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Università di Pisa

Piazza Torricelli 4 - 56126 Pisa

P. IVA 00286820501 · Codice Fiscale 80003670504

Tel. +39 050 2212056 · Fax +39 050 2212945

E-mail press@unipi.it · PEC cidic@pec.unipi.it

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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 1853, f. 186v

*Debate by the Book, about the Book, in a Book:
Shem Tov Falaquera's Epistle of the Debate,
Al-Fārābī's Book of Dialectic, and Aristotle's Topics
on Philosophy and the Holy Writ*

Yehuda Halper*

Abstract

Shem Tov Falaquera's *Epistle of the Debate* describes a debate between a Pietist who is knowledgeable only in Jewish law and religious texts and a Scholar who is well versed in both Jewish and philosophical works about whether according to Scripture studying philosophy is forbidden, permitted, or necessary for the perfection of human beings. I argue that to a large extent the form, style, and much of the content of the arguments in the debate are based on Al-Fārābī's *Book of Dialectic*. Falaquera thus provides an example of a debate by the book (Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*), about the Book (Scripture), and in a book (*The Epistle of the Debate*). Moreover, by examining the arguments of the *Epistle* in light of Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*, we can see how dialectic can provide both training in adversarial debates and an introduction to philosophy and science.

At the end of the first day of the debate between a scientist Scholar and a Pietist well-versed in religious Law recounted in *Epistle of the Debate* by Shem Tov Falaquera (c. 1225-c. 1290), the Scholar chastises the Pietist for being unfamiliar with the difficulties raised by dialectic (*ha-nišuah*) and accordingly being unable to defend his beliefs properly. As an example of a dialectical argument that might not be recognized as such by those untrained in dialectic, Falaquera's Scholar mentions "proof for the refutation of motion even though it is a thing perceived by the senses (this is the problem known as the problem of halves)". This argument is dialectical and its fallaciousness can only be countered by one knowledgeable in demonstration (*ha-mofet*). If one unfamiliar with dialectic can be led astray about things apparent to his senses, asks the Scholar, "How much more so is this the case concerning tradition (*qabbalah*)?"¹

Had the Pietist studied dialectic through Al-Fārābī's *Book of Dialectic*, he would indeed have been familiar with the dialectical character of Zeno's paradox and its ramifications for accepting tradition. Al-Fārābī speaks of using dialectic "to test (يُمْتَحِن) traditionally received opinions (الأراء المقبولة), which are those that one encounters first, in which one is educated, and to which one is habituated".² Rather than bring an example of such a test of traditionally

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¹ *Falaquera's Epistle of the Debate: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy*, ed. and trans. S. Harvey, Harvard U.P., Cambridge MA 1987, p. 61-2 (Hebrew edition) / p. 24-5 (English translation). All references to *Epistle of the Debate* are to this edition and will include the page number for the Hebrew text followed by the page numbers for the English translation.

² D. Mallet, "La Dialectique dans la philosophie d'Abū Naṣr Al-Fārābī", Ph.D. Dissertation, Université Michel-de-Montaigne 1992, p. 52, §20.1. All references to the Arabic of Al-Fārābī's *Book of Dialectic* are to this edition.

received opinions, Al-Fārābī brings the example of Zeno's paradox, which shows, he says, that dialectical arguments can even bring people to become skeptical (حمل ... على الاسترابة) about the sensibles (بالمحسوسات). Indeed, Al-Fārābī attributes knowledge of three types of propositions to a beginner who has not yet studied philosophy: widely held opinions (الآراء المشهورة), traditionally received opinions (الآراء المقبولة), and sensible opinions (الآراء المحسوسة). The implication is the same as that which Falaquera's Scholar draws explicitly: if dialectical arguments such as Zeno's paradox can make one skeptical of sensible opinions (e.g., that motion exists), then they can also make one skeptical of widely-held opinions and traditionally received opinions. Al-Fārābī is most likely drawing on Aristotle, *Topica* 8, 160 b 7-9, where Zeno's argument is presented as an example of statements that are the opposite of accepted opinions (λόγους ... ἐναντίους ταῖς δόξαις). Yet, it was Al-Fārābī who connected these statements to traditionally received opinions in addition to sensible opinions and widely-held opinions.³ For Al-Fārābī, the first benefit (نافع) of dialectic for the study of philosophy is primarily in testing traditionally received opinions, opinions that are inculcated through education or acculturation (أدب) and habituation (عود); these opinions would apparently include religious views. Such tests, says Al-Fārābī, are not possible without "opposition" (عناد), which in turn is not possible without the art of dialectic (صناعة الجدل). Indeed, Al-Fārābī dedicates a large part of his *Dialectic* to describing how in debates questioner and respondent put forward various opposing views and arguments whose resolution brings them closer to practicing philosophy.

Actually, were the Pietist of Falaquera's *Epistle* familiar with Al-Fārābī's *Book of Dialectic*, he would find more similarities between Al-Fārābī's rules for dialectical debate and the debate in the midst of which he finds himself in the *Epistle*. In fact, as we shall see, the structure and form of the arguments of the debate correspond directly to Al-Fārābī's classification of arguments and how they should be argued by questioner and respondent in his *Dialectic*. Moreover, the debate setting in general, along with its apparent goals, is apparently drawn from Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*. This is not to say that Falaquera's *Epistle* relies exclusively on Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*. Indeed, Falaquera drew on numerous other works, including especially Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*.⁴

While we do not know in what form Falaquera had access to the *Dialectic*, we do know that at least the first part of the work was available in Southern Europe and was even translated into Hebrew around Falaquera's time if not before.⁵ Still, a preponderance of evidence will suggest that Falaquera did indeed base many of his arguments in the *Epistle* and, likely even, the work's

Unless otherwise noted, all translations of this text are my own. My translations have been aided by the recent English translation of the work in D. DiPasquale, *Alfarabi's Book of Dialectic (Kitāb al-Jadal): On the Starting Point of Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2019. Di Pasquale's translation lists the page and paragraph numbers of Mallet's edition (above, n. 2). Here, I translate مقبولة "traditionally received" to emphasize its similarity to its Hebrew cognate used by Falaquera, קבלה.

³ Averroes is much closer to Aristotle, using Zeno's paradox only in connection with the difficulty of supporting widely-held opinions (המפורסמות), even though this discussion occurs in the first treatise of Averroes' *Middle Commentary*, not the last.

⁴ Throughout his edition and translation, Steven Harvey shows a vast array of influences on Falaquera. The most important of these is Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*, which he shows to have determined which philosophical issues are points of contention between religion and philosophy, the elitism of the philosophically adept and numerous other issues. See Falaquera's *Epistle of the Debate*, pp. 83-98 Harvey. Yet, the debate-format itself is not derived from Averroes *ibid.*, (p. 96 Harvey). Falaquera was a compiler of sources who drew on numerous texts in Arabic and Hebrew, and there would have been nothing preventing him from drawing on both Averroes' *Decisive Treatise* and Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*.

⁵ This anonymous translation has the hallmarks of a very early (i.e., 12-13th century) Hebrew translation made by someone not familiar with the conventions of Tibbonide philosophical translations. Gadi Weber and I are currently preparing a critical edition of this important text with the support of the Israel Science Foundation.

very structure as a dialogue on the teachings of Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*. Accordingly, we may say that Falaquera has provided us an example of a debate by the book (Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*), about the *Book* (*Scripture*), and in a book (*The Epistle of the Debate*). In doing so, Falaquera shows by example exactly how dialectical debate can be an introduction to philosophy, particularly for those raised in a religious society.⁶

Falaquera's *Epistle* can be divided into two sections: the first is characterized by open hostility between the Scholar and the Pietist, while the second is characterized by the Pietist's admission that philosophy has something to teach him and his inquiries into how it might be reconciled with religious texts and law.⁷ The antagonism between the interlocutors wanes significantly in the second section until the Pietist admits his errors and asks the Scholar to teach him philosophy.⁸ Here I shall begin with the arguments of the first section, then turn to those of the second section, before looking at the overall features of the debate.

The First Section of Falaquera's Epistle

The first section of the debate starts out with a description of the character of the interlocutors – the Pietist constantly studies the Bible and works of Jewish law, while the Scholar studies those works at times, but also studies works of philosophy (*filosofiyyah*). Still, Falaquera makes sure to tell us that they are both equally virtuous in following the Law.⁹ Nevertheless, these different approaches to study lead to “enmity” and “trial and contention” as the Pietist would “proclaim to the multitude that the Scholar denied the religion and pursued falsehood and deceit,” while the Scholar proclaimed that the Pietist “did not understand what he read and that his intellect was deficient”.¹⁰ Such proclamations form the background of the debate, but the debate itself apparently concerns only a single proposition: that the Scholar is among the heretics. To the Scholar's question as to the content of his heresy, the Pietist says, “You mix the words of the Epicureans and the heretics with the right words of the Law, and you engage in the study of the irreligious books and the compositions of the Greek philosophers”.¹¹ While this is the Pietist's position, the Scholar's position is that the Pietist “had been entertaining a position against the worthy”,¹² i.e., that the Pietist is wrong. That is, the Scholar's position is the contradictory of the Pietist's position. In the ensuing dialogue, the Scholar asks a series of

⁶ That this debate is an introduction to philosophy is argued by S. Harvey in Falaquera's *Epistle of the Debate* (above, n. 1), esp. pp. 102-10. It may be implicit in Falaquera's opening remarks to the *Epistle* (pp. 55-56 [Hebrew edition] / pp. 14-15 [English translation]). It is certainly evident at the end of the work when the Scholar promises to write the books of philosophy which Falaquera himself wrote as a way for the Pietist to continue his philosophical development (pp. 79-80 [Heb.] / p. 51 [trans]).

⁷ The first section is on pp. 55-65 Harvey (Heb.) / pp. 14-29 (trans.), while the second is from pp. 66-80 Harvey / pp. 30-52.

⁸ The full admission occurs on p. 76 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 46 (trans), is reiterated in even stronger terms on p. 78 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 4 (trans) 8, and is then followed by an overview of how the Scholar will teach philosophy through his future writings.

⁹ Cf. p. 56-57 Harvey (Heb.) / pp. 16-17 (trans).

¹⁰ Cf. p. 56 Harvey (Heb.) / 16. (trans).

¹¹ 57 /18. The word for “heretics” here is *minim*, which is a Talmudic word referring to sectarians diverging from the Rabbinic mainstream. Elsewhere, Falaquera uses the term *kofrim* for heretics and *kefirah* for heresy, a term connected to denying or negating. It is this latter meaning which can more properly be applied to non-Jews, especially Greek thinkers. To be sure, *kefirah* also refers to heresy among Jewish people; hence its translation throughout Falaquera's work. Still, “heresy” would not properly apply to someone not Jewish, like Aristotle.

¹² P. 56 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 17 (trans). This phrasing is repeated by the Scholar and tacitly acknowledged by the Pietist after his full admission that the Scholar was correct on p. 78 Harvey (Heb.).

questions to the Pietist and proposes various other positions, which might seem at first glance to be unrelated, until the Pietist is led to a contradiction and ultimately abandons his view and accepts that of the Scholar.

Compare this to a statement at the opening of Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*:

The activity of this art is debate and dialectic; it is a discussion with widely-held statements by which a man, if he is a questioner, seeks to refute whichever part of a contradiction he receives by questioning a respondent who takes it upon himself to defend it. If the man is a respondent, he seeks to defend whichever part of the contradiction the questioner happens to have taken upon himself to refute.¹³

Falaquera's *Epistle* clearly presents a questioner (the Scholar) and a respondent (the Pietist) taking contradictories of a position which the Pietist seeks to defend and which the Scholar seeks to refute.

However, the position in question, viz. that the Scholar mixes heresy with the Law and studies the books of the Greek philosophers, is not clearly among the "widely-held statements" (مشهورات, מפורסמות, roughly equivalent to Aristotle's ἐνδοξα). Moreover, Al-Fārābī says repeatedly that the premises of dialectic are to be not only "widely-held," but also "universal" (كلیة)¹⁴ and Falaquera's formulation of the proposition is particular to the Scholar of the *Epistle*. What Falaquera tells us about the particular Scholar, however, is very little: he studies both philosophy and the Law.¹⁵ This limited and impersonal categorization, though, lends itself easily to universalization: Scholars are those who study philosophy and the Law.¹⁶ In fact, then, the Pietist accuses him, and thereby all Scholars like him, of studying Greek philosophy books and mixing heresy with the Law.

It repeatedly becomes clear that the objection to studying Greek philosophical texts is on the grounds that they are heretical. The Pietist says:

You mix the words of the Epicureans and the heretics with the right words of the Law and you engage in the study of the irreligious books and the compositions of the Greek philosophers. What greater sin could you pursue? The words of all these are a stumbling-block to those who read them and a snare! Are they not what make man go astray from his God and give the lie to the covenant of the Law, and cause him to cry out against Heaven and to be a heretic.¹⁷

This speech culminates in an accusation of heresy, but its central tenet is the legal claim that the words of all of these works are "a stumbling-block" and a "snare". Now, Maimonides in both the *Book of Commandments* interprets Leviticus 19:14, "Thou shalt not ... put a stumbling-block

¹³ Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §2, lines 1-5 (p. 20 Mallet, p. 12 DiPasquale): وفعل هذه الصناعة هي المجادلة والجدل وهو مخاطبة بأقاويل مشهورة يلتبس بها الإنسان إذا كان سائلا إبطال أي جزء من جزئي النقيض اتفق أن يتسلمه بالسؤال عن مجيب - My translation. - تضمّن حفظه وإذا كان مجيبا التمس بها حفظ أي جزء من جزئي النقيض اتفق أن عرضه لسائل تضمّن إبطاله.

¹⁴ See Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §1 (p. 19 Mallet) and §5 (p. 26 Mallet)..

¹⁵ *Epistle of the Debate*, p. 56.11-15 Harvey (Heb.)/ p. 16 (trans.).

¹⁶ Al-Fārābī identifies the use of particulars in place of universals as characteristic of jurisprudential syllogisms in his *Short Commentary* on Aristotle's *Analytica Priora*. See Al-Fārābī, *Syllogism: An Abridgement of Aristotle's Prior Analytics*, trans. S. Chaty – W. Hodges, Bloomsbury, London 2020, pp. 156-60, esp. p. 156: "As for putting a particular case in place of a universal [proposition]: this [occurs] when a phrase means a concept [that we intend to express], but [we express] a particular case of that concept instead of the concept that we intended".

¹⁷ P. 57.18-19 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 18 (trans.).

before the blind”,¹⁸ to prohibit “misleading people in opinion” (*ta‘tīr ba‘ḍanā ba‘ḍ bi-l-ra’y*) especially where such opinions lead to sin (*ma‘ṣiya*).¹⁹ Falaquera’s Pietest would seem to have this prohibition in mind in his accusation against the philosophers: their works are stumbling-blocks in that they give people misleading opinions that can lead them to sin.

This argument would seem to be an example of what Al-Fārābī calls the universal jurisprudential syllogism at the end of his *Short Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Analytica Priora*. There, Al-Fārābī describes a process of taking expressions in the Quran and restating them as declarative (*ḡāzim*) sentences so as to allow one to make a first figure syllogism. These declarative statements, which often have actions as their subjects, are apparently the accepted legal interpretation of a verse, often in ways not immediately obvious from the verse itself.²⁰ Falaquera’s Pietist apparently has something similar in mind when he calls the words of the philosophers a “stumbling-block”. As a result, the Pietist would seem to have in mind the following jurisprudential syllogism:

Misleading people in opinion is forbidden.

The words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion.

Therefore the words of the philosophers are forbidden.

The second premise as it appears here is not universal. Later in the argument, the Pietist will say “all their words contradict our Law”,²¹ allowing one to restate this second opinion universally: all the words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion. But even at the outset, it is clear from the ensuing discussion that this premise is understood to have a universal modifier, since the Scholar’s rejoinder, as we shall see, is to claim that only some of the words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion. Such an argument would not be possible if the Pietist already agreed with it. In fact, Al-Fārābī says that when it comes to jurisprudential syllogisms

often [the intended meaning] is present from the outset but hidden, so that it is not known whether [the universal statement] is being used in place of a particular case or not. (...) When it is hidden one should seek to identify it by means of a syllogism (...) If this particular case is made clear to us

¹⁸ KJV.

¹⁹ Moses Maimonides, *Sefer Hamišvot*, ed. and Hebrew trans. J. Qafih, Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 320-2, negative commandment 299. I have transliterated the Arabic here which appears in Hebrew characters. Compare *Sefer Haḥinukh*, ed. Ḥ. Chavel, Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1999), pp. 318-19, negative commandment 240. This anonymous work was penned sometime between 1274 and 1310 in Barcelona and so could have been available to Falaquera. Even if it was not, it reflects a view of this commandment prevalent at the time. This author is particularly concerned with bad opinions (עצה רעה) that can tempt one into idolatry. In *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides again interprets the verse to prohibit upholding unreasonable opinions, “strengthening the hands of sinners”, and “not seeing the true path on account of the desires of his heart”. כל המכשיל עור בדבר והשיאו עצה שאינה הוגנת או שחזק ידי עוברי עברה שהוא עור ואינו. רואה דרך האמת מפני תאוה לבו – הרי זה עובר בלא תעשה See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, ed. Y. Makbili, 3rd ed., The Mishneh Torah Project, Haifa 2009, p. 1015 (*Book of Torts, Laws of Murder and Guarding Life*, 12.14).

²⁰ See Al-Fārābī, *Syllogism* (above, n. 16), pp. 154-155 Chatti-Hodges. E.g., the statement “Avoid wine” is restated “Every intoxicant is forbidden”. In this example, the verbal character of “avoid wine” has been replaced by a predicative expression. Al-Fārābī tells us to make similar replacements with sentences like, “Be sure to wash your faces and hands” and “When you speak, be just”, which would result in the use of verbal nouns as predicates, e.g., “washing your face” and “being just”. Such a use is likely in line with the ninth and tenth categories, the category of acting and being acted upon. Note also that in such syllogisms, the first premise is the universal law, X is forbidden, prohibited, etc. and the second premise is that some Y is a case of X.

²¹ Cf. p. 58.13-16 Harvey (Heb./) p. 19 (trans): “Do we not know that they [the philosophers] are the heretics (...) and that all their words contradict our Law”.

through a syllogism that gives us a universal premise, the result is that we [can] use [the universal premise] in the same way we use any other universal [premise].²²

Al-Fārābī would, then, support the Scholar in treating this second premise as universal, especially since the Pietist offers no objection and indeed goes along with it.

Additionally, the matter-of-fact statement of the Pietist's second premise without proof or argument would appear to place it among the widely-held opinions of Falaquera's time. Indeed, as Al-Fārābī notes in *Dialectic*, widely held premises are "employed without having been tested or probed and without it being known whether they conform to the existing things or not. Rather they are accepted only because they are opinions without there being known about them any thing other than that all people believe that they are so or not so".²³ In the continuation of the passage, Al-Fārābī makes no mention of any way of accounting for how such beliefs can be held by all other than a general confidence (ثقة) that they are. General confidence that such beliefs are held by all is expressed several times by the Pietist.²⁴ Moreover, the same passage from Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic* also distinguishes the beliefs of all from those beliefs about sensory things and traditionally received beliefs, which are held by one group, but not by all. Falaquera's Pietist does not appeal to any traditionally received views or legal statements in support of the view that philosophical texts mislead people in opinion, though this is what we might expect from a legal scholar. The second premise is certainly not gained through sensation or intelligible premises. This second premise, then, meets Al-Fārābī's criteria for being considered universal and widely-held by all.

It is this second premise which the Scholar attacks in the first section of the *Epistle*. Although the Pietist is not familiar with dialectic and does not recognize the syllogistic structure of his argument, he concentrates most of his efforts on this second premise and abandons it once he considers it to have been refuted. Thus he somehow recognizes and accepts the terms of the debate. The Scholar's attacks against the Pietist's second premise, viz. that all the words of the philosophers are misleading to people in opinion, take the form of seven arguments conducted through question and answer all of which have direct analogues in Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic*.

The first argument is a general statement outlining the Scholar's approach to refuting the Pietist's position. The Scholar maintains that he does not "consider any of their words that go against our Law. Rather, I believe of their words only that which I see to be true and in agreement with our religion".²⁵ Although the Scholar does not tell us how he arrived at this statement, it is clear that it assumes that some philosophical words are not heretical. Accordingly, we can see the Scholar here as presenting an alternative syllogism to that of the Pietist, though it is not spelled out as such:

Misleading people in opinion is forbidden.

Not all words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion.

Therefore not all words of the philosophers are forbidden.

Again we have a first figure syllogism, but the modifications to the second premise place it in the third mood. The Scholar is less concerned with the Pietist's ad hominem attack against him

²² Al-Fārābī, *Syllogism* (above, n. 16), p. 156 Chatti-Hodges.

²³ Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §6, lines 1-4 (p. 26 Mallet, p. 16 DiPasquale): هذه المقدمات والآراء وتستعمل من غير أن تمتحن وتسير ويعلم هل هي مطابقة للأمر الموجودة أو غير مطابقة لها. بل تقبل على أنها آراء فقط من غير أن يعلم منها غير أن تمتحن وتسير ويعلم هل هي مطابقة للأمر الموجودة أو غير مطابقة لها. - Cf. §19, (p. 48 Mallet).

²⁴ See, e.g., the accusation on p. 58 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 19 (trans.): "You wish to change what is known (...) and to deny the voice that all ears hear. Do we not know that they [the philosophers] are the heretics".

²⁵ Cf. p. 57 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 18 (trans.). The entirety of what I consider the first argument occurs on *ibid.*, p. 57.22-25.

and more concerned with whether the second premise of both this syllogism and the Pietist's syllogism is a universal affirmative ("All ...") or a particular negative ("Not all ..."). Moreover, the Scholar's second premise is introduced with a general appeal to its veracity without support from sensation or intelligible premises. Accordingly, the second premise is apparently based on a widely-held opinion. That is, it is clear that what the Scholar is doing is "construct[ing] a syllogism from widely-held premises in order to refute a position whose subject is universal".²⁶

The Pietist, however, summarily rejects this reformulation on the grounds that "since the [philosophers] deny the Law, it is improper to (...) study (...) their books (...) at all".²⁷ This formulation is imprecise and would appear to advocate rejecting all philosophy on the grounds that some of it denies the Law. That is, it can be taken to admit the Scholar's formulation of the second premise: "Not all words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion". The Scholar apparently picks up on this in his second argument, which is based on the admission that some statements of heretics are true.²⁸ The Scholar obtains this admission from the Pietist by asking him to admit that Jethro of Exodus 18 was an idolater, and then to point out that Moses nevertheless took his advice. To this, the Scholar adds the widely-held view that "man must learn the truth from those who speak it even though they be infidels".²⁹ These views can be restated as a juridical syllogism:

True statements are statements that must be learned.

Some statements of heretics are true statements.

Therefore some statements of heretics are statements that must be learned.³⁰

The first syllogism, whose conclusion is "not all words of the philosophers are forbidden," is the contradictory of the Pietist's latent position: "all words of the philosophers are forbidden". The second syllogism is contrary to the ethical position of the Pietist that studying the works of the philosophers is forbidden because they are heretics. We might expect these two arguments to be sufficient for refuting the Pietist.

The Scholar's procedure here corresponds to that outlined in Al-Fārābī's Dialectic:

The questioner's method is first to get an admission of the position from the respondent by questioning. When the position comes to be supposed, his actions will find success after this when he also gets the respondent to admit through questioning each of those premises that he believes are beneficial for refuting that position. When some of the premises that the respondent admits come about for him such that if he composes them, the contradictory of the [respondent's] position necessarily follows, he combines them so that he yields the contradictory position out of them. He does this via statements rather than via questioning.³¹

²⁶ Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §1, line 2 (p. 19 Mallet): يعمل من مقدمات مشهورة قياسا في إبطال وضع موضوعه: عمل من مقدمات مشهورة ينتج كَلْبِي. Cf. *ibid.*, §2, lines 14-15 (p. 21 Mallet): فالسائل منهما يتضمّن إبطاله بأن يأتي بقياس عمله من مقدمات مشهورة ينتج نقيضه, "Of the two [viz. questioner and respondent] it is the questioner who takes it upon himself to refute the position by bringing a syllogism that he knows will produce its contradictory out of widely-held premises".

²⁷ Cf. p. 58 Harvey (Heb.)/ p. 18 (trans.).

²⁸ I take the second argument to be found on p. 58.3-13 Harvey (Heb.)/ p. 18-19 (trans.).

²⁹ Cf. p. 58 Harvey (Heb.)/ p. 19 (trans.). There is no need here to distinguish between idolaters, infidels, and heretics. Indeed, Falaquera's Scholar appears to use the terms interchangeably, often in order to preserve the rhyme scheme of his work.

³⁰ This is a kind of juridical syllogism with a proscriptive or hortatory declarative (*ḡāzim*) premise. See Al-Fārābī, *Syllogism* (above, n. 15), p. 155 Chatti-Hodges. As with the other syllogisms here, one who prefers greater accuracy could expand this into more syllogisms.

³¹ Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §3, lines 1-6 (pp. 21-22 Mallet): السائل سبيله أن يتسلم أولاً من المجيب الوضع: فإذا حصل الوضع مفروضاً فأنتج أفعاله بعد ذلك أن يتسلم أيضاً بالسؤال من المجيب المقدمات التي يرى أنها نافعة في

Later, Al-Fārābī says:

The most successful [technique] in dialectic is to proceed via the questioner's eliciting an admission for each premise individually, and then combining them into one that will produce a contradiction and an opposite to the respondent's way of proceeding. Further [the questioner] covers and hides the subject of contrariety so that the respondent does not sense it.³²

Thus, the Scholar gets the Pietist to admit³³ that Jethro was an idolater without apparently sensing that this will undermine his claim that one ought not learn from heretics. The Scholar then adds to this by way of stating, not questioning the widely-held, Rabbinically sanctioned view that one ought learn from all men. That the Scholar does not explicitly state the conclusion, though it directly refutes the Pietist's view, is also mentioned as a technique by Al-Fārābī who says that one can mention each premise alone, "omitting to mention the conclusion",³⁴ if he does not think that the respondent will accept it.³⁵ In fact, the Pietist does not immediately accept this conclusion and initially rejects the entire argument of the Scholar.³⁶

In the remaining arguments of the first section, the Scholar continues to attack the Pietist's latent second premise, viz. all words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion. In the third argument, the Scholar gets the Pietist to admit that he has not read any works of philosophy though he does not make explicit the inference that the Pietist cannot then know whether all their words are misleading.³⁷ This is presumably because he once again does not think that the respondent will accept this view. Indeed, the ensuing discussion in which the Scholar pleads with the Pietist to consider his words carefully before judging him would seem to support this.³⁸

The Scholar begins his fourth argument by asking the Pietist about the meaning of "heresy".³⁹ The Pietist's answer that a heretic "concerning something is one who does not believe in it"⁴⁰ understands heresy and belief as contradictories: one has either belief or heresy; there is nothing in between. The Scholar corrects the Pietist's definition of heresy to refer to active denial of a proposition, thereby implying that heresy and belief are contraries, but not contradictories.⁴¹

إبطال ذلك الوضع مقدّمة مقدّمة. فإذا حصل عنده من المتقدّمات التي سلّمها المجيب متقدّمات إذا ألفها لزم عنها نقيض الوضع جمعها وأنتج عنها النقيض مخاطبة بها للمجيب على طريق الإخبار لا على طريق السؤال.

³² Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §4.2, lines 19-22 (p. 25 Mallet): أنتج ما في الجدل استعمال الطريق التي بها يتسلم: السائل مقدّمة مقدّمة على انفراد ثم يجمع من ذلك ما ينتج نقيض ومقابل مذهب المسؤول وأن يخفي عند سؤاله موضع التقابل ويستتره لئلا يحسّ به المسؤول.

³³ Falaquera's word is הרה, which is also used in the anonymous Hebrew translations of Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic* to translate תסלם. Falaquera may not have known about this, but there is no more suitable word in Hebrew to translate this term.

³⁴ Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §4.2, line 6 (p. 24 Mallet): بترك ذكر النتيجة, DiPasquale trans. (note 3), p. 14 Di Pasquale thinks this passage is referring to Arist., *Top.* 158 a 7-8 (see p. 14, n. 12). Aristotle, however, does not talk about omitting to mention the conclusion there, but rather cautions against stating one's conclusion as a question which can then be dismissed with a shake of the head.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, §4.2, lines 4-5 (p. 24 Mallet): وإنما ينبغي أن يفعل ذلك فيما يظنّ أنّ المجيب يسلمها إذا خوطب بها.

³⁶ It is here that he states that "all their words contradict our Law". See note 21 above. It is possible that this formulation of what I call the second premise is not solidified in his mind until this point in the argument. If so, it is another testament to his inexperience with dialectical arguments and syllogisms.

³⁷ This argument is on p. 58.17-23 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 20 (trans).

³⁸ Cf. p. 58.24-59.14 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 20-21 (trans.).

³⁹ I take the fourth argument to be on p. 59.15-60.14 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 21-22 (trans.).

⁴⁰ P. 59 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 21 (trans.). Harvey uses the Hebrew term in transliteration, "kofe", rather than heretic because it more clearly refers generally to denial, not necessarily to heretical denial of someone of a particular religion.

⁴¹ On this distinction, see Al-Fārābī, *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*,

That is, there is a middle ground between denial and belief: perhaps, uncertainty. Once the Pietist agrees to this, the Scholar points out that the philosophers, in fact, believe in God and deny idolatry, which according to a Talmudic principle makes them “as one who acknowledges the Law”.⁴² As in the second argument, the Scholar apparently follows Al-Fārābī’s recommendations by not only concealing the purpose of his initial question, but also by neglecting to make the conclusion of his argument explicit. Presumably, the philosophers are not heretics about many things not because they are somehow equivalent to observant Jews by the Talmudic principle, but because they neither believe in them nor deny them. That is, it is their uncertainty or perhaps unwillingness to express their views that makes them neither heretics nor believers. The existence of middle ground between heresy and beliefs accordingly undermines the conclusion the Pietist claims to draw from what I identified as his first syllogism, viz. that the philosophers are heretics.⁴³ As in the second argument, the Pietist would presumably not accept this conclusion and so the Scholar did well to leave it out.

Following the implication that there are views between denial and belief, the Pietist asks the Scholar to explain the need for philosophical proof in general. The Scholar’s response, the fifth argument,⁴⁴ is that belief in something attained through intellect or sight is stronger than belief in the same thing attained via accepting someone else’s views. Such belief cannot be refuted through debate. This discussion culminates in the Scholar’s use of Zeno’s paradox that I have already suggested was taken from Al-Fārābī’s *Dialectic*, but it likely also draws on Al-Fārābī’s discussion of the different arguments leading to certainty.⁴⁵

By the end of the first day of debate, the Scholar has presented five arguments attacking the Pietist’s second premise that all words of the philosophers are misleading people in opinion and the conclusions the Pietist draws from this, viz. the philosophers are heretics. These arguments amount to a general argument as to why some philosophy is acceptable to Jews and indeed recommended learning, but it is not until the second day that the Scholar presents arguments that provide examples of positive philosophical content that actively bolsters Jewish faith. Without such examples, the Pietist’s conviction that some philosophy is recommended does not last the night. The two then come to the second day ready for “battle” (*milḥamah*) and “each drew the sword of his thought”.⁴⁶

The second day of the debate sees the Scholar bring two arguments illustrating how the study of philosophy can positively contribute to religious observance. The first of these begins with the concept of God’s oneness.⁴⁷ The Scholar gets the Pietist to admit that he believes that God

ed. F.W. Zimmerman, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1981, pp. 53-6. This distinction is used repeatedly in Al-Fārābī’s *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), and explained briefly at §12, p. 34 Mallet.

⁴² See Falaquera, *Epistle*, p. 22 and the reference in n. 23.

⁴³ The exact connection between the first syllogism and the accusation of heresy is never solidified in the *Epistle*. Presumably, the juridical syllogism would be something like this:

All forbidden words are heresies.

All the words of the philosophers are forbidden.

Therefore the words of the philosophers are heresies.

⁴⁴ Cf. p. 60.15-62.11 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 22-25 (trans.). Note that in *Dialectic* (above, n. 15), §20, pp. 53-54 Mallet, Al-Fārābī mentions dialectical discussion of the one as that which Socrates undertakes at the urging of Parmenides.

⁴⁵ *Dialectic* (above, n. 15), §7-8, pp. 28-30 Mallet. David Lemler notes the similarity of this discussion to the description of dialectic in Falaquera’s rendition of *’Iḥṣā al-’ulūm* in his *Reshit Hokhmah*, ed. M. David, Berlin 1902, pp. 35-36. See Shem Tov Falaquera, *L’accrod de la Torah et de la philosophie*, ed. and trans. D. Lemler, Hermann, Paris 2014, p. 194.

⁴⁶ P. 62 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 25 (trans.). Cf. the language evoking battle of the introductory poem, p. 55 (Heb.) / p. 13 (trans.).

⁴⁷ This occurs on pp. 63.9-65.3 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 26-28 (trans.).

is one, and then that he attains this belief by forming the concept (*mešayyer*) in his soul.⁴⁸ The Scholar points out first that “one” is said in many ways and then that the soul has many parts. The Pietist is unable to account for how the soul forms a concept of God’s oneness or in which sense God can be said to be one. The Pietist also acknowledges the importance of such understanding for fulfilling the Law and so asks the Scholar, “what is the remedy for this?”⁴⁹ This, indeed, is the turning point in the argument, after which the Pietist becomes more open to learning about philosophy. The Scholar reaches this turning point using more or less the same questioning technique that he applied in the second and fourth arguments of the first day: he gets the Pietist to admit something apparently unconnected and then questions him until he draws him to a position that contradicts his views. In this case, the position is that philosophy can positively contribute to the religious understanding of God’s oneness.

Yet, this method here is also similar to what Al-Fārābī calls “scientific questioning” (السؤال العلمي) in the fourth chapter of his *Dialectic*. One form this method of questioning takes is “that by which one examines the understanding of a meaning which is signified by a term and its formation as a concept in one’s soul”.⁵⁰ Indeed, the Scholar leads the Pietist toward an examination of the meanings of the term “one” and how they are formed as concepts in the soul. Moreover, Al-Fārābī goes on to describe this method as aiming toward examining the existence of a thing (وجود الشيء), which can only be properly achieved via demonstration (برهان).⁵¹ That is, insofar as this method of scientific questioning is employed in dialectic, it is to point to its completion via science proper and especially demonstration. This is, in fact, the very use the Scholar makes of this argument in the *Epistle*, where he argues for the existence of God’s oneness! The Scholar concludes by urging the Pietist to strive to apprehend the roots of religion via intellect and to pursue “clear proofs” (*ra’ayot berurot*) and “science” (*ba-ḥokhmah*).⁵²

The Scholar’s final argument in the first section continues to argue this point. The Scholar gets the Pietist to admit that accepting details of the laws of acquisition on faith alone without understanding is not sufficient. Accordingly, he argues that accepting more central laws, such as God’s oneness, on faith alone is insufficient and one must understand them. One ought, then, to seek to understand them. The Scholar’s argument on the second day supports the same syllogism of the second argument above, which concluded that some statements of heretics are statements that must be learned. Yet, here the emphasis is on the understanding conveyed through philosophy, even if this understanding is not available to every Jewish person.⁵³ From this point on, the Pietist raises no significant objections to the Scholar and indeed appears to work with him in the rest of the dialogue to gain a better understanding of the connection between philosophy and the Law.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ P. 63.21-23 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 27 (trans).

⁴⁹ P. 65.3 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 28 (trans.).

⁵⁰ Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic* (above, n. 2), §38, lines 1-2 (p. 77 Mallet): منه السؤال الذي يستدعى به تفهيم المعنى الذي يدل عليه الاسم وتصويره في النفس.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, §38, pp. 77-78.

⁵² Falaquera, *Epistle*, p. 65.2-3, and 5-7 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 28 (trans.).

⁵³ P. 65.21-23 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 29 (trans.). For those Jews who cannot understand philosophy the Scholar says tradition alone must be sufficient.

⁵⁴ The Pietist, though, still makes a few remarks of protest before he finally accepts the views of the Scholar.

Still, the Scholar's argument is problematic. This is clear if we restate his argument as a syllogism:

Understanding the fundamental concepts of the Law is recommended.

Some fundamental concepts are explained in works of the philosophers.

Therefore understanding the works of the philosophers is recommended.

This second figure juridical syllogism is not valid. That capable Jews and philosophers both understand the foundations of the Law need not imply that one should turn to the works of the philosophers. Falaquera does not say that this understanding can be found only in philosophical works. Indeed, he can be taken to suggest that such understanding can be found among capable Jews. Ironically, the Pietist was not willing at first to accept the Scholar's arguments as to why philosophy was not entirely heretical and so not entirely objectionable, even though they were valid syllogisms, but he is willing to accept the argument that philosophy ought to be studied because philosophers can account for some fundamental concepts, even though this argument is not valid. This highlights both the Pietist's inability to argue with syllogisms and the power of dialectical argumentation, even when it is not entirely valid, to convince the Pietist to study philosophy.

The Second Section of Falaquera's Epistle

The second section⁵⁵ departs from the first chiefly in three ways: 1. The antagonism of the interlocutors is severely muted. 2. The Pietist is now the questioner and the Scholar the respondent. 3. The notion that all philosophy is misleading or heretical is no longer up for debate. Instead, the Pietist's questions are apparently directed toward the conclusion the Pietist obtained in the first section, albeit via an invalid syllogistic argument, viz., studying works of the philosophers is recommended. Yet without the antagonism of the first section, the focus of the debate becomes not refuting or upholding this position, but rather working toward a better understanding of what to study and how to study the works of the philosophers.

Like the first section, the second section is characterized by seven arguments, which are here posed as questions from the Pietist, which are then answered by the Scholar. Three of the questions concern the status of philosophy according to Judaism, three of the questions concern what philosophy is in itself, and one question concerns why not all Jews who study philosophy turn out to be good people. Aside from a single outburst of antagonism,⁵⁶ the Pietist does not counter the Scholar's statements, but rather appears interested in the answers and eventually admits that the Scholar is right.

Most of the second section is taken up with the Pietist's three questions about Jewish Law. The Pietist asks why the Torah, Prophets, and Talmudic Rabbis do not recommend seeking the intelligibles through philosophy. The Scholar claims that these sources and human reason itself do in fact recommend philosophical pursuits.⁵⁷ The Pietist also asks why demonstrative inquiry is not mentioned in the Torah, to which the Scholar responds that such inquiry is meant only for

⁵⁵ What I consider to be the second section appears on pp. 66-76 of Harvey's edition.

⁵⁶ P. 70 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 35 (trans.). Note that the Scholar does not respond to this objection directly, but asks the Pietist to hold his objections until the end of his arguments. At that point, the Pietist is already convinced.

⁵⁷ The Pietist asks his question on p. 67 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 32 (trans.) and the response, interspersed with various subsidiary questions and answers, continues through p. 74 / 42. Steven Harvey has shown how the Scholars' answer to this question treats the central issues of medieval Jewish philosophy and draws extensively on a large number of sources, especially Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*. See above, n. 4.

the elite and not for the whole people.⁵⁸ Finally, the Pietist asks why there are no philosophical works of Jewish authors, to which the Scholar responds that, indeed, there were, but that they have been lost.⁵⁹

The Pietist's three questions about what philosophy is in itself are interspersed among the questions about allusions to philosophic knowledge in Jewish texts. The Pietist begins the second section by asking who was the first to guide the philosophers to the paths leading to truth. The Scholar answers that this was God and that He did so by providing them with intellect.⁶⁰ This answer is bolstered in greater detail later in the Scholar's explanation of how human reason encourages philosophy, particularly in a passage taken directly from the opening of Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*.⁶¹ The Pietist then asks the Scholar to explain the intelligibles. The Scholar says that this is beyond the scope of their discussion and it is clear that the Pietist is not able to distinguish between intelligibles and things "all men who are of sound natural temper can comprehend".⁶² Later, the Pietist asks whether all of the philosophers "apprehended the truth" and attained "true knowledge". The Scholar replies that although the philosophers learn progressively more, they did not attain the whole truth and there are in fact things, particularly divine things, which cannot be demonstrated by anyone.⁶³ Not only is philosophy not sufficient for attaining complete knowledge of the divine, it is not sufficient for making people good. This becomes clear in the Scholar's answer to the Pietist's final question of section two: Why do some Jews who study philosophy become bad? The Scholar's answer is that not everyone is able to grasp the sciences, particularly the divine sciences, to the fullest degree and those who fail to do so often have bad temperaments and evil desires and so fall into bad ways.⁶⁴

The Scholar's emphasis on the divine things suggests that what is hardest to prove or understand philosophically are the things pertaining to God. If we take the "divine things" to refer to metaphysics as defined by Aristotle, then we may also be permitted to infer that the knowledge of what constitutes an intelligible is among those things not fully understandable. The Scholar's answer here, then, suggests that we do not, in fact, demonstrably know that God gave man intellect through which he can understand the world and then come to understand God. This lack of demonstrable certainty about God and the human intellect would appear to contrast with the Scholar's depiction of philosophy as a way to perfection that originates in God. We may also question the Scholar's unsupported assertion that ancient Jews studied philosophy in works that are now lost. In sum, there are reasons to question the entire description of philosophy in the second half of the *Epistle* as a divinely mandated intellectual quest for perfection sanctioned by the Bible and Talmud which was described in numerous ancient Jewish works that are now lost. Why, then, does Falaquera include such a description in his *Epistle*?

⁵⁸ Cf. pp. 74-75 Harvey (Heb.) / pp. 42-44 (trans.).

⁵⁹ Cf. pp. 75 / 44. Falaquera makes a similar point in his introduction to his unattributed translation / summary of Al-Fārābī's *'Iḥṣā al-'ulūm* (with chapters from *Kitāb al-ḥurūf* and a few other works) in *Reshit Hokhmah* (above, n. 45), p. 21. There he describes the 'lost' philosophical works of King Solomon. As Gadi Weber points out to me, the *Epistle* ignores medieval Jewish contributions to philosophy including those of Maimonides. Perhaps Falaquera intends this debate to take place in an earlier time or quite possibly outside of time altogether.

⁶⁰ P. 66 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 30 (trans.).

⁶¹ P. 73 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 40 (trans.).

⁶² P. 66-67 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 30-32 (trans.). Cf. Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic* (above, n. 15), §9, lines 3-5 (p. 30 Mallet): ويرون في المشهورات ... أنها هي المعقولات (People "believe that the widely held things ... are the same as the intelligibles").

⁶³ P. 74 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 42-43 (trans.).

⁶⁴ P. 75-76 Harvey (Heb.) / p. 44-46 (trans.).

Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic* may suggest an answer.⁶⁵ In describing the various uses of dialectic, Al-Fārābī speaks of the necessity of developing a popular philosophy that is to be diffused among the public. Al-Fārābī says,

We [philosophers] are political by nature. It is incumbent on us therefore to (a) live in harmony with the public ... (b) Associate them in the good whose care is entrusted to us ... by showing them the truth concerning the opinions they hold in their religions; for when they share with us in the truth, it will be possible for them, to the extent of their ability, to associate with philosophers in the happiness of philosophy. (c) Move them away from things – arguments, opinions, law – in which we find that they are not right. This cannot be done with them through certain demonstrations because these are not within their reach, are strange to them, and difficult for them. It is only possible through bits of knowledge that we have in common with them – that is, in that we address them with arguments that are generally accepted among them, well known to them, and well received among them. (...) We acquire the power to practice this philosophic art only by having ready and available generally accepted opinions, and this we achieve through the art of dialectic. Through it the philosopher associates with the public and becomes well protected so that he is not found burdensome or engaged in an objectionable business.⁶⁶

Falaquera's Scholar's depiction of philosophy as a divinely mandated intellectual quest for perfection sanctioned by the Bible and Talmud and contained in numerous now lost ancient Jewish works would appear to fulfil Al-Fārābī's criteria. The Scholar uses dialectical arguments in a debate setting to move the Pietist and those who follow him away from their condemnation of philosophy. Moreover, the Scholar connects the pursuit of knowledge of the divine to philosophy and encourages the Pietist to see their pursuits as similar and even to pursue philosophy himself, i.e., to strive to share in the happiness of philosophy. The success of the Scholar's dialectical arguments leads to the Pietist's dismissing his earlier accusations of heresy and accordingly the elimination of legal ramifications against philosophers (probably some form of excommunication). That is, the dialectical arguments of the *Epistle* grant Jewish philosophers protection against being considered to be engaged in objectionable business and allow them to live harmoniously with religious Jews.

Conclusion: The Overall Structure of the Debate

Al-Fārābī identifies two kinds of dialectical debate among “those whose opinions are contradictory” (الذين آراؤهم متناقضة), §15 line 1 [p. 40 Mallet]: one where at least one side “is aware of some deficiency in what they believe” (يشعر بما في اعتقاده من النقص) §15, lines 1-2 [p. 40 Mallet] and another in which neither side “is aware of anything deficient, but for each [side] what he has attained is true and unable to be otherwise”

⁶⁵ Note that while Averroes' *Decisive* Treatise also proposes an intellectual quest for perfection sanctioned by both philosophy and the Holy Writ, it does not accord the same prominence to dialectical arguments. Indeed, Averroes famously recommends against diffusing dialectical arguments among the public.

⁶⁶ Al-Fārābī's *Dialectic* (above, n. 15), §29, lines 1-18 (pp. 66-7 Mallet). This translation is by Muhsin Mahdī in M. Mahdi, “Man and His Universe in Medieval Arabic Philosophy”, in Ch. Wenin (ed.), *L'homme et son univers au Moyen Âge*, Éd. de l'Institut supérieur de philosophie, Louvain-la-Neuve 1986, pp. 112–13. Cf. §10 of Al-Fārābī, *Dialectic*, where public education is explained to happen through widely-held premises that bring about moral appreciation. Ideally, it would seem, there should be some correspondence between scientific truth and what is praised in dialectic.

ولا يشعر بشيء من النقص بل يكون عنده أنّ الذي أدركه هو الصحيح الذي لا يجوز غيره) §15, lines 2-4 [p. 40 Mallet]). Those disputants who are unaware of deficiencies in their beliefs are happy (سّر) with their understanding of science (العلم) and indeed not only defend it against others, but even love it (واحبه) and consider themselves to have the virtue of possessing it (فضيلة السبق).⁶⁷ Accordingly they love to teach their views and strive to control all such instruction (رئاسة التعليم) so that their own virtue will achieve recognition. This leads such people to accuse others of having false views (التزييف) and to hold those views in contempt, even as they glorify their own views. This in turns leads to competition (منافسة) and disputation (مغالبة), i.e., debate, with those proficient in theoretical inquiry (الناظرون).⁶⁸

Yet, for those aware of deficiencies in what they believe, the debate is one where they work with those theoreticians to engage in joint study in pursuit of science (العلم) and of “removing the deficiencies they became aware of in their beliefs” (ليزول النقص الذي شعر به في اعتقاداته) §15, line 20 [p. 41 Mallet, p. 25 DiPasquale]). In this kind of debate, the interlocutors investigate (يتفاحصون) together, compare their views with each others’, and in general seek benefit through dialogue through syllogisms and examining the assumptions that are opposite to what they had supposed earlier. They help and assist each other in “singling out what is true in each premise and conclusion” (تخليص الصادق من كل مقدّمة ومن كل نتيجة) §15, line 28 [p. 42 Mallet]). They do this by asking each other questions as questioner and respondent and looking for contradictions and objections that can eliminate competing claims. Moreover, says Al-Fārābī, they do this either orally or in books.⁶⁹

It is clear that Falaquera’s *Epistle* is one such book. The first section presents a dialectical debate between a theoretician (the Scholar) and one who is confident that there is no deficiency in his argument (the Pietist). The Pietist is clearly happy with his understanding of science, teaches it to others, and seeks to have control over the discourse and to force the Scholar to adopt his views. Yet once the Pietist becomes aware of the deficiency in his views, he turns to the second kind of debate in the second section. There we see him seeking to work with the Scholar to correct misunderstandings and to establish proper premises for further work. At the end of the *Epistle*, the Pietist asks the Scholar to teach him the sciences and the Scholar promises to write him a series of philosophy books (works which, in fact, Falaquera wrote). The Pietist is then completely motivated to study philosophy even though the arguments the Scholar presents are only dialectical, as we have seen, and not demonstrative. In this way, the debate described in the *Epistle* follows what Al-Fārābī identifies as the ultimate goal of dialectic: “to grant man the power to investigate and prepare his mind for philosophy (...) In general, the end of the art of dialectic is to assist and serve the art of philosophy”.⁷⁰ Readers of Al-Fārābī’s *Dialectic* who are not certain how the debate format he describes can contribute to preparing someone for philosophy would do well to read Falaquera’s *Epistle*.

⁶⁷ This somewhat obscure expression likely refers to people who consider themselves to have virtue because they hold some positions first. Cf. *Gallex* for the use of سبق to translate the Aristotle’s προέχω and even ἔχω (*Glossarium Graeco-Arabicum. A Lexicon of the Mediaeval Arabic Translations from the Greek* <http://telota.bbaw.de/glossga/glossary.php?ar_lexeme=سابق and http://telota.bbaw.de/glossga/glossary.php?ar_lexeme=سبق).

⁶⁸ Al-Fārābī’s *Dialectic* (above, n. 15), §15, p. 40-41 Mallet.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41-42 Mallet.

⁷⁰ Al-Fārābī’s *Dialectic* (above, n. 15), §19.1, lines 3-6 (p. 47 Mallet, p. 29 DiPasquale): والجدل فغرضه الأقصى أن يحصل للإنسان القوّة على الفحص وتوطئة ذهنه نحو الفلسفة (...) وبالجملة فإن غاية صناعة الجدل إرفاد صناعة الفلسفة وخدمتها. Cf. Arist., *Top.* 101 a 28 and 101 a 35 - b 4.