law.

One sort is in no way adept at interpretation. These are the rhetorical people, who are the overwhelming multitude. That is because no person of unimpaired intellect is exempted from this kind of assent.

Another sort is those adept in dialectical interpretation. These are those who are dialectical by nature alone or by nature and by habit.

Another sort is those adept in certain interpretation. These are those who are demonstrative by nature and art -- I mean, the art of wisdom. This interpretation ought not to be declared to those adept in dialectic, not to mention the multitude.

45. When something pertaining to these interpretations is declared to someone not adept in them -- especially demonstrative interpretations, due to their remoteness from things about which there is shared cognizance -- both he who declares it and the one to whom it is declared are steered to unbelief. The reason for that is that interpretation includes two things, the rejection of the apparent sense and the establishing of the interpretation. Thus if the apparent sense is rejected by someone who is an adept of the apparent sense without the interpretation being established for him, that leads him to unbelief if it is about the roots of the Law. So interpretations ought not to be declared to the multitude nor established in rhetorical or dialectical books -- I mean, books in which the statements posited are of these two sorts -- as Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] did.⁴⁵

46. For this kind [of people], it is obligatory to declare and to say, with respect to the apparent sense -- when it is such that the doubt as to whether it is an apparent sense is in itself apparent to everyone without cognizance of its interpretation being possible for them -- that it is one of those [verses] that resemble one another [whose interpretation is] not known except to God and that it is obligatory for the stop in His saying, may He be exalted, to be placed here: "None knows their interpretation but God" (3:7).⁴⁶ In the same way is the answer to come forth with respect to a question about obscure matters for whose understanding no path exists for the multitude -- as with His saying, may He be exalted, "and they will ask you about the spirit; say: 'the spirit is by the command of my Lord; and of knowledge you have been given only a little'" (17:85).

47. Now [22] anyone who declares these interpretations to those not adept in them is an unbeliever because of his calling

people to unbelief. This is contrary to the call of the Lawgiver, especially when they are corrupt interpretations having to do with the roots of the Law -- as has occurred with a group of people in our time. For we have witnessed some groups who suppose they are philosophizing and have, by means of their astounding wisdom, apprehended things that disagree with the Law in every manner -- I mean, [things] not admitting of interpretation. And [they suppose] that it is obligatory to declare these things to the multitude. By declaring those corrupt beliefs to the multitude, they have become the reason for the multitude's and their own perdition in this world and in the hereafter.

48. Here is a likeness of these people's intention as contrasted to the intention of the Lawgiver. Someone is intent upon [going to] a skilled physician who is intent upon preserving the health of all of the people and removing sicknesses from them by setting down for them statements, to which there is common assent,⁴⁷ about the obligation of practicing the things that preserve their health and remove their sicknesses as well as of avoiding the contrary things. He is not able to make them all become physicians, because the physician is the one who knows by demonstrative methods the things that preserve health and remove sickness. Then this one goes out to the people and says to them: "These methods this physician has set down for you are not true." And he sets about rejecting them until they have rejected them. Or he says: "They have interpretations." Yet they do not understand them and thus come to no assent as to what to do because of them.

Now are you of the opinion that people who are in this condition will do any of the things useful for preserving health and removing sickness? Or will this one who has declared that they should reject what they used to believe about those [things] be able to practice that with them -- I mean, preserving health? No! Rather, he will not be able to practice these with them nor will they be able to practice them, and perdition will encompass them all.

49. This is if he declares sound interpretations about those things to them, because of their not understanding that interpretation -- not to mention his declaring corrupt interpretations to them. Because he will so interpret the matter to them that they will not be of the opinion there is a health that must be preserved or a sickness that must be removed, not to mention [23] their being of the opinion that there are things such as to preserve health and remove sickness. And this is what happens with respect to the Law when anyone declares an interpretation to the multitude or to someone not adept for it.

He corrupts it and bars them from it; and the one who bars others from the Law is an unbeliever.

50. Now this illustration is certain and not poetical, as someone might say. It is a sound linking between the one and the other. That is because the link between the physician and the health of bodies is [the same as] the link between the Lawgiver and the health of souls -- I mean, the physician is the one who seeks to preserve the health of bodies when it exists and to bring it back when it has disappeared, while the Lawgiver is the one who aspires to this with respect to the health of souls.

This health is what is called "piety." And the precious book has declared in various verses that it is to be sought by means of Law-based actions. Thus He, may He be exalted, said: "Fasting was prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you so that you might come to be pious" (2:183). And He, may He be exalted, said: "Neither their flesh nor their blood will reach God, but piety on your part will reach Him" (22:37).⁴⁸ And He said: "Indeed, prayer puts an end to iniquity and to transgression" (29:45); and so on in innumerable other verses to this effect contained in the precious book.

Now the Lawgiver seeks this health only through Law-based knowledge and Law-based practice. And this health is the one from which happiness in the hereafter derives and misery in the hereafter from its contrary.

51. From this, it has become evident to you that sound interpretations -- not to mention corrupt ones -- must not be established in books for the multitude. Sound interpretation is the deposit mankind was charged with holding and held, whereas all existing things shirked it -- I mean, the one mentioned in His statement, may He be exalted, "indeed, we offered the deposit to the heavens, to the earth, and to the mountains" [and so on to the end of] the verse (33:72).⁴⁹

[VI. ON THE EMERGENCE OF FACTIONS WITHIN ISLAM]

[A. DIFFERENT OPINIONS REGARDING INTERPRETATION]

52. Because of the interpretations with respect to the Law -- especially the corrupt ones -- and the supposition that it is obligatory to declare them to everyone, factions emerged within Islam so that one charged the others with unbelief or with heretical innovation. Thus the Mu'tazilites interpreted many verses and many Traditions and declared their interpretations to the multitude, as did the Ash'arites, although they resorted less to [24] interpretation. Because of that, they threw people into loathing, mutual hatred, and wars; they tore the Law to shreds; and they split the people up into every sort of faction.

53. In addition to all this, in the methods they followed to establish their interpretations they were neither with the multitude nor with the select. They were not with the multitude because their methods were more obscure than the methods shared by the majority. And they were not with the select because if their methods are examined they are found to fall short of the conditions for demonstration -- and that will be grasped after the slightest examination by anyone who is cognizant of the conditions for demonstration. Rather, many of the roots upon which the Ash'arites base their cognizance are sophistical. For they deny many necessary things such as the stability of accidents, the influence of some things upon others, the existence of necessary reasons for what is made to occur,⁵⁰ substantial forms, and intermediates.

54. Those among them who reflect have wronged the Muslims in the sense that a group of Ash'arites has charged with unbelief anyone who is not cognizant of the existence of the Creator, glorious is He, by the methods they have set down for cognizance of Him in their books. But in truth they are the ones who are the unbelievers and those who are misguided. From here on they disagreed, with one group saying "the first obligation is reflection" and another group saying "faith is" -- I mean, because they were not cognizant of which methods are the ones shared by everyone through whose doors the Law calls all the people and supposed that there is [only] one method. So they erred about the intention of the Lawgiver and were misguided and made others become misguided.

[B. HOW TO AVOID THE EVILS BROUGHT ABOUT BY FACTIONS]

55. If it were said: "If these methods followed by the Ash'arites and others adept in reflection are not the shared methods by which the Lawgiver intended to teach the multitude and by which alone it is possible to teach them, then which ones are these methods in this Law of ours?" We would say: They are the methods that are established in the precious book alone. For if the precious book is examined, the three methods existing for all the people will be found in it; and these are the shared methods for teaching the majority of the people and [the method for teaching] the select.⁵¹ And if the matter is examined with respect to them, it will become apparent that no better shared methods for teaching the multitude are to be encountered than the methods mentioned in it.

56. So anyone who distorts these methods by making an interpretation that is not apparent in itself or that is more apparent to everyone than they are -- and that is something non-existent -- rejects [25] their wisdom and rejects their intended

action for procuring human happiness. That is very apparent from the condition of those in the earliest days [of Islam] and the condition of those who came after them. For those in the earliest days came to have perfect virtue and piety only by practicing these statements without making interpretations of them; and any one of them who grasped an interpretation did not think fit to declare it. When those who came after them practiced interpretation, their piety decreased, their disagreements became more numerous, their love for one another was removed, and they split up into factions.

57. It is obligatory for whoever wants to remove this heretical innovation from the Law to apply himself to the precious book and pick from it the indications existing for every single thing we are responsible for believing. In his reflection he is to strive for their apparent sense as much as he can without interpreting anything, except insofar as the interpretation is apparent in itself -- I mean, of an apparentness shared by everyone. For if the statements set down in the Law for teaching the people are examined, it seems that one reaches a point in defending them such that only someone who is an adept at demonstration pulls out of their apparent sense something that is not apparent in them. And this particular characteristic is not found in any other statements.

58. The statements of the Law declared to everyone in the precious book have three particular characteristics that indicate their inimitability. The first is that nothing more completely persuasive and able to bring about assent for everyone is to be found than they. The second is that by their nature they admit of defense ending up at a point where no one grasps an interpretation of them -- if they are such as to have an interpretation -- except those adept in demonstration. The third is that they contain a means of alerting those adept in the truth to the true interpretation. And this is not found in the doctrines of the Ash'arites nor in the doctrines of the Mu'tazilites -- I mean, their interpretation neither admits of defense, contains a means of alerting to the truth, nor is true. Therefore innovative heresies have increased.

[VII. CONCLUSION]

[A. THE NEED TO PURSUE THE TASK SET FORTH HERE]

59. We would love to devote ourselves to this intention and carry it out thoroughly; and if God prolongs our life, we shall establish as much of it as we can. That could possibly be a starting point for someone who comes afterwards. Now our soul is in [26] utmost sorrow and pain due to the corrupt dissensions and distorted beliefs that have permeated this Law, especially those

that have occurred to it from among people linking themselves to wisdom. For injuries from a friend are graver than injuries from an enemy -- I mean that wisdom is the companion of the Law and its milk-sister. So injuries from those linked to it are the gravest injuries -- apart from the enmity, hatred, and quarreling they bring about between both of them. These two are companions by nature and lovers by essence and instinct. It [the Law] has also been injured by many ignorant friends from among those who link themselves to it, namely, the factions existing within it. But God shows all people the right way, brings everyone to love Him, unites their hearts in pious fear of Him, and removes hatred and loathing from them through His grace and mercy.

[B. THE POSITIVE ROLE OF THE PRESENT RULERSHIP]

60. God has removed many of these evils, ignorant occurrences, and misguided paths by means of this triumphant rule.⁵² By means of it, He has brought many good things closer, especially for that sort who follow the path of reflection and yearn for cognizance of the truth. That is, this rule calls the multitude to a middle method for being cognizant of God, glorious is He, raised above the low level of the traditionalists yet below the turbulence of the dialectical theologians, and alerts the select to the obligation for complete reflection on the root of the Law. By His grace, God is the Giver of success and the Guide.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, the term translated throughout this treatise as "Law" is *sharīʿa* or its equivalent, *sharʿ*. In this treatise, the terms are used to refer only to the revealed law of Islam. Elsewhere, however, Averroes uses the term *sharīʿa* to refer to revealed law generally. Because the term "legal" may be misleading for modern readers, even when capitalized and rendered "Legal," the adjectival form of *sharīʿa* -- that is, *sharʿī* -- is rendered here as "Law-based."

In his justly famous manual of law, Averroes explains that the jurists acknowledge the judgments of the divine Law to fall into five categories: obligatory (*wājib*), recommended (*mandūb*), prohibited (*maḥẓūr*), reprehensible (*makrūh*), and permitted (*mubāḥ*). Here, however, he groups the first two under a more comprehensive category of "commanded" (*maʿmūr*) and -- perhaps since it is not applicable to the present question -- passes over "reprehensible" in silence; see *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 17-18. The alliterative title, pointing to the work's character as a primer of Islamic law, can be rendered in English as *The Legal Interpreter's Beginning and The Mediator's Ending*.

2. The term is *maʿrifa*. Similarly, *ʿarafa* is translated as "to be cognizant" and *ʿārif* as "cognizant" or "one who is cognizant." *ʿilm*, on the other hand, is translated as "knowledge" or "science," *ʿalima* as "to know," and *ʿālim* as "knower" or "learned." It is important to preserve the distinctions between the Arabic terms in English -- distinctions that seem to reflect those between *gignōskein* and *epistasthai* in Greek -- because Averroes goes on to speak of human cognizance of God as well as of God's knowledge of particulars (see below sects. 4 and 17).

3. In this treatise, Averroes uses the terms "book of God" and "precious book" to indicate the Quran. The numbers within parentheses refer to chapters and verses of the Quran. All translations from the Quran are my own.

4. Normally the term *qiyās* is translated as "syllogism," this being an abridgment of "syllogistic reasoning." Here, and in what follows, I translate it as "syllogistic reasoning" in order to bring out the way Averroes seems to be using the term.

5. The rest of the verse reads: ". . . one of those who have certainty."

6. The term is *al-mu'min*. Throughout this treatise *amana* is translated as "to have faith" and *imān* as "faith"; while *i'taqada* is translated as "to believe," *mu'taqid* as "believer," and *i'tiqād* as "belief."

7. The term is *al-mutaqaddim* and comes from the same verb that has been translated heretofore as "set out," namely, *taqaddama*.

8. Actually, if the diameter of the earth is used as the unit of measure, it is about 109 times greater.

9. The term is *munāẓara* and has the same root as *naẓar*, translated throughout this treatise as "reflection."

10. That is, the Western part of the Islamic world -- North Africa and Spain.

11. As is evident from the sub-title of the treatise, *ḥikma* ("wisdom") is used interchangeably with *falsafa* to mean philosophy. Nonetheless, the original difference between the two is respected here in that *ḥikma* is always translated as "wisdom" and *falsafa* as "philosophy."

12. That is, the books of the Ancients referred to above.

13. The reference is to the Quran 16:69 where, speaking of bees, it is said: "there comes forth from their innards a drink of variegated colors in which there is healing for mankind."

14. That is, to all human beings -- the red, or white, and the black.

15. The language here is somewhat ambiguous and reads literally: "drawing the significance of an utterance out from its true significance to its figurative significance" (*ikhrāj dalālat al-lafẓ min al-dalāla al-ḥaqīqiyya ilā al-dalāla al-mujāziyya*).

Heretofore, the term *dalāla* has been translated as "indication."

16. The term is *ajma'a*; from it is derived the noun "consensus" (*ijmā'*). Consensus is accepted in some schools of Islamic Law as a root or source of Law after the Quran and Tradition (*ḥadīth*). Its validity as a root of the Law comes from a Tradition that reports the prophet to have declared: "Indeed, God would not let my nation form a consensus about an error."

17. Those who follow the theological teachings of Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ash'arī (260/873-324/935). He was a pupil of the Mu'tazilites (see below, sect. 43 and n. 44).

18. The verse reads: "He it is Who created for you everything that is in the earth; then He directed Himself up towards the heavens, and He made them congruous as seven heavens; He is knowledgeable about everything." The Tradition in question is: "God descends to the lower world."

19. Those who follow the teachings of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (164/780-241/855). A strict literalist, he was opposed to the Mu'tazilites.

20. The whole verse reads: "He it is who has sent down to you the book; in it, there are fixed verses -- these being the mother of the book -- and others that resemble one another. Those with deviousness in their hearts pursue the ones that resemble one another, seeking discord and seeking to interpret them. None knows their interpretation but God and those well-grounded in science. They say: 'We believe in it; everything is from our Lord.' And none heeds but those who are mindful."

The distinction between the fixed verses (*āyāt muḥkamāt*) and those that resemble one another (*mutashābihāt*) is that the former admit of no interpretation, whereas the latter are somewhat ambiguous or open-ended and do admit of interpretation -- the question being, interpretation to what end? As will become evident in the sequel, there is some question as to where the clause explaining who "knows their interpretation" ends. Some hold that it ends after "God," so that the remainder of the verse reads: "And those well-grounded in science say: 'We believe in it . . .'" Others, like Averroes, hold that it reads as presented here. See below, sect. 16.

21. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (450/1058-505/1111) was a famous theologian who, as Averroes observes below, attacked the philosophers. In *Faiṣal al-Tafrīqa (Arbitrator of the Distinction)*, al-Ghazālī explains the limits to be placed on charging others with unbelief and notes in particular that going against consensus is not to be considered unbelief. He gives two reasons for this: first, consensus usually concerns the branches of faith rather than the roots; second, it is very difficult to determine what there is consensus about. The roots of faith are three according to al-Ghazālī: faith in God, in his messenger, and in the hereafter. See *al-Quṣūr al-ʿAwālī min Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī* (Cairo: al-Jundī, N.D.), pp. 161-168, esp. 165-166.

Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (419/1028-478/1085), who is also known as Imām al-Ḥaramayn, was an Ashʿarite theologian and also al-Ghazālī's teacher.

22. Literally, "leaders of reflection" (*aʿimmat al-naẓar*).

23. Literally, "reflective matters" (*al-naẓariyyāt*). Unless otherwise noted, all future occurrences of the term "theoretical" are to translate this adjectival sense of *naẓar*.

24. A transmission is deemed to be uninterrupted when we know that one person has related the particular doctrine to another through the ages so that it comes down to us with no break in the chain of authorities attesting to its authenticity. This is one of the criteria for judging the soundness of Traditions about the Prophet; see the next note.

25. Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿil al-Bukhārī (194/810-256/870) is the author of one of the six canonical collections of Tradition -- that is, accounts of things the Prophet and his companions said and did. ʿAlī Ibn Abū Ṭālib (d. 41/661) was the fourth orthodox caliph.

26. The charge is brought by al-Ghazālī at the very end of his book, but he deftly side-steps the question associated with it of whether those who accept such beliefs are to be put to death; see *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, ed. Maurice Bouyges, S.J. (Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum, Série Arabe, II; Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1927), 376:2-10 and also pp. 21-94, 223-238, and 344-375. In addition to attempting to defend the philosophers here, Averroes wrote a detailed refutation of al-Ghazālī's charges in

the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. Maurice Bouyges, S.J. (Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum, Série Arabe, III; Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1930), pp. 4-117, 455-468, and 580-586; see also p. 587. The English translation by Simon Van Den Bergh, *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)* (Oxford: University Press, 1954) has Bouyges' page numbers in the margins.

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī was born in 257/870 and died in 339/950; and Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna was born in 370/980 and died in 428/1037.

27. See *Faiṣal al-Tafriqa*, pp. 168-171. Averroes thus reads this subsequent passage as modifying the earlier assertion (pp. 163-164) that the philosophers are to be charged with unbelief for what they say about God's knowledge of particulars and their denial of the resurrection of bodies and punishments in the next life.

28. See above, sect. 14 and n. 20.

29. That is, the verses of the Quran; and this becomes clear in what follows.

30. In his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, Averroes explains Aristotle's account of homonymous names as follows:

He said: things having homonymous -- that is, shared -- names are things which have not a single thing in common and shared, except for the name alone. The definition of each one which makes its substance understood according to the way it is denoted by that shared name is different from the definition of the other one and is particular to what it defines. An example of that is the name 'animal' said of a depicted man and of a rational man.

See *Averroes' Middle Commentaries on Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth, (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), section 3. The term "shared" can also be understood as "ambiguous"; see *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, sections 57-58.

Though *al-jalal* is usually used to speak of something that is momentous or magnificent, it can also be used to signify what is paltry or petty. The basic sense of *al-ṣarīm* is that of cutting; thus it is used to speak both of daybreak or dawn -- as

though cut off from the night -- and of night -- as though cut off from the day. See E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, (reprint, Islamic Texts Society, 1984; London: Williams and Norgate, 1877), p. 1684, col. 3.

31. Namely, the *Epistle Dedicatory*. For an explanation of the title of this work and of its sub-title, *The Question the Shaykh Abū al-Walīd mentioned in the Decisive Treatise*, as well as of its place with respect to the *Decisive Treatise* and the third part of the trilogy - the *Kashf ‘an Manāhij al-Adilla fī ‘Aqā'id al-Milla* (Uncovering the Methods of Proofs with respect to the Beliefs of the Religious Community) - see the Introduction to the *Epistle Dedicatory*.

32. The term is *sabab fā'il*. Unless otherwise noted, *sabab* is always translated as "reason" in this treatise. However, to render the term *sabab fā'il* as "reason agent" here would make no sense.

33. The term is *fā'il* and, were it not for the declaration at the end of the next paragraph, might better be rendered here as "Maker."

34. That is, the Traditions concerning what the Prophet said and did (*al-sunna*); see above, n. 25. This is one of the roots or sources of the divine Law, along with the Quran and consensus.

35. The term is *ijtihād* and refers to personal judgment about an interpretation of the Law.

36. The term is *asbāb*, sing. *sabab*; see above, n. 32.

37. Existing things are identified as: *dhātī* (essential), *ḥissī* (sense perceptible), *khiyālī* (imaginary), *‘aqlī* (intelligible), and *shibhī* (figurative); see *Faiṣal al-Tafrīqa*, pp. 150-156. Though al-Ghazālī definitely enumerates these five sorts or ranks of existing things and explains them with respect to interpretations, Averroes's uncertainty here about how many sorts or kinds al-Ghazālī actually enumerated implies that the account is not obvious. He may be referring to the way al-Ghazālī excludes the first rank, essential, from being interpreted or, alternatively, to the way al-Ghazālī brings

together the sense perceptible and imaginary ranks.

38. See above, sect. 14 and n. 18.

39. See above, sects. 14 and 16 and nn. 20 and 28.

40. Literally, "alert the innate dispositions" (*tanbīh al-fiṭar*).

41. The verse is by ʿImrān Ibn Ḥiṭṭān al-Sadūsī, a poet who lived in the seventh century. South Arabian tribes were considered to be Yamanites, whereas North Arabian tribes -- among whom the Maʿaddī -- were considered to be Adnanites.

42. The verse is part of Luqmān's instruction to his son by way of preaching and reads in full: "And thus Luqmān said to his son, while preaching to him, 'Oh, son, do not associate [other gods] with God, for associating [other gods with God] is surely a major wrong.'" Averroes uses it to illustrate how great the injustice or wrong can become when the learned, prohibited from reading demonstrative books, are lead to ignorance of the greatest of all beings, God, and thus to polytheism.

43. That is, in accordance with the preceding section, limited to fewer people.

44. The Muʿtazilites constitute the first school of dialectical theology in the Islamic tradition. They enjoyed the support of the Abbasid caliphs during the middle part of the ninth century, but were attacked by the Ashʿarites.

45. Or, in keeping with the way Averroes has used this verb heretofore, "as Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] artfully did" (*kamā ṣanaʿa dhālika Abū Ḥāmid*).

46. See above, sect. 14 and n. 20. The verses that "resemble one another" are thus ambiguous and difficult to explain, at times so difficult that it seems "none knows their interpretation but God."

47. Literally, "statements of shared assent" (*aqāwīl mushtarikat al-taṣḍīq*); see below, sects. 53-55 and 57.

48. The context is animal sacrifice. Neither the flesh nor the blood of camels will affect God, but human piety will.

49. The rest of the verse reads: "... but they refused to bear it and shirked it, whereas mankind bore it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant."

50. The term is *al-musabbabāt* and is thus the plural past participle of *sabab*, "reason."

51. The three methods consist of two that are shared by the majority of people (namely, the rhetorical and the dialectical) and one limited to the select few (the demonstrative); see above, sects. 40, 44, and 53-54.

52. The reference is to the rule of the Almohade sovereign, Abū Yaḳūb Yūsuf (reigned 1163-1184).

Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy: Leo Strauss

1. What does Strauss mean by “mutual influence,” which would suggest that theology and philosophy have something that unites them, that they share in common? How should we understand this in light of Strauss’ dismissal of any efforts toward a synthesis of the two? Is the case the same or different if we say that theology = Biblical religion and philosophy = Greek philosophy?
2. If we adopt Strauss’ position, how should we treat appeals to mysticism as personal revelation or prophecy as “verbal inspiration” (p. 10, line 7) from God? Can such revelations stand up to scrutiny in “broad daylight”? When we are presented with such revelations, how can we determine the validity of the revelation, e.g., distinguish between true and false prophets? How would a philosopher inquire? How would a believer?
3. “[M]any people today say, and that was also said by certain famous theologians of the past, that miracles presuppose faith; they are not meant to establish faith.” (p. 8, line 16). How are we to think about miracles? Since they can’t be ruled out philosophically, are they to be admitted necessarily? And, if creation was a miracle—“the miracle”—that can’t sufficiently be accounted for reasonably, can we not then say that all other miracles are possible in an omnipotent God?
4. What is the significance of Strauss closing his essay by using the hydrogen bomb as an example of the triumph of the modern scientific project? If, according to Strauss, modern science cannot give an explanation of its own necessity, does its power, its practical utility provide sufficient proof, whether it’s in our practical interest or not?
5. “...Nor, to come back to what I said before, has revelation, or rather theology, ever refuted philosophy. For from the point of view of philosophy, revelation is only a possibility: and secondly, man, in spite of what the theologians say, can live as a philosopher, that is to say, untragically. It seems to me that all these attempts made...to prove the life of philosophy is fundamentally miserable presuppose faith; it is not acceptable and possible as a refutation of philosophy” (p. 11, lines 34-38). How then is living non-philosophically--living as a believer--living tragically?
6. In his first essay, **On the Interpretation of Genesis**, Strauss maintains that: “The first chapter, in other words, questions the primary theme of philosophy; the second chapter questions the intention of philosophy”—“the knowledge of good and evil based on the contemplation of heaven.” (p.12, lines 2-4). Lacking an account of the whole, Greek philosophy (as portrayed by Plato’s Socrates) nevertheless shows that the pursuit of wisdom is the highest form of human life. Is this choice of the philosophical life then no less act of faith? (**Mutual Influence**, p. 12, lines 12-13).

THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

5

LEO STRAUSS

10 When we attempt to return to the roots of Western civilization, we observe soon that Western civilization has two roots which are in conflict with each other, the biblical and the Greek philosophic, and this is to begin with a very disconcerting observation. Yet this realization has also something reassuring and comforting. The very life of Western civilization is the life between two codes, a fundamental tension. There is therefore no reason inherent in the Western civilization itself, in its fundamental constitution, why it should give up

15 life. But this comforting thought is justified only if we live that life, if we live that conflict, that is. No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian or, for that matter, a third which is beyond the conflict between philosophy and theology, or a synthesis of both. But every one of us can be and ought to be either the one or the other, the philosopher open to the challenge of theology or the theologian open to the challenge of philosophy.

20 There is a fundamental conflict or disagreement between the *Bible* and Greek philosophy. This fundamental conflict is blurred to a certain extent by the close similarity in points. There are, for example, certain philosophies which come seemingly close to the biblical teaching - think of philosophic teachings which are monotheistic, which speak of the love of God and of man, which even admit prayer, etc. And so the difference becomes sometimes almost invisible. But we recognize the difference immediately if we make this

25 observation. For a philosopher or philosophy there can never be an absolute sacredness of a particular or contingent event. This particular or contingent is called, since the eighteenth century, the historical. Therefore people have come to say that revealed religion means historical religion, as distinguished from natural religion, and that philosophers could have a natural religion, and furthermore, that there is an essential superiority of the historical to the natural. As a consequence of this interpretation of the particular and contin-

30 gent as historical, it came to be held, and that is very frequently held today, that the *Bible* is in an emphatic sense historical, that the *Bible*, as it were, discovered history (or the biblical authors), whereas philosophy as philosophy is essentially non-historical. This view is underlying much of present-day interpretation of biblical thought. What is called existentialism is really only a more elaborate form of this interpretation. I do not

35 This is the English original of the Hebrew translation of "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy " which appeared in *Iyyun. Hebrew Philosophical Quarterly* (Jerusalem), V, No. 1 (January, 1954), pp. 110. 126. Aryeh Leo Motzkin of Harvard University has kindly compared the Hebrew translation with an English version originating from a series of lectures given at the University of Chicago in the early 1950s, and has made a few small changes to bring it into line with the published Hebrew text. In the few places where the English text departs significantly from the Hebrew translation, the English reading has been included but set off in [brackets].
- Editor.

1 believe that this approach is very helpful for the understanding of the *Bible*, at least as far as its basic parts are concerned; and as an explanation, I will suggest here only one consideration: that these present-day concepts, such as History with a capital “H”, are very late concepts, very derivative, and by this very fact not as capable of unlocking to us early thought, thought which is in no way derivative, but at the beginning of a tradition.

5 One can begin to describe the fundamental disagreement between the *Bible* and Greek philosophy, and doing that from a purely historical point of view, from the fact that we observe first a broad agreement between the *Bible* and Greek philosophy regarding both morality and the insufficiency of morality; the disagreement concerns that “x” which completes morality. According to Greek philosophy, that “x” is *theoria*, contemplation, and the biblical completion we may call, I think without creating any misleading
10 understanding, piety, the need for divine mercy or redemption, obedient love. To be more precise (the term morality itself is one of these derivative terms which are not quite adequate for the understanding of earlier thought), we may replace the term morality by the term justice, a term common to both sources; and justice means primarily obedience to law, and law in the full and comprehensive sense, divine law. Going even back behind that, we suggest as a starting point of the whole moral development of mankind, if we may say so, a
15 primeval identification of the good with the ancestral. Out of this primeval equation which we still understand, of which we still make use in actual life, the notion of a divine law necessarily arose. And then in a further step, the problem of divine law: the original notion of a divine law or divine code implies that there is a large variety of them. The very variety and, more specifically, the contradiction between the various divine codes makes the idea of a divine law in the simple and primary sense of the term radically problematic.

20 There are two diametrically opposed solutions to this problem possible, the one is the philosophic and the other is the biblical solution. The philosophic solution we may describe in the following terms: The philosophers transcend the dimension of divine codes altogether, the whole dimension of pious and of pious obedience to a pre-given code. Instead they embark on a free quest for the beginnings, for the first things, for the principles. And they assume that on the basis of the knowledge of first principles, of the first principles,
25 of the beginnings, it will be possible to determine what is by nature good, as distinguished from what is good merely by convention. This quest for the beginnings proceeds through sense perception, reasoning, and what they called *noesis*, which is literally translated by “understanding” or “intellect”, and which we can perhaps translate a little bit more cautiously by “awareness”, an awareness with the mind’s eye as distinguished from sensible awareness. But while this awareness has certainly its biblical equivalent and even its mystical equivalent,
30 this equivalent in the philosophic context is never divorced from sense perception and reasoning based on sense perception. In other words, philosophy never becomes oblivious of its kinship with the arts and crafts, with the knowledge used by the artisan and with this humble but solid kind of knowledge.

Now turning to the biblical alternative, here the basic premise is that one particular divine code is accepted as truly divine; that one particular code of one particular tribe is the divine code. But the divine character
35 of all other allegedly divine codes is simply denied, and this implies a radical rejection of mythology. This rejection of mythology is also characteristic of the primary impulse of philosophy, but the biblical rejection of mythology proceeds in the opposite direction as philosophy does. To give some meaning to the term mythology which I am here forced to use, I would say that mythology is characterized by the conflict between

1 gods and impersonal powers behind the gods. What is in Greek sometimes called *moira*, for example. Now
philosophy replaces this impersonal fate, as we might say, by nature and intelligible necessity. The *Bible*, on
the other hand, conceives of God as the cause of everything else, impersonal necessities included. The bib-
lical solution then stands or falls by the belief in 'God's omnipotence. The notion of omnipotence requires,
5 of course, monotheism, because if you have more than one God clearly none of them can be omnipotent.
Only the biblical authors, we may say, understand what omnipotence really means, because only if God is
omnipotent can one particular code be the absolute code. But an omnipotent God who is in principle per-
fectly knowable to man is in a way subject to man, in so far as knowledge is in a way power. Therefore a truly
omnipotent God must be a mysterious God, and that is, as you know, the teaching of the *Bible*. Man cannot
10 see the face of God, and especially the divine name, "I shall be that I shall be," means it is never possible in
any present to know that, what God shall be. But if man has no hold whatever over the biblical God, how
can there be any link between man and God? The biblical answer is the covenant, a free and mysterious
action of love on the part of God, and the corresponding attitude on the part of man is trust, or faith, which
is radically different from theoretical certainty. The biblical God is known in a humanly relevant sense only
15 by his actions, by his revelations. The book, the *Bible*, is the account of what God has done and what he has
promised. It is not speculation about God. In the *Bible*, as we would say, men tell about God's actions and
promises on the basis of their experience of God. This experience, and not reasoning based on sense percep-
tion, is the root of biblical wisdom.

This radical difference between the *Bible* and Greek philosophy shows itself also in the literary character
20 of the *Bible*, on the one hand, and of Greek philosophic books, on the other. The works of the Greek philos-
ophers are really books, works, works of one man, who begins at what he regards as the necessary beginning,
either the beginning simply or the best beginning for leading up people to what he regards as the truth. And
this one man - one book, was characteristic of Greek thought from the very beginning: Homer. But the
Bible is fundamentally, as is today generally held, a compilation of sources, which means the *Bible* continues
25 already a tradition with a minimum of changes, and therefore the famous difficulties with which the biblical
scholars are concerned. The decisive point, I think, is this: here is no beginning made by an individual, no
beginning made by man, ultimately. There is a kinship between this art of writing and the favored form of
writing, favored in the Jewish tradition, namely, the commentary, always referring back to something earlier.
Man does not begin.

30 In my analysis I presupposed that the equation of the good with the ancestral is the primeval equation.
That may be so in chronological terms, but one cannot leave it at that, of course, because the question arises,
why should this be so, what evidence does this equation have? That is a very long question, and I do not pro-
pose to answer it now. I would only refer to a Greek myth according to which Mnemosyne, memory, is the
mother of the muses, meaning the mother of wisdom. In other words, primarily the good, the true, however
35 you might call it, can be known only as the old because prior to the emergence of wisdom memory occu-
pied the place of wisdom. Ultimately, I think, one would have to go back to a fundamental dualism in man
in order to understand this conflict between the *Bible* and Greek philosophy, to the dualism of deed and
speech, of action and thought - a dualism which necessarily poses the question as to the primacy of either -

1 and one can say that Greek philosophy asserts, the primacy of thought, of speech, whereas the *Bible* asserts
the primacy of deed. That is, I know very well, open to misunderstandings, but permit me to leave it at this
for the moment.

5 II.

Now we are at any rate confronted with the fact that there is a radical opposition between *Bible* and a sec-
ular philosophy, and this opposition has given rise to a secular conflict from the very beginning. This conflict
is characteristic of the West, the West in the wider sense of the term including even the whole Mediterra-
10 nean basin, of course. It seems to me that this conflict is the secret of the vitality of the West. I would ven-
ture to say that as long as there will be a Western civilization there will be theologians who will suspect the
philosophers and philosophers who will be annoyed or feel annoyed by the theologians. But, as the saying
goes, we have to accept our fate, and it is not the worst fate which men could imagine. We have this radical
opposition: the *Bible* refuses to be integrated into a philosophical framework, just as philosophy refuses to
15 be integrated into a biblical framework. As for this biblical refusal, there is the often-made remark, that the
god of Aristotle is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore any attempt to integrate the
biblical understanding into philosophic understanding means to abandon that which is meant by the God of
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As for philosophy, that is perhaps a little bit obscured by a number of facts and
therefore we must dwell upon it for a moment. The obscuration, I believe, is ultimately due to the fact that
20 in the discussions regarding the relation of theology and philosophy, philosophy is identified with the com-
pleted philosophic system, in the Middle Ages, of course, primarily with Aristotle - by which I do not mean
to say that Aristotle has a system, although it is sometimes believed that he had - but certainly with Hegel
in modern times. That is, of course, one very special form of philosophy: it is not the primary and necessary
form of philosophy. I have to explain that.

25 In a medieval work, the *Kuzari*, by Yehuda Halevi, we find this statement: "Socrates says to the people,
'I do not reject your divine wisdom, I simply do not understand it. My wisdom is merely human wisdom.'" Now
in the mouth of Socrates, as in this apothegm, human wisdom means imperfect wisdom or quest
for wisdom, that is to say, philosophy. Since he realizes the imperfection of human wisdom, it is hard to
understand why he does not go from there to divine wisdom. The reason implied in this text is this: as a
30 philosopher, he refuses assent to anything which is not evident to him, and revelation is for him not more
than an unevident, unproven possibility. Confronted with an unproven possibility, he does not reject, he
merely suspends judgment. But here a great difficulty arises which one can state as follows: it is impossible
to suspend judgment regarding matters of utmost urgency, regarding matters of life and death. Now the
question of revelation is evidently of utmost urgency. If there is revelation, unbelief in revelation or disobe-
35 dience to revelation is fatal. Suspense of judgment regarding revelation would then seem to be impossible.
The philosopher who refuses to assent to revelation because it is not evident therewith rejects revelation. But
this rejection is unwarranted if revelation is not disproved. Which means to say that the philosopher, when
confronted with revelation, seems to be compelled to contradict the very idea of philosophy by rejecting

1 without sufficient grounds. How can we understand that? The philosophic reply can be stated as follows:
the question of utmost urgency, the question which does not permit suspense, is the question of how one
should live. Now this question is settled for Socrates by the fact that he is a philosopher. As a philosopher,
he knows that we are ignorant of the most important things. The ignorance, the evident fact of this igno-
5 rance, evidently proves that quest for knowledge of the most important things is the most important thing
for us. Philosophy is then evidently the right way of life. This is in addition, according to him, confirmed by
the fact that he finds his happiness in acquiring the highest possible degree of clarity which he can acquire.
He sees no necessity whatever to assent to something which is not evident to him. And if he is told that his
disobedience to revelation might be fatal, he raises the question, what does fatal mean? In the extreme case, it
10 would be eternal damnation. Now the philosophers of the past were absolutely certain that an all-wise God
would not punish with eternal damnation or with anything else such human beings as are seeking the truth
or clarity. We must consider later on whether this reply is quite sufficient. At any rate, philosophy is meant,
and that is the decisive point, not as a set of propositions, a teaching, or even a system, but as a way of life,
a life animated by a peculiar passion, the philosophic desire or *eros*, not as an instrument or a department of
15 human self-realization. Philosophy understood as an instrument or as a department is, of course, compatible
with every thought of life, and therefore also with the biblical of life. But this is no longer philosophy in the
original sense of the term. This has been greatly obscured, I believe, by the Western development, because
philosophy was certainly in the Christian Middle Ages deprived of its character as a way of life and became
just a very important compartment.

20 I must therefore try to restate why, according to the original notion of philosophy, philosophy is necessar-
ily a way of life and not a mere discipline, if even the highest discipline. I must explain, in other words, why
philosophy cannot possibly lead up to the insight that another way of life apart from the philosophic one is
the right one. Philosophy is quest for knowledge regarding the whole. Being essentially quest and being not
able ever to become wisdom, as distinguished from philosophy, the problems are always more evident than
25 the solutions. All solutions are questionable. Now the right way of life cannot be fully established except
by an understanding of the nature of man, and the nature of man cannot be fully clarified except by an
understanding of the nature of the whole. Therefore, the right way of life cannot be established metaphys-
ically except by a completed metaphysics, and therefore the right way of life remains questionable. But the
very uncertainty of all solutions, the very ignorance regarding the most important things, makes quest for
30 knowledge the most important thing, and therefore a life devoted to it, the right way of life. So philosophy
in its original and full sense is then certainly incompatible with the biblical way of life. Philosophy and *Bible*
are the alternatives or the antagonists in the drama of the human soul. Each of the two antagonists claims
to know or to hold the truth, the decisive truth, the truth regarding the right way of life. But there can be
only one truth: hence, conflict between these claims and necessarily conflict among thinking beings; and
35 that means inevitably argument. Each of the two opponents has tried since millenia to refute the other. This
effort is continuing in our day, and in fact it is taking on a new intensity after some decades of indifference.

III.

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Now I have to say a few words about the present-day argument. The present-day argument in favor of philosophy, we can say, is practically non-existent because of the disintegration of philosophy. I have spoken on a former occasion of the distinction between philosophy and science as understood today, a distinction which necessarily leads to a discrediting of philosophy. The contrast between the lack of results in philosophy and the enormous success of the sciences brings this about. Science is the only intellectual pursuit which today successfully can claim to be the perfection of the human understanding. Science is neutral in regard to revelation. Philosophy has become uncertain of itself. Just one quotation, a statement of one of the most famous present-day philosophers: "Belief in revelation is true, but not true for the philosopher. Rejection of revelation is true for the philosopher, but not true for the believer." Let us turn to the more promising present-day argument in favor of revelation. I shall not waste words on the most popular argument which is taken from the needs of present-day civilization, the present-day crisis, which would simply amount to this: that we need today, in order to compete with communism, revelation as a myth. Now this argument is either
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stupid or blasphemous. Needless to say, we find similar arguments also with Zionism, and I think this whole argument has been disposed of in advance a long time ago by Dostoyevsky in *The Possessed*.

Now the serious argument in favor of revelation can be stated as follows: there is no objective evidence whatever in favor of revelation, which means there is no shred of evidence in favor of revelation except, first, the experience, the personal experience, of man's encounter with God, and secondly, the negative proof of the inadequacy of any non-believing position. Now as to the first point - there is no objective evidence in favor of revelation except the experience of one's encounter with God - a difficulty arises. Namely, what is the relation of this personal experience to the experience expressed in the *Bible*? It becomes necessary to distinguish between what the prophets experience, what we may call the call of God or the presence of God, and what they said, and this latter would have to be called, as it is today called by all non-orthodox theologians, a human interpretation of God's action. It is no longer God's action itself. The human interpretation cannot be authoritative. But the question arises, is not every specific meaning attached to God's call or to God's presence a human interpretation? For example, the encounter with God will be interpreted in radically different manners by the Jew on the one hand, and by the Christian on the other, to say nothing of the Muslim and others. Yet only one interpretation can be the true one. There is therefore a need for argument between the various believers in revelation, an argument which cannot help but to allude somehow to objectivity. As for the second point - the negative proof of the inadequacy of any non-believing position - that is usually very strong in so far as it shows the inadequacy of modern progressivism, optimism, or cynicism, and to that extent I regard it as absolutely convincing.

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But that it not the decisive difficulty. The decisive difficulty concerns classical philosophy, and here the discussions, as far as I know them, do not come to grips with the real difficulty. To mention only one point, it is said that classical philosophy is based on a kind of delusion which can be proved to be a delusion. Classical philosophy is said to be based on the unwarranted belief that the whole is intelligible. Now this is a very long question. Permit me here to limit myself to say that the prototype of the philosopher in the

1 classical sense was Socrates, who knew that he knew nothing, who therewith admitted that the whole is not
intelligible, who merely wondered whether by saying that the whole is not intelligible we do not admit to
have some understanding of the whole. For of something of which we know absolutely nothing, we could of
course not say anything, and that is the meaning, it seems to me, of what is so erroneously translated by the
5 intelligible, that man as man necessarily has an awareness of the whole. Let me only conclude this point. As
far as I know, the present-day arguments in favor of revelation against philosophy are based on an inadequate
understanding of classical philosophy.

Now, to find our bearings, let us return to a more elementary stratum of the conflict. What is truly signif-
icant in the present-day argument will then become clearer, and we shall understand also the reasons for the
10 withdrawal from objectivity in the argument in favor of revelation in present-day theology. The typical older
view regarding revelation and reason is today accepted fully only by the Catholic Church and by Orthodox
Jews and orthodox Protestants. I speak of course only of the Jewish version. The question is, how do we
know that the Torah is from Sinai or the word of the living God? The traditional Jewish answer is primarily
that our fathers have told us, and they knew it from their fathers, an uninterrupted chain of a reliable tradi-
15 tion, going back to Mount Sinai.

If the question is answered in this form, it becomes inevitable to wonder, is the tradition reliable? I will
mention only one specimen from the earlier discussion. At the beginning of his legal code, Maimonides
gives the chain of tradition from Moses down to Talmudic times, and there occurs the figure of Ahijah the
Shilonite who is said to have received the Torah from King David and also is introduced as a contemporary
20 of Moses, who had received the Torah from Moses. Now, whatever Maimonides may have meant by the in-
sertion of this Talmudic story, from our point of view it would be an indication of the fact that this chain of
the tradition, especially in its earlier parts, contains what today is called "mythical," that is to say, unhistor-
ical elements. I shall not dwell on the very well-known discrepancies in the *Bible*. The question, who wrote
the Pentateuch, was traditionally answered, as a matter of course, by Moses, so much so that when Spinoza
25 questioned the Mosaic origin of the Torah it was assumed that he denied its divine origin. Who wrote the
Pentateuch, Moses himself, or men who knew of the revelation only from hearsay or indirectly? The details
are of no interest to us here; we have to consider the principle.

Is an historical proof of the fact of revelation possible? An historical proof of the fact of revelation would
be comparable to the historical proof of the fact, say, of the assassination of Caesar by Brutus and Cassius.
30 That is demonstrably impossible. In the case of historical facts proper, or historical facts in the ordinary sense
of the term, there is always evidence by impartial observers or by witnesses belonging to both parties. For
example, here, friends and enemies of Caesar. In the case of revelation, there are no impartial observers. All
witnesses are adherents and all transmitters were believers. Furthermore, there are no pseudo-assassinations
or pseudo-wars, but there are pseudo-revelations and pseudo-prophets. The historical proof presupposes,
35 therefore, criteria for distinguishing between genuine and spurious revelation. We know the biblical crite-
rion, at least the decisive one in our context: a prophet cannot be a genuine prophet if he contradicts the
preceding classic revelations, the Mosaic revelation. Therefore the question is, how to establish the classic
revelation?

1 The usual traditional answer was, "miracles." But here the difficulty arises in this form: miracles as mira-
cles are not demonstrable. In the first place, a miracle as a miracle is a fact of which we do not know the nat-
ural causes, but our ignorance of the cause of a given phenomenon does not entitle us to say it cannot have
5 been produced by any natural cause but only supernaturally. Our ignorance of the power of nature - that is
Spinoza's phrasing of the argument - our ignorance of the power of nature disqualifies us from ever having
resource to supernatural causation. Now this argument in this form is not quite adequate for the following
reasons: because while our knowledge of the power of nature is certainly very limited, of certain things we
know, or at least men like Spinoza believed to know, that they are impossible by nature. I mention only the
10 resurrection of a dead man, to take the strongest example, which Spinoza would admit could never have tak-
en place naturally. Therefore the argument taken from the ignorance of the power of nature is supplemented
by the following argument: that it might be possible theoretically to establish in given cases that a certain
phenomenon is miraculous, but it so happens that all these events regarding which this claim is made are
known only as reported, and many things are reported which have never happened. More precisely, all mir-
15 acles which are important, certainly to the Jew and even to the Protestant (the case of Catholicism is differ-
ent), took place in a pre-scientific age. No miracle was performed in the presence of first-rate physicists, etc.
Therefore, for these reasons, many people today say, and that was also said by certain famous theologians of
the past, that miracles presuppose faith; they are not meant to establish faith. But whether this is sufficient,
whether this is in accordance with the biblical view of miracles, is a question. To begin with, one could make
20 this objection: that if you take the story of the prophet Elijah on Carmel, you see that the issue between God
and Baal is decided by an objective occurrence, equally acceptable to the sense perception of believers as well
as unbelievers.

The second ordinary traditional argument in favor of revelation is the fulfillment of prophecies. But I
need not tell you that this again is open to very great difficulties. In the first place, we have the ambiguity
of prophecies, and even in cases like unambiguous prophecies: for example, the prophecy of Cyrus in the
25 fortieth chapter of Isaiah, that is today generally taken to be a prophecy after the event, the reasoning being
that such a prophecy would be a miracle if established: but it is known only as reported and therefore the
question of historical criticism of the sources comes in.

Much more impressive is the other line of the argument which proves revelation by the intrinsic quality
of revelation. The revealed law is the best of all laws. Now this, however, means that the revealed law agrees
30 with the rational standard of the best law; but if this is the case, is then the allegedly revealed law not in fact
the product of reason, of human reason, the work of Moses and not of God? Yet the revealed law, while it
never contradicts reason, has an excess over reason; it is supra-rational, and therefore it cannot be the prod-
uct of reason. That is a very famous argument, but again we have to wonder what does supra-rational mean?
The supra has to be proved and it cannot be proved. What unassisted reason sees is only a non-rational
35 element, an element which, while not contradicting reason, is not in itself supported by reason. From the
point of view of reason, it is an indifferent possibility: possibly true, possibly false, or possibly good, possibly
bad. It would cease to be indifferent if it were proved to be true or good, which means if it were true or good
according to natural reason.

1 But again, if this were the case, it would appear to be the product of reason, of human reason. Let me try
to state this in more general terms. The revealed law is either fully rational - in that case it is a product of
reason - or it is not fully rational - in that case it may as well be the product of human unreason as of divine
super-reason. Still more generally, revelation is either a brute fact, to which nothing in purely human experi-
5 ence corresponds - in that case it is an oddity of no human importance - or it is a meaningful fact, a fact re-
quired by human experience to solve the fundamental problems of man - in that case it may very well be the
product of reason, of the human attempt to solve the problem of human life. It would then appear that it is
impossible for reason, for philosophy, to assent to revelation as revelation. Moreover, the intrinsic qualities of
the revealed law are not regarded as decisive by the revealed law itself. Revealed law puts the emphasis not on
10 the universal, but on the contingent, and this leads to the difficulties which I have indicated before.

Let us turn now to the other side of the picture; these things are, of course, implied in all present-day sec-
ularism, now all these and similar arguments prove no more than that unassisted human reason is invincibly
ignorant of divine revelation. They do not prove the impossibility of revelation. Let us assume that revelation
is a fact, if a fact not accessible to unassisted reason, and that it is meant to be inaccessible to unassisted rea-
15 son. For if there were certain knowledge, there would be no need for faith, for trust, for true obedience, for
free surrender to God. In that case, the whole refutation of the alleged rejection of the alleged objective his-
torical proofs of revelation would be utterly irrelevant. Let me take this simple example of Elijah on Carmel:
were the believers in Baal, whom Elijah or God convinced, impartial scientific observers? In a famous essay,
Francis Bacon made a distinction between idolaters and atheists and said that the miracles are meant only for
20 the conviction, not of atheists, but of idolaters, meaning of people who in principle admit the possibility of
divine action. These men were fearing and trembling, not beyond hope or fear like philosophers. Not theol-
ogy, but philosophy, begs the question. Philosophy demands that revelation should establish its claim before
the tribunal of human reason, but revelation as such refuses to acknowledge that tribunal. In other words,
philosophy recognizes only such experiences as can be had by all men at all times in broad daylight. But God
25 has said or decided that he wants to dwell in mist. Philosophy is victorious as long as it limits itself to repel-
ling the attack which theologians make on philosophy with the weapons of philosophy. But philosophy in its
turn suffers a defeat as soon as it starts an offensive of its own, as soon as it tries to refute, not the necessarily
inadequate proofs of revelation, but revelation itself.

30 IV.

Now there is today, I believe, still a very common view, common to nineteenth and twentieth century
freethinkers, that modern science and historical criticism have refuted revelation. Now I would say that they
have not even refuted the most fundamentalistic orthodoxy. Let us look at that. There is the famous example
35 which played such a role still in the nineteenth century and, for those of us who come from conservative
or orthodox backgrounds, in our own lives. The age of the earth is much greater than the biblical reports
assume, but it is obviously a very defective argument. The refutation presupposes that everything happens
naturally; but this is denied by the *Bible*. The *Bible* speaks of creation; creation is a miracle, the miracle. All

1 the evidence supplied by geology, paleontology, etc., is valid against the *Bible* only on the premise that no
miracle intervened. The freethinking argument is really based on poor thinking. It begs the question. Simi-
larly, textual criticism - the inconsistencies, repetitions, and other apparent deficiencies of the biblical text: if
the text is divinely inspired, all those things mean something entirely different from what they would mean
5 if we were entitled to assume that the *Bible* is a merely human book. Then they are just deficiencies, but
otherwise they are secrets.

Historical criticism presupposes unbelief in verbal inspiration. The attack, the famous and very effective
attack by science and historical criticism on revelation is based on the dogmatic exclusion of the possibility
of miracles and of verbal inspiration. I shall limit myself to miracles, because verbal inspiration itself is one
10 miracle. Now this attack, which underlies all the scientific and historical arguments, would be defensible if
we knew that miracles are impossible. Then we would indeed be able to draw all these conclusions. But what
does that mean? We would have to be in possession of either a proof of the non-existence of an omnipotent
God, who alone could do miracles, or of a proof that miracles are incompatible with the nature of God. I
see no alternative to that. Now the first alternative - a proof of the non-existence of an omnipotent God -
15 would presuppose that we have perfect knowledge of the whole, so as it were we know all the corners, there
is no place for an omnipotent God. In other words, the presupposition is a completed system. We have the
solution to all riddles. And then I think we may dismiss this possibility as absurd. The second alternative -
namely, that miracles are incompatible with the nature of God - would presuppose human knowledge of the
nature of God: in traditional language, natural theology. Indeed the basis, the forgotten basis, of modern free
20 thought, is natural theology. When the decisive battles were waged, not in the nineteenth century, but in the
eighteenth and seventeenth, the attempted refutation of miracles, etc., were based on an alleged knowledge
of the nature of God - natural theology is the technical name for that.

Let us sketch the general character of this argument. God is the most perfect being. This is what all men
mean by God, regardless of whether He exists or not. Now the philosophers claim that they can prove the
25 incompatibility of revelation and of any other miracle with divine perfection. That is a long story, not only
in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but of course also in the Middle Ages. I will try to sketch this
argument by going back to its human roots. Fundamentally, the philosophic argument in natural theology is
based on an analogy from human perfection. God is the most perfect being. But we know empirically perfec-
tion only in the form of human perfection, and human perfection is taken to be represented by the wise man
30 or by the highest human approximation to the wise man. For example, just as the wise man does not inflict
infinite punishment on erring human beings, God, still more perfect, would do it even less. A wise man does
not do silly or purposeless things, but to use the miracle of verbal inspiration, for example, in order to tell a
prophet the name of a pagan king who is going to rule centuries later, would be silly. I mean that is the argu-
ment underlying these things or something of this kind. To this I would answer as follows: God's perfection
35 implies that he is incomprehensible. God's ways may seem to be foolish to man; this does not mean that they
are foolish. Natural theology would have to get rid, in other words, of God's incomprehensibility, in order to
refute revelation, and that it never did.

There was one man who tried to force the issue by denying the incomprehensibility of God's essence,

1 and that man was Spinoza. [May I say this in passing that I have leaned very heavily in my analysis of these
things on Spinoza.] One can learn much from Spinoza, who is the most extreme, certainly of the modern
critics of revelation, not necessarily in his thought but certainly in the expression of his thought. I like to
quote the remark of Hobbes, you know, a notoriously bold man, who said that he had not dared to write
5 as boldly as Spinoza. Now Spinoza says, "We have adequate knowledge of the essence of God," and if we
have that, God is clearly fully comprehensible. What Spinoza called the adequate knowledge of the essence
of God led to the consequence that miracles of any kind are impossible. But what about Spinoza's adequate
knowledge of the essence of God? Let us consider that for one moment, because it is really not a singular
and accidental case. [Many of you will have seen Spinoza's Ethics, his exposition of that knowledge.] Spino-
10 za's Ethics begins, as you know, with certain definitions. Now these definitions are in themselves absolutely
arbitrary, especially the famous definition of substance: substance is what is by itself and is conceived by
itself. Once you admit that, everything else follows from that; there are no miracles possible then. But since
the definitions are arbitrary, the conclusions are arbitrary. The basic definitions are, however, not arbitrary if
we view them with regard to their function. Spinoza defines by these definitions the conditions which must
15 be fulfilled if the whole is to be fully intelligible. But they do not prove that these conditions are in fact ful-
filled - that depends on the success of Spinoza's venture. The proof lies in the success. If Spinoza is capable of
giving a clear and distinct account of everything, there we are confronted with this situation. We have a clear
and distinct account of the whole, and, on the other hand, we have obscure accounts of the whole, one of
whom would be the biblical account. And then every sane person would prefer the clear and distinct account
20 to the obscure account. That is, I think, the real proof which Spinoza wants to give. But is Spinoza's account
of the whole clear and distinct? Those of you who have ever tried their hands, for example, at his analysis of
the emotions, would not be so certain of that. But more than that, even if it is clear and distinct, is it nec-
essarily true? Is its clarity and distinctness not due to the fact that Spinoza abstracts from those elements of
the whole which are not clear and distinct and which can never be rendered clear and distinct? Now funda-
25 mentally, Spinoza's procedure is that of modern science according to its original conception - to make the
universe a completely clear and distinct, a completely mathematizable unit.

Let me sum this up: the historical refutation of revelation [and I say here that this is not changed if you
take revelation in the most fundamentalist meaning of the term] presupposes natural theology because the
historical refutation always presupposes the impossibility of miracles, and the impossibility of miracles is
30 ultimately guaranteed only by knowledge of God. Now, natural theology which fills this bill presupposes in its
turn a proof that God's nature is comprehensible, and this in its turn requires completion of the true system
of the true or adequate account of the whole. Since such a true adequate, as distinguished from a merely
clear and distinct, account of the whole, is certainly not available, philosophy has never refuted revelation.
Nor, to come back to what I said before, has revelation, or rather theology, ever refuted philosophy. For
35 from the point of view of philosophy, revelation is only a possibility: and secondly, man, in spite of what the
theologians say, can live as a philosopher, that is to say, untragically. It seems to me that all these attempts,
made, for explicit by Pascal and by others, to prove that the life of philosophy is fundamentally miserable,
presuppose faith; it is not acceptable and possible as a refutation of philosophy. Generally stated, I would say

1 that all alleged refutations of revelation presuppose unbelief in revelation, and all alleged refutations of philosophy presuppose already faith in revelation. There seems to be no ground common to both, and therefore superior to both.

5 If one can say colloquially, the philosophers have never refuted revelation and the theologians have never refuted philosophy, that would sound plausible, considering the enormous difficulty of the problem from any point of view. And to that extent we may be said to have said something very trivial; but to show that it is not quite trivial. I submit to you this consideration in conclusion. And here when I use the term philosophy, I use it in the common and vague sense of the term where it includes any rational orientation in the world, including science and what have you, common sense. If this is so, philosophy must admit the possibility of revelation. Now that means that philosophy itself is possibly not the right way of life. It is not necessarily the right way of life, not evidently the right way of life, because this possibility of revelation exists. But what then does the choice of philosophy mean under these conditions? In this case, the choice of philosophy is based on faith. In other words, the quest for evident knowledge rests itself on an unevident premise. And it seems to me that this difficulty underlies all present-day philosophizing and that it is this difficulty which is at the bottom of what in the social sciences is called the value problem: that philosophy or science, however you might call it, is incapable of giving an evident account of its own necessity. I do not think I have to prove that showing the practical usefulness of science, natural and social science, does not of course prove its necessity at all. I mean I shall not speak of the great successes of the social sciences, because they are not so impressive; but as for the great successes of the natural sciences, we in the age of the hydrogen bomb have the question completely open again whether this effort is really reasonable with a view to its practical usefulness. That is of course not the most important reason theoretically, but one which has practically played a great role.

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