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

Logic in a Pre-Tibbonian Hebrew Philosophical Dialogue

Y. Tzvi Langermann

Abstract

A dialogue between “Intellect” and “Soul”, preserved uniquely and incompletely in a manuscript now held by the University of Pennsylvania, is a rare and precious specimen of pre-Maimonidean Hebrew philosophical literature. The author repurposes some terms drawn from rabbinic legal texts, innovates some terms on his own, and occasionally must resort to writing out Arabic terms in Hebrew letters. In one passage, which clearly draws upon Galen’s *Institutio Logica*, he displays relational syllogisms which prove the superiority of the soul over the body.

1. Pre-Tibbonian Philosophy and Science

Two milestones mark the flourishing of philosophy and science in the Jewish communities of medieval Europe. One is the mammoth translation of project undertaken by members of the Ibn Tibbon clan, the other the great philosophical opus of Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. The two coalesce in *Moreh Nevukhim*, the Hebrew translation of the *Guide* prepared by Samuel Ibn Tibbon, son of Judah, “father of the translators”. In practice, it seems that the labels pre-Tibbonian and pre-Maimonidean are almost interchangeable; I generally prefer the former when language is the key issue, and the latter when the scientific -philosophical content is at stake. I find the distinction useful, but it should not be pressed.

It is a fair generalization that medieval Jewish philosophy in Hebrew is by and large defined by the *Moreh*; thinkers are often cataloged according to the depth of their commitment to Maimonides, their perceived radical or moderate interpretation of the master’s teachings – to be more precise, what a given scholar holds to be the master’s teaching on a given topic – or, alternatively, the ferocity of their opposition to Maimonides. Rare indeed is a work of Jewish thought that was composed in naive ignorance or patronizing disregard of the *Guide*. On the other hand, pre-Maimonidean philosophy displays a great diversity of beliefs and opinions, and world-views, as manifest in writings of major figures such as Saadya Gaon and Judah ha-Levi, and a slew of minor figures, including an original contribution by Judah Ibn Tibbon himself.¹

The Tibbonian contribution to the Hebrew language was no less momentous than their contribution of a corpus of philosophical and scientific texts. Indeed, much of their vocabulary, and even some of their style, continue to be in use even as I write these lines. Contemporary scholarship is heavily focused on the so-called technical terms that the Tibbonians (and other

* I express my gratitude to Charles Manekin for his assistance.

¹ I have in mind Sha’ar ha-Yihud, “Chapter on Unity”, a text published by Rabbi J. Gad from his personal collection of manuscripts; another copy, with significant variants, is MS Vatican *ebr.* 270. For a brief account, see my “From My Notebooks: Masīh bin Ḥakam, a Jewish-Christian (?) Physician of the Early Ninth Century”, *Aleph* 4 (2004), pp. 283-97; I will have more to say in a longer study in progress on *Masīh*.

translators and writers) innovated. However, it seems to me that their contribution to Hebrew scientific prose – how one constructs a sentence or a paragraph, how one phrases a concept, in (relatively) clear and comprehensible language is far more important. One can in fact do without Hebrew technical terms, either by simply transcribing the term (be it Arabic, Latin, or Greek) into Hebrew letters and incorporating it into the text; this device remains common practice to this day, the Israeli press being full of English words written out in Hebrew. One can also coin Hebrew words from Arabic cognates, as the Tibbonians did, for example, with words such as *merkaz* (“center”) or *qoṭer* (“diameter”).

The capacity for prose expression, by contrast, is far more difficult to acquire. Pre-Tibbonian texts, such as the one to be discussed in detail below, are characterized by their cumbersome prose.² Some specimens appear nearly impenetrable; I single out here early translations of Saadya, especially the anonymous translation of his seminal commentary to *Sefer Yesira*.³ There are exceptions, to be sure, notably in the writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Abraham Bar Hiyya. Exceptions can certainly be found to whatever generalizations I may have proposed.

The most distinctive term in pre-Maimonidean logic is *dīn*, which may stand for either *ḥukm* or *qiyās* in Arabic. We do not always possess the original of a Hebrew translation, nor are the translators necessarily chronologically pre-Tibbonian. My remarks here and in the following paragraphs aim to shed some light on the logical apparatus exploited by pre-Maimonidean authors of philosophical texts. The issue is complex, and the usage may reflect the norms within a given tradition, rather than familiarity with logical texts.⁴ For example, in his *Book of Elements* Isaac Israeli refutes Democritean atomism. In the course of one argument, he presents a *reductio ad absurdum* of the case of two contingent points. Either the two points merge completely one into the other or only part of their surfaces touch each other; in both cases, the atomistic hypothesis leads to an absurdity. In the first case, the two become one, “and so shall be the *dīn* of a third point” – so reads the text published by Fried, to date still the only edition.⁵ However, the anonymous translation, which Fried did not use, has *heqeish*, which suggests – though it doesn’t prove – that the translator saw *qiyās* in the original.⁶ Either term, *dīn* or *heqeish*, could mean here that the analogy of the third point to the second point applies, or that the rule applying to the second point – namely, that is indistinguishable from the first – applies to the third. The *Book of Elements* is written in a *kalam* vein, and as such it prefers the inferential tools available from Jewish legal literature, even though Israeli has certainly studied Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, and even gives it an unusual, Pythagorean-flavored reading.⁷

² For example, see the text I published in “An Early Jewish Defense of Creationism”, in H. Ben-Shammai *et al.* (eds.), *Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*, Israel Academy, Jerusalem 2013, pp. 116-47.

³ I have identified a copy in MS Vat. ebr. 236; see my “Early Defense” (above, n. 2), p. 116.

⁴ There is nothing in the logical writings of Jewish authors that parallels al-Fārābī’s investigations into *al-qiyās al-fiqhī*; see J. Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practices*, Brill, Leiden 1994, pp. 233-58. This does not imply, of course, that Jewish thinkers were uninterested in studying Talmudic inference in the light of formal logic; see A. Ravitzky, “The Influence of Logic on the Understanding of the Methods of Halakhic Inference in the Middle Ages”, Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University. See also note 9 below.

⁵ *Das Buch über die Elemente*, ed. S. Fried, Kauffmann, Frankfurt 1900, p. 43.

⁶ I consulted MS Parma, Biblioteca Palatina 2611, fol. 69a. On the translations of the *Book of Elements* see Ch.H. Manekin – Y.T. Langermann – H.H. Biesterfeldt (eds.), *Moritz Steinschneider. The Hebrew Translations of the Middle Ages and the Jews as Transmitters*, Springer, Berlin 2013 (Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Philosophy, 16), pp. 105.

⁷ Y.T. Langermann, “Isaac Israeli (the Elder): Some Interesting Remarks on the *Posterior Analytics* in his *Book on Fevers*”, *Aleph* 17.1 (2017), pp. 157-66. The type of reasoning employed in medieval medicine is a complex topic in its own right.

Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* frequently uses the phrase *dīno ka-dīn*, which clearly indicates analogy;⁸ in his Arabic legal writings he will employ either *ḥukmuhu* or *ḥukmuhā ka-ḥukm* (depending on the gender of the antecedent), which means the same thing. This terminology is not found at all in the *Guide* or the philosophical sections of the Commentary to the *Mishnah*. I suspect that he may have deliberately decided to base his argumentation of philosophical issues on “scientific” logic rather than legal reasoning. Indeed, he proclaims in his commentary to the mishnah in Avot 5:6: “One should make the request that is appropriate for a particular issue; one should not ask for a rigorous demonstration (*burhān ta‘līmī*) in the natural sciences, nor for an argument drawn from nature (*ḥuḡḡa tabī‘iyya*) in the exact sciences (*al-ta‘līm*)”. It stands to reason, then, that law too has its own rules and methods, and Maimonides has much to say on this elsewhere in his various writings.⁹

The pre-Tibbonian dialogue which is the focus of the present study employs legal reasoning, using forms of the Hebrew *din*. However, it also contains other types of argument or proof that derive from formal logic, for whose exposition the author appears to innovate terminology which is unique to his work, as far as I know. The three selections that have been chosen display a variety of logical terms and forms of reasoning drawn from diverse traditions: Jewish law, Galen, and even the Book of Daniel.

2. An Unpublished Pre-Tibbonian Hebrew Philosophical Dialogue

The dialogue is found in a small manuscript (eleven folia). I began to study it while it was up for auction at Sotheby's; the former owner, Mr Jacob Djmal, is an avid bibliophile and generously made a copy available. It is now held by the University of Pennsylvania, where it is cataloged as Codex 1856.¹⁰ The dialogue fills the first eight folia, about 25 lines to the page. The text is written in a fourteenth century Sefardi hand. This is certainly not an autograph, but a professional copy. The text is defective both in the beginning and end; no indication at all of the name, provenance, or date of the author is to be found in the extant portion. The remaining three folia contain a number of short writings on ethics. I made some quick checks and was not able to identify them; they too may offer some new and highly interesting specimens to the corpus of medieval Hebrew philosophical literature.

The text of interest consists of a dialogue between Intellect (*sēkbel*) and Soul (*neshamah*); the former is the teacher, the latter the eager, and perceptive, disciple. As such it belongs to a very large body of medieval debate literature, most of which are conducted between body and soul.¹¹ Within Jewish philosophical literature, the new text calls to mind the famous dialogue, originally written in Arabic, between intellect and soul that is included in

⁸ A few examples: Laws of Divorce 9:4; Laws of the Temple Vessels 2:10; Laws of Agents and Partners 8:2.

⁹ See the detailed analysis in chapter two of the seminal book of M. Halberthal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought*, Princeton U.P., Princeton 2015, pp. 92-133.

¹⁰ The item, lot 180, was sold in December 2016; see <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/important-judaica-n09589/lot.180.html?locale=en>. I was in contact with both the past owner, Mr Jacob Djmal, and Sotheby's, and some of my observations are included in Sotheby's catalogue.

¹¹ M.-A. Bossy, “Medieval debates of body and soul”, *Comparative Literature* 28 (1976), pp. 144-63. More generally concerning the dialogue as literary form in medieval Jewish philosophy, see A. Hughes, “Dialogues”, in A.W. Hughes - J.T. Robinson (eds.), *Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Its Literary Forms*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2019, pp. 185-212.

Bahya ben Paqudah's *Duties of the Heart*. Our text, however, is a Hebrew original, though, as we shall see, the author certainly knew Arabic well, almost certainly as his (or one of his) native tongue(s). More than once does he resort to that language when he can find no appropriate Hebrew phrase. In one place he presents an interesting justification for what must be an original rendering into Hebrew of an Arabic term. The dialogue covers topics, mainly in natural science and the character of the "higher world", that are not taken up in Bahya's dialogue. It may then, be the case, that someone – perhaps Bahya himself – decided to continue the dialogue of *Duties of the Heart* and treat additional subjects. It should be noted that in the final passage, which is long and unfortunately incomplete, Intellect urges Soul to pursue an ascetic lifestyle. The preaching there is very much in the tone of Bahya.

The text which I transcribe and describe here in very preliminary fashion seems to me to belong to the earliest phases of medieval Jewish philosophy in Europe. A preliminary transcription and translation, accompanied by a lengthy introduction, has been posted online.¹² I am now working towards the publication of an edition, translation, and commentary. I limit myself here to a few brief additional remarks about the dialogue.

The dialogue reveals no hints at all of any familiarity with Maimonides, and the Hebrew – both diction and terminology – is not that of the Ibn 'Ibbon's. I am quite certain that with regard to both language and content the text should be classified as pre-Tibbonian. The only sages mentioned by name are Plato and Aristotle; I note the prominence of Plato in pre-Maimonidean Jewish philosophy.¹³

Our treatise bears close comparison with another Jewish tract written in the format of a dialogue between a master and disciple, Solomon Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*. Indeed, some points of similarity are so striking that one almost thinks Ibn Gabirol is the author of our dialogue. While I am not at all about to suggest that that is the case, it is by no means impossible.

The present paper focuses on the logic – forms of argument and terminology – displayed in the dialogue. However, in an attempt to locate the dialogue as best I can within the history of Jewish philosophy, and, no less, because of the intrinsic historical interest aroused by some of the passages, I will comment on the doctrinal content of the passages and not just on the logic exhibited therein.

¹² [URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332834013_An_Early_Hebrew_Philosophical-Scientific_Dialogue?iepl%5BgeneralViewId%5D=X29HL2dQ1ZE7M9VYhHmt1n3i4xjXSLwdJvRU&iepl%5Bcontexts%5D%5B0%5D=searchReact&iepl%5BviewId%5D=zLx8SNOcs0yrzBUlAP0reevkyUhnVsqTgyON&iepl%5BsearchType%5D=publication&iepl%5Bdata%5D%5BcountLessEqual20%5D=1&iepl%5Bdata%5D%5BinteractedWithPosition1%5D=1&iepl%5Bdata%5D%5BwithoutEnrichment%5D=1&iepl%5Bposition%5D=1&iepl%5BrgKey%5D=PB%3A332834013&iepl%5BtargetEntityId%5D=PB%3A332834013&iepl%5BinteractionType%5D=publicationTitle]; [URL: https://www.academia.edu/29688250/An_Early_Hebrew_Philosophical_Scientific_Dialogue_pdf?sm=b] The bracketed numbers at the beginning of each passage refer to the numbering I introduced in the online drafts. I have since made many significant revisions to the online draft, which is no longer reliable.

¹³ For example, Saadya prioritizes the Platonic view (or what he understood to be the Platonic view) in his refutations of doctrines that compete with Jewish doctrine of creation. Judah ha-Levi appeals to Plato for help in understanding *Sefer Yesira*, even though that book is, in his opinion, the paragon of pristine Jewish wisdom; see now Y.T. Langermann, *In and Around Maimonides*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2021, pp. 143-66.

3. Logic in the Pre-Tibbonian Dialogue

A) A chain of relations which together establish that our appetite for food is needed to maintain our souls. This tool is called *תבונת סמיכות*; I suggest emending to *תבנית סמיכות*, “relational syllogism”. The passage reads:¹⁴

(4) אמ' השכל: נברא התאוה כדי להתאוות המאכל להעמיד בו הגוף ולהשאי[רו] בחיים עד שישלים העקר על מה שנברא דאי אפשר להציל [שצ"ל: להאציל] הנפש בגוף אם לא היתה מתנובב ואין התנובה אלא מרוטב המאכל ולהלן נבאר דאי אפשר להציל הנפש בגוף מאין (?) רוח החיים וכן (!) רוח החיים הנקרא רוח אל חי[נראה שרצה להשלים בערבית, אלחיואני, כפי שעשה לקמן] ואי אפשר שידבק בגוף מאין דם ולא יהיה דם בגוף מאין מאכל יצא מהענין שלא תתחבר הנפש עם הגוף לולי תבונת [שצ"ל תבנית] הסמיכות שהזכרנו ולכן ידון השכל שכל רודף אחר דן [צ"ל: דין] הנפש הוא רודף אחר התמימות וכל הרודף אחר הגוף הוא רודף אחר החסרון והגני מקים לבי ראייה קיימת על בירור הדבר.

(4) “Said Intellect: Appetite was created so as to crave food in order to maintain body and keep it alive until it has accomplished the cardinal [reason] for which it was created. For the soul cannot survive in the body were it [the body] not nourished, and nourishment comes about only from the moisture of food. We shall presently establish that it is impossible for the soul to survive in the body without the vital spirit; and similarly the vital spirit, which is called *rūḥ al-ḥay[awāniyy]*,¹⁵ cannot adhere to the body without the blood; and there will be no blood in the body without food. The upshot of this issue is that the soul would not be joined to the body, were it not for the relational syllogism (*tavnit* {emend. *tevunat*} *semikhut*) that we have noted. Hence, intellect judges that whoever pursues the rule of the soul is pursuing perfection, whereas the one who pursues the body is pursuing deficiency. I—my heart (?!)—will now construct a sound proof (*re'ayah qayyemet*) in order to establish this”.

My translation certainly reflects the choppy character of pre-Tibbonian Hebrew scientific prose. Two possible emendations have been bracketed in the Hebrew text; I reject the first but accept the second. The first concerns the verb להציל, “to save, to rescue”. I translate it here by “to survive”, e.g., “the soul cannot survive”, preferring that over the more literal and cumbersome rendering, “the soul cannot be enabled to survive”. It is possible that the form displayed is an error, the intended word being להאציל, “to emanate”; the plosive aleph is hardly audible in most pronunciations and so was dropped. However, I do not think that this suggestion is necessary or advisable. The second possibility concerns the key phrase *tevunat semikhut*; I will shortly defend emending the first word in that phrase to *tavnit*.

This passage occurs near the beginning of the extant fragment of the dialogue. It figures as the reply of Intellect to Soul’s questioning why humans have been given appetites. Presumably, Soul worries that appetite redirects our attention from sublime matters to food; what good does that do? The answer is that nutrition stands at the head of the chain of relations which accounts for the soul’s ability to survive within the body. The ethical lesson to be drawn from this is that the purpose of appetite is solely to insure the soul’s survival in the body by having the

¹⁴ I have enclosed within square brackets some editorial comments and suggestions; I have not “corrected” the spelling or gender agreement. The abbreviation שצ"ל=שמא צריך לאמור marks a suggestion, which will be discussed in the discussion of the passage.

¹⁵ In passage 76 the adjective is given the masculine form. In both Arabic and Hebrew, *rūḥ* can take either gender, though it is usually feminine. *Rūḥ* should also be given the definite article, *al-rūḥ*.

body aware of its need for nourishment; there is no other reason for satisfying the body's urge. Hence one should devote one's life and energies to cultivating the soul rather the body. The author promises to establish a "sound proof" (*re'ayah qayyemet*) for this claim later on. Our main interest here is in the chain of relations—actually two such chains—which he dubs *tevunat semikbut*. The relations are phrased as negations, For convenience, I will rephrase them here, in somewhat simplified form, as a chain of relations of dependence:

soul requires the body
 the body requires nutrition
 nutrition requires the moistness in food;

soul requires vital spirit
 vital spirit requires blood
 blood requires food

Each argument is constructed from three ordered relations which lead to an implied conclusion. "Soul" is the first term in the first part of each and "food" the last. In both sets, the second term of the first part is the first of the second part, and the second term of the second part is the first term of the third part. Each leads to the conclusion that soul requires food. Each set has the structure:

a iff b
 b iff c
 c iff d
 ∴ a iff d

This chain of statements constitutes a *tevunat semikbut*. Of the two Hebrew terms, only the second is a logical term in medieval Hebrew.¹⁶ *Semikbut* denotes the category of "relation", *pros ti*; it most likely translates *idāfa*, which is also used in Arabic for the construct formation in grammar. Significantly, as it seems to me, *semikbut* is employed several times by Ibn Ṣaddīq; I have already remarked on the affinity between the dialogue and Ibn Ṣaddīq's *Microcosm*. Ibn Ṣaddīq speaks in fact of a dependence between two pairs of terms: matter and form, and higher species and lower species:

"Let us return to our explication. All existing things must necessarily possess matter and form. Matter is said by way of relation (*derekh semikbut*) to form, and form is by way of relation to the matter for which it is the form, just as the higher species is said by way of relation to the lower species, and the lower species is by way of relation to the higher species".¹⁷

Ibn Ṣaddīq, then, is speaking of correlatives as defined in the *Treatise on Logic* ascribed to Maimonides: "When two things reciprocate in necessary existence and one is not the cause of the other, we say that they are together in nature, e. g. the double and the half. The same is true of the correlatives from the standpoint of their correlation".¹⁸ In the correlations described

¹⁶ J. Klatzkin, *Otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim ve-antologyah filosofit: otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit be-khol tekufoteha, she-bi-defus ve-gam she-bi-khetav-yad; miḥar ha-filosofyah ha-ivrit ve-gam ha-arvit she-ba-targumim ha-ivrim. Antologyah shel ha-filosofyah ha-ivrit ve-ha-filosofyah ha-arvit be-targumeha ha-ivrim*, Eshkol, Leipzig 1926, pt. 3, p. 104.

¹⁷ S. Horowitz, *Der Mikrokosmos des Josef ibn Saddik*, Th. Schatzky, Breslau 1903, p. 9.

¹⁸ I. Efron, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, American Academy for Jewish Research, New York 1938, p. 58.

in the dialogue, only the first each pair of terms requires the second; however, neither is the cause of the other.

The same (pseudo-?) Maimonidean treatise uses the same example of higher and lower species brought by Ibn Šaddīq, but explains it in detail:

“We call man, horse, scorpion, palm-tree, iron, and their like, the lowest species; because lower than these there is nothing but individuals of their respective species. We call ‘animal’ a subaltern genus or a subaltern species; because it is a genus with reference to the animal species that are under it, and it is a species with reference to nourishable matter, which is above it, and which includes both animals and plants. ‘Plant’ also is a subaltern genus to what is lower and a subaltern species to what is higher in the scale. We call ‘animal’ and ‘plant’ component species, for the genus of nourishable matter is completely divisible into animal and plant”.¹⁹

That treatise preserves for us the Arabic as well as the Hebrew terms. Unfortunately, the passage just cited was missing from the manuscripts available to Israel Efros when he first published the treatise in 1938, and he did not know that Maimonides uses here *idāfa*, the same term he employs later on to name the fourth category, which is relation. In all occurrences of *idāfa*, Ibn Tibbon translates it by *semikhut*. However, Efros apparently translated *semikhut* in context, as he understood it; hence in the passage above he chooses “with reference to”. His choice does not damage the intent of the text, but it obscures the particular ways in which (pseudo-?) Maimonides uses *idāfa*, rather than, say, *nisba*; the choice of Arabic term may offer another clue as to the correctness of the attribution to Maimonides. In 1966 Efros published a new edition of the complete Arabic text; in the introduction he revisited a number of places in the text, but he did not retranslate the sections that had been missing from the original in his 1938 publication.²⁰

The dialogue calls this argument or proof *tevunah semikhut*. We must now figure out what *tevunah* may mean, or whether it should be emended. *Tevuna* means something like “wisdom” or “understanding” in a very general sense. The phrase could perhaps signify for the insight or piece of knowledge that is gleaned from the two sets of ordered relations, namely that the soul can survive within the body only if the body is continually nourished. Equipped with this insight, intellect will then conclude that food should be sought only for survival; its attainment – and, by extension, other bodily needs – should not be the goal of life. However, this usage of *tevunah* seems very much out of character for medieval scientific Hebrew.²¹

Two possible emendations would have the phrase refer to the schematic structure of the two sets of relations. The softest intervention would be to read *tekhunah* (usually corresponding to the Arabic *hay'a*); the confusion between א and ח in Hebrew orthography is very common.²² *Tekhunah* commonly translates *hay'a*, “configuration”; however appropriate it may be describe the ordered sets of relations, *hay'a/tekhunah* was not used to signify for the structure of a logical proof.²³

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁰ I. Efros, “Maimonides’ Arabic *Treatise on Logic*”, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966), pp. 155-60 and pp. 9-42 (Hebrew numbering of pages containing the Judaeo-Arabic text).

²¹ I find no such usage in the entry of Klatzkin, *Otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim ve-antologyah filosofit* (above, n. 16), pt. 4, p. 177; Klatzkin cites Abraham Ibn Ezra, who opines that the corresponding Arabic term is *fikra*.

²² I thank Hanna Kasher for this last suggestion.

²³ No such usage is found in the extensive entry in Klatzkin, *Otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim ve-antologyah filosofit* (above, n. 16), pt. 4, pp. 191-5.

A much more plausible, almost irresistible emendation, is to posit *tavnit* as the intended term which was somehow miscopied or misread. *Tavnit* is a good translation of *shakl*, which in turn translates the Greek *σχήμα*, the “figure” of the syllogism. The Hebrew word features twice in Exodus 25:9, and Sa’adya translates it both times by *shakl*. Maimonides endorses this translation at the beginning of *Guide* I, 3. *Tavnit* is also used, albeit rarely, for the figure of the syllogism.²⁴ The *tavnit semikbut* (if we choose this emendation) is indeed a “figure”, a way of structuring and arranging premises so as to draw from them a conclusion; the premises are not categorical, and so this “figure” does not belong to the well-known Aristotelian “figures”.

Galen devotes chapters 16-18 of his *Institutio Logica* to the relational syllogism. His express motivation is his dissatisfaction with the logic of some mathematical treatises, particularly with regard to the transitive relation; and the two syllogisms in the dialogue make use of the transitive relation. Two more examples given by Galen extend the application of the relational syllogism beyond mathematics; they set out to prove precisely the same point the dialogue wishes to make concerning the superiority of soul over body. The two syllogisms chosen by Galen are: “The virtue of the better is worthier of choice; soul is better than body; therefore, the virtue of the soul is worthier of choice than the virtue of the body (...). The good of the better is worthier of choice; soul is better than body; therefore, that of soul is worthier of choice than that of body”.²⁵ Those are precisely the insights that the dialogue infers from the relational syllogisms. He promises, however, to deliver a “sound proof” later on.

In sum, then, the emendation of *tevunah* to *tavnit* is justified. Moreover, the combination of a technical term for relational syllogism, three worked out examples of such syllogisms, and their mobilization in service of the same “soul is better than body” motif, together comprise powerful evidence that Galen’s views on relational syllogism, if not the *Institutio* itself, were available to the author of the dialogue in some form or other.²⁶

B) A standard term for announcing a logical conclusion: *yaša mi-moša davar*, impossible to translate literally, but meaning to “to ensue”, “to follow as an inference”. I translate here “it follows”. In its first application in the dialogue, this phrase is used – apparently – in refuting the claim that the formation of compounds from the four elements as well their disintegration is an entirely spontaneous process which does not require any external agent. I say “apparently” because part of the page containing the claim (passage 33) is cut off.

(34) אמ' השכל: זו הטענה תבטל משני דרכים הדרך האחד שנאמר לאותו הטוען התועה: שהנמצא לא היה טרם המצאו כלום וכשלא היה כלום אי להיות מעשה ממי שאינו נמצא והוה. והיה דרך ההוה השני נאמר לאותו הטוען הלא כבר נתבאר שאין מקרה לעולם נמצא מאין זוהר ולא זוהר מאין מקרה ושניהם צריכין זה לזה במציאה אעפ"כ אי אפשר לאחד מהם לנפול ממנו מעשה הוא בלבד. לכן יצא ממוצא דבר שחברם פועל והוא הפועל הקדמון ית' וית' הוא האחד האמת.

²⁴ The more common medieval term for the figure of the syllogism is *temunah*. Klatzkin, *Otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim ve-antologyah filosofit* (above, n. 16), pt. 4, p. 179, lists the figure of the syllogism last among the meanings of *tavnit*.

²⁵ J.S. Kieffer, *Galen's Institutio Logica: English Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore 1964, p. 51; for a recent concise analysis of Galen’s relational syllogistic, see B. Morison, “Logic”, in R.J. Hankinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2008, pp. 66-115, esp. pp. 105-13.

²⁶ Kieffer, *Galen's Institutio Logica* (above, n. 25), p. 27, observes that Galen’s examples “are paralleled in Alexander (e.g., *Anal. Pr.*; see *ibid.*, pp. 21-22), by whom they are attributed to the *neoterioi* or the Stoics, so that Galen’s claim is not to the discovery of these syllogisms”.

[34] “Said Intellect: That claim may be refuted in two ways. One [way is] that we say to its erring advocate: that which exists was naught before it came into existence; and when it was naught, it could not perform any action, because an action cannot ensue from that which does not exist and is not present. The second way is that we say to that advocate: has it not been demonstrated that there is no accident without a substance, and no substance without an accident? One cannot exist without the other (literally: each requires the other in existence); nonetheless (!), no action can ensue from one of them alone. Therefore, it follows that an agent joined them together, and it is the Primeval Agent, Blessed and Exalted is He; He is the True One”.

This passage presents two arguments for the existence of a “primeval agent” who bonded substance to accident. (1) The cosmos cannot auto-create out of nothing because creation is an action and nothing cannot act. Clearly, this sounds like an argument against eternalism, but that issue is taken up only later, as we shall see in text C; the context indicates that the issue here is an Epicurean-type conception of compounds spontaneously and randomly forming and deforming. (2) The cosmos cannot spontaneously arise from (uncreated) substance and accident, since there must be an agent to join substance to accident. Substance and accident require each other in order to exist, and their bonding demands an agent which existed prior to their bonding. That agent must then be the Primeval Agent, who is identified with the true deity. Therefore – I infer – the combination and disintegration of compounds also requires an external agent.

The argument resembles the one found in Ibn Šaddīq’s *Microcosm* (p. 51). There Ibn Šaddīq employs the substance-accident system, though, as we saw in the discussion of text A, he also speaks of matter and form. Moreover, Ibn Šaddīq calls the creator “The Primeval Substance, who acts (*po’el*) upon things, blessed be His name!”. That epithet is very close in our dialogue’s Primeval Agent, *ba-Po’el ha-Qadmon*. Note that our dialogue is not arguing for creation *ex nihilo*.

The logical term here is *yaša mi-moša davar*, “it follows”. Klatzkin takes note of the term, which is biblical (Daniel 9:25), and but he offers no examples, remarking only that it is often found in modern literature.²⁷ However, with the assistance of online data bases, I can confirm that it is not unknown in medieval sources as well. Isaac ‘Arama (1420-1494) in particular uses it frequently. It also features in *Midrash Aggadat Bereishit*, whose dating is controversial, but is evidently pre-Tibbonian.²⁸

The use of the Hebrew *zohar* for substance is the author’s innovation, and a brilliant one at that (pun intended). It is linguistically ingenious since he needs to change only one letter in the Arabic *ḡawhar* in order to arrive at the Hebrew *zohar*.²⁹ It is also an excellent choice given the description of substance early on in the dialogue as “pure, clear and clarified” (טהור וזך ומזוקק),

²⁷ Klatzkin, pt. 2, p. 167.

²⁸ *Midrash Aggadat Bereishit*, Zichron Aharon, Jerusalem 5771/2011, p. 25. As for the dating of this text, Lieve Teugels (*Aggadat Bereshit: Translated from the Hebrew With an Introduction and Notes*, edited by L.M. Teugels, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2001, p. XV) writes “Even though it has not been dated with certainty, AB [*Aggadat Bereishit*] is usually set in the tenth century (...)”.

²⁹ In my online draft I dwell at length the author’s brilliant and revealing translation of *ḡawhar* by the Hebrew *zohar*.

that is to say, translucent.³⁰ It may then be some degraded form of light that has solidified. The phrase used to describe substance is close to that used by Ibn Gabirol in his *Keter Malkhut*: וטהר חוק קדמון.³¹ This is an issue of capital importance in early cosmogyny.³²

C) In these two consecutive passages we encounter again יצא ממוצא דבר, indicating the conclusion that is to be drawn, and also forms of *dīn*, which we have marked as the most common logical term in pre-Tibbonian Hebrew. Most commonly *dīn* means “law” or “rule”. However, *dīn* has other applications in science and philosophy, which, in context, means something like commission: the task that a certain entity—in our text, wisdom or fire are such entities—has been decreed to fulfill. I translate it by “rule”. Note especially the phrase דין דבר אנוס בדינו, “the rule for something that is compelled by its rule”. In Jewish law, *anūs* describes a person acting in circumstances that are completely out of his control, and, therefore, that person is not liable for violating a law or not fulfilling a commandment. The dialogue argues as follows: whereas fire, an element of nature, is absolutely bound by its *dīn* to burn – it can never cool; and wherever there is fire, there is combustion – the Primeval, or, to be precise, the wisdom of the Primeval, is not so bound to exercise justice. Hence there is no difficulty in the Primeval’s existing without a field of application for His justice before He created the universe. The argument is aimed at refuting eternalism – more specifically, some variant of Proclus’ first argument against creation.

(51) אמ' הנשמה כאשר יש הצדק דין חכמת הקדמון ויש הבריאה עיקר הצדק יצא ממוצא דבר שאין אריכות ימים זמן בין הבריאה ובין בוראה לפי שכמו לא היה הקדמון ית' מאין דין לחכמתו כך ידון השכל ימצא דין ולא מפעל (52) אמ' השכל באמת יש הדין שהזכרת דין דבר אנוס בדינו כמו האש שיש דינו ההבערה לעולם ולא נמצא האש אלא שנמצא ההבערה עמו וכן כל הדברים הקבועים בוסתא (!) וחוק לא יעזבם חוק מדתם לעשות הפך דינם למן (!) יש האש מתחממת אינה יכולה לצונן למן יתקיים מזו שלעולם לא ימצאו הדברים הקבועין בוסת בלא דין וסתם אבל הפועל הקדמון ית' שהוא מתעלה מכל חמה [!; אולי צ"ל "חמה"] ומכל וסת לא נתכן לטעון זו הטענה עליו לפי (!) ית' יצר דבר וכחושו הנקרא ש"י וצד"ה כמו חמה וצנה יובש ולחה וכל הדברים המתחדשים שהם מעידים על בורא בחפץ ואין לו אנוס לאנוסו

[52] Said Soul: Since justice is the rule of the Primeval’s wisdom, and creation is the principle [field of application] of justice, it follows that there is no lengthy period between the creation and its creator; for, just as the Primeval, blessed is he, was not without a rule applicable to his wisdom, so does the intellect judge that there [can be no] rule without acting [upon that rule].

[53] “Said Intellect: The rule that you have mentioned is truly the rule for something that is compelled by its rule. For example, fire’s rule is combustion; fire will never be found without some combustion accompanying it, just like all the things whose regularity (*veset*) and rule are fixed. The rule [attached to] their standard will not give them leave to do the opposite of their rule. Since fire heats, it is not able to cool. Hence it is established that things having a fixed regularity are never found without their rule and regularity. However, the Primeval Agent, blessed is He, is above all of these (?) and all regularity. This argument cannot be made against Him, because He, blessed is He, has made a thing and its opposite, e.g., heat and cold, dryness and moisture; all things that come about testify to a willful creator, with no compulsion that compels Him”.

³⁰ Passage 10 in my preliminary transcription posted online.

³¹ J. Schirmann, *Hebrew Poetry in Spain and Provence*, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1960, I, 262.

³² See my draft (above, n. 12), pp. 5-9.

There are no logical terms in these passages that can help ferret out the method behind the inference. We do encounter the phrase discussed in text B to signify an inference, *yaša mi-moša davar*. In addition, there are two seemingly unrelated usages of the Hebrew root d.y.n.: as a verb, meaning “to judge” or “to conclude”, in “[so] does the intellect judge (*yadūn ha-sēkhelel*)”, and as a noun, meaning “rule” or “law”, which may or may not be fixed. Now let us look at the logic under-girding the argument, which can be unpacked as follows.

1) Agreed that the rule of divine wisdom is to exercise justice, and agreed that there must be some universe upon which this justice is exercised.

2) Problematic inference: just as the deity is always accompanied by his wisdom, so the justice which is the charge of wisdom must always have a field of action.³³

3) Unstated conclusion: there was no willful creation in time; the universe has always existed along with the deity.

4) Refutation: You have mistakenly drawn an analogy between the “rule” of terrestrial powers such as fire and the “rule” of divine wisdom. The “rule” of fire is fixed and compulsory; it must always burn and can never to the opposite. The Primeval is above all such restraints.

5) Proof of refutation: The creator has made “a thing and its opposite”. Presumably, the idea is that whatever can fashion both heat – which is compelled to heat and only heat – and cold – which is compelled to cool and only to cool – exercises volition.

6) Additional justification: All things that come about in this world testify to a willful Creator.

Before offering some additional suggestions for placing the content of these arguments in historical context – the most interesting aspect of the passages, in my view – a few remarks on the vocabulary would be in order. I call attention to the use of *yeish* placed at the beginning of the sentence and serving to link a subject with its predicate. *Veset* in the sense of “regularity” and *anūs* meaning compelled are both Talmudic.³⁴ Note that the author uses the Arabic terms for a thing and its opposite, *shay’ wa-diddahu*.

The dialogue shifts smoothly through a series of epithets, all of which signify the deity. It mentions the “the Wisdom of the Primeval (*ba-Qadmon*)”, “the Primeval, blessed is He”, “the Primeval Agent, blessed is He”, and finally a willful Creator (*borei bi-ḥefeṣ*). These names all appear to refer to the same divine Being; I see no reason to consider any as hypostases or anything of the sort. The theory of attributes, which is so central to Islamic theology and to the Jewish theologians who accepted or rejected that theory, does not seem to be of any concern to the dialogue. “Wisdom” here is not at all the knowledge which figures so prominently in medieval attribute theology. Instead, it recalls the intimate association of God and Wisdom in creation that we meet in Hellenistic Jewish literature. Consider, for example, the following account by David Winston from his book on the *Wisdom of Solomon*:

... the matter is, I think, settled by the description of Wisdom as “chooser of God’s works” (8:4), which clearly implies that Wisdom is identical with the Divine Mind through which the Deity acts. In the light of this, the assertion that ‘with you is Wisdom who knows your works and was present when you created the world’ (9:9) must signify that Wisdom contains the paradigmatic patterns of all things (cf. 9:8) and serves as the instrument of their creation.³⁵

³³ I will shortly remark upon the deeply intertwined and seemingly inseparable notions of deity, wisdom, and justice.

³⁴ M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, Luzac, London 1903, pp. 86 (*anūs*) and 374 (*veset*).

³⁵ D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Doubleday, New York 1979, p. 38.

Indeed, in some sense justice and wisdom may be indistinguishable from each other, or from the divine presence. I cite Winston again: “The terms ‘justice,’ ‘goodness,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘spirit of the Lord,’ ‘holy spirit,’ and ‘power,’ are here employed synonymously (cf. 9:17), personified as a divine entity which cannot abide fraudulence and injustice and swiftly withdraws from their presence”.³⁶

The epithet “Primeval Agent (*ha-Po‘el ha-Qadmon*)” is employed frequently in the dialogue, sometimes shortened to *ha-Qadmon*. Gershom Scholem notes that *ha-Po‘el ha-Qadmon* is the standard epithet of the deity in *Fons Vitae*.³⁷ This, however, is incorrect, as one can see from the citation Scholem brings in that same footnote from book III, paragraph 32, where the deity is referred to as *factor primus*; that phrase should be rendered in Hebrew *ha-Po‘el ha-Rishon*, as in fact it is in Falaquera’s extracts from *Fons Vitae*.³⁸ I do not find an Arabic equivalent of this name in the passages from the original collected by S. Pines.³⁹

Scholem’s note concerns the occurrence of *ha-Po‘el ha-Qadmon* in *The Book of Unity* by Rabbi Ḥammai, one of the key texts of the so-called ‘*Iyyun* circle.’⁴⁰ Again, with the help of online data bases, additional occurrences may be identified, for example, in the treatise called *Sod Yedi‘at ha-Meṣi‘ut* (*Secret of the Knowledge of Reality*), which too may belong to ‘*Iyyun* circle.’⁴¹ The authors belonging to that circle were mystics who are, in the words of Joseph Dan, “completely ignoring the concept of the ten sefirot and other central characteristics of the *kabbala*”.⁴² I do not think that it is correct for the historian to insist on a too strict a distinction between kabbalists and philosophers before the turn of the thirteenth century (approximately, of course).⁴³ Though the dialogue under scrutiny in this paper could smoothly be incorporated into a history of Jewish philosophy, the traces of “mysticism”,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁷ G. Scholem, “Li-Ḥeqer Kabbalat R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen”, part two, *Tarbiz* 3 (1931): 118-217, p. 421, n. 2.

³⁸ See the passage in S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, A. Franck, Paris 1859, p. 14b.

³⁹ Sh. Pines, “Fragments of the Arabic Original of *Fons Vitae* in Moses Ibn Ezra’s Work ‘Arugat Habbosem’”, *Tarbiz* 27 (1958): 218-233 [Hebrew]; reprinted in Id., *Studies on the History of Jewish Philosophy: The Transmission of Texts and Ideas*, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1977, pp. 44-60. However, *al-fā‘il al-qadīm* is found in a text from far-off Yemen, the philosophical midrash *Nūr al-Zalām*, edited and translated by Rabbi Y. Kafah, *Ma‘or ha-Afelah* (*Nūr al-Zalām*), Jerusalem, 5717/1957, p. 27. Concerning this work see Y.T. Langermann, *Yemenite Midrash: Philosophical Commentaries on the Torah*, HarperSanfrancisco, New York 1996, pp. 265-6.

⁴⁰ Concerning this and other writings of the circle, see M. Verman, *Books of Contemplation, The: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, SUNY Press, New York 2012.

⁴¹ The text is included in Isaac Erlanger, *Sifrei Kabbalat ha-Geonim*, Jerusalem 5766/2006, p. 66. This same treatise is included in a collection of extracts from ‘*Iyyun* writings, privately published in 1955, and now held in the Scholem Collection of the National Library of Israel (shelfmark PH Scholem 573). It has recently been edited by O. Porat, *Kitvei ha-‘Iyyun*, Cherub Press, Los Angeles 2013, pp. 39-52.

⁴² J. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. 1, *Late Antiquity*, Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1998, p. 246, note 5.

⁴³ I will allow myself one pertinent piece of evidence. *Peirush Shem shel Arba Otiyot*, one of the treatises that are ascribed to the ‘*Iyyun* Circle, cites the following remark on the divine names from an anonymous scholar: “The scholar (*he-khabam*) said: they say that those forty-two letters do not comprise a single word, nor one discrete name. Instead, those letters taken together convey information about the divinity of the Blessed One, i.e. that He is one”. (My translation from the citation in J. Dan, *History of Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism*, vol. VII, Early Kabbalistic Circles, Shazar, Jerusalem 2012, p. 80 [Hebrew].) It seems to me that the scholar cited here is none other than Maimonides, who remarks in his *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 61, that the divine “names” made up of twelve or forty-two letters are actually informative statements or phrases, rather than apophatic strings of letters. M. Verman, *Books of Contemplation, The: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, SUNY Press, New York 2012, pp. 167-8 and *passim*, recognizes the undeniable influence of Maimonides on these thirteenth-century mystical writings, but the examples he brings are all from the realm of philosophy; my example concerns the divine names, one of the most relished topics in mystical circles.

or what would later be classified as mysticism, should not be ignored, nor also the pietist preaching that one finds at the end of the text.

The dialogue bolsters its argument by asserting that the Primeval creates pairs of opposites. One cannot claim that the Primeval is compelled by the “rule” governing His justice “because He, blessed is He, has made a thing and its opposite, e.g., heat and cold, dryness and moisture”. As I have discussed in detail elsewhere, the classification of key elements of the world into pairs of opposites is a fundamental cosmological principle accepted in a wide range of pre-Maimonidean works of Jewish thought, first and foremost Sa’adya Gaon’s version of *Sefer Yešira*. It is shared as well by Abraham Bar Hiyya’s *Megillat ha-Megalleh*, and one the treatises associated with the ‘Iyyun circle; an early Shi’ite treatise knows of it as well.⁴⁴

Well before all of the sources mentioned above, Ben Sirah had established that God created all things in pairs: “Good is the opposite of evil, and life the opposite of death; so the sinner is the opposite of the godly. Look upon all the works of the Most High; they likewise are in pairs, one the opposite of the other [33: 14-15]”.

Moreover – and of critical importance for our dialogue – it has been argued that theodicy is the central concern of Ben Sirah, and “it is ultimately in Ben Sirah that a reinvigorated rational defense of theodicy issues forth in praise of the one who created all things in pairs. The duality of good and evil is at the basis of creation and operates under the impress of divine service to reward the good and punish the wicked”.⁴⁵ This insight – the idea that divine justice is the rationale behind creation – offers a precious clue towards understanding the claim which the dialogue wishes to refute.

At the heart of this exercise lies Proclus’ first and, in the view of many, most potent objection to creationism.⁴⁶ As is well known, the first of Proclus’ eighteen objections is extant only in Arabic.⁴⁷ The Arabic is in fact rather complex, but it can be broken into three components: (1) The “goodness” of the maker produces everything, and the maker is not sometimes good and sometimes not, but rather always good. (2) The maker always desires for all things to resemble himself; and he could not ever have been incapable of making things in this way.

⁴⁴ Y.T. Langermann, “Gradations of Light and Pairs of Opposites: Two Theories and Their Role in Abraham Bar Hiyya’s Scroll of the Revealer”, in Y.T. Langermann – R.G. Morrison (eds.), *Texts in Transit in the Medieval Mediterranean*, Pennsylvania State U.P., University Park PA 2016, pp. 47-66, esp. 58 ff.

⁴⁵ L.G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, The Almond Press, Sheffield 1991, p. 15. Perdue is summarizing the seminal research of J.L. Crenshaw, especially the latter’s “The problem of theodicy in Sirach: On human bondage”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94.1 (1975), pp. 47-64.

⁴⁶ Al-Ġazālī thought so, and his view was endorsed by later Jewish thinkers, such as Isaac Abrabanel and Joseph Delmedigo; see *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. M. Marmura, Brigham Young U.P., Provo 1997, p. 14; Y.T. Langermann, “Proclus Revenant: The (Re-)Integration of Proclus into the Creationism-Eternalism Debate in Joseph Solomon Delemedigo’s (1591-1671) *Novelot Hokhma*”, in David D. Butorac – Danielle A. Layne (eds.), *Proclus and his Legacy*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2017, pp. 375-90.

⁴⁷ There are at least two versions in Arabic of Proclus’ eighteen objections. The first, associated with the name of the translator Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn, has been published several times, most recently with accompanying English translation and extensive notes by J. McGinnis, as an appendix to Proclus, *On the Eternity of the World (De Aeternitate Mundi)*, trans. H.S. Lang – A.D. Marco, University of California Press, Berkeley 2001. A second Arabic version of Proclus’ eighteen arguments was edited and translated by E. Wakelnig, “The other Arabic version of Proclus’ *De Aeternitate Mundi*. The surviving first eight arguments”, *Oriens* 40.1 (2012), pp. 51-95. One must also add that the direct citations from Proclus reproduced by Philoponus at the beginning of each of the eighteen arguments are, or seem to me to be, supplemented by other citations that Philoponus introduces in the course of his refutations.

(3) The argument based on these two premises leads to the conclusion that the cosmos is eternal. However, Proclus does not stop here: the first argument ends with a distinction between the eternity of the maker and the eternity of the cosmos. The eternity of the maker is the *aion*, “complete and simultaneous being”, whereas the eternity of the cosmos is “time without limit”, i.e. the cosmos is always coming into being.⁴⁸ This form of eternity ascribed to the cosmos is in essence the doctrine of perpetual creation.

Clearly, our dialogue is not drawing directly upon this complex argument. Instead, Soul’s question resembles more closely the simple formulation found in Proclus’ commentary to the *Timaeus*, the gist of which is “Why didn’t He create the world earlier?”⁴⁹ Niketas Siniossoglou explains: “As Proclus puts it, did God create the world because he had the idea that it would be better that way? But this very ‘better’, did he not know it beforehand, yes or no? It is strange that he ignored it, says Proclus, since he is *Nous*. Then again, if he knew it all along, why didn’t he create the world earlier? This argument is a locus communis in Platonic anti-Christian polemics and is employed in the context of Ammonius’ school by Gessius, one of the key figures in Ammonius’ circle and student of Galen”.⁵⁰

Be that as it may, the dialogue formulates the objection in terms of God’s justice: without a cosmos, there would be no field of operation for God’s justice. How, when, and why was the argument shifted from a pre-eternal withholding of divine goodness or generosity to a pre-eternal inactivity of divine justice? How do we know that the purpose of creation was to provide a platform for God to put His justice into practice?

We have already uncovered an important hint in Ben Sira’s connection between divine justice and the pairs of opposites. The latter theory was carried on, and expanded, among a slew of pre-Maimonidean thinkers, including the author of our dialogue. Supporting evidence may, in my opinion, be drawn from the Qur’ān, among whose influences one must certainly count Jewish thought, especially late antique Jewish thought. At least one verse from the Qur’an, found in *sūrat al-Ġāthiya* (“The Kneeling”), implies that the purpose of creation was just that: to provide scope for divine justice. “Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged [Qu. 45:22]”. I have deliberately chosen to cite the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali.⁵¹ The word which Ali renders “for just ends”, *bi-l-ḥaqq*, is usually translated literally “in truth”. However, O’Shaughnessy, in his thorough study of the Qur’ān’s employment of *ḥaqq* in connection with creation, has suggested that in the verse just quoted “some other attribute like justice” is “a coordinate of *ḥaqq*”.⁵² The last of the interpretations of the phrase displayed by Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in his discussion of the verse states that “the purpose (*al-maqṣūd*) of the creation of this world is to manifest justice and mercy”.⁵³ The few clues that I have presented in the preceding paragraphs should help, I hope, in placing the dialogue’s refutation of the eternalist position in historical context.

⁴⁸ I rely here on John McGinnis’s very helpful note 35 to Lang and Marco (2001), p. 163.

⁴⁹ Proclus, *In Tim.*, p. 1.288.17-23 Diehl.

⁵⁰ N. Siniossoglou, “Time, perpetuity and eternity in late antique Platonism”, *KronoScope* 5.2 (2005), pp. 213-35, on p. 222.

⁵¹ Ali’s translation, *The Holy Qur’ān: English Translation & Commentary*, was first published in 1934 by Shaik Muhammad Ashraf Publishers of Bakhshi Bazaar, Lahore, India (later Pakistan); it has been frequently reprinted ever since.

⁵² Th.J. O’Shaughnessy, “Creation with Wisdom and with the Word in the Qur’ān”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1971), pp. 208-21, on p. 212.

⁵³ O’Shaughnessy cites a few commentators who “regard the attribute described by *ḥaqq* as wisdom—the cause of divine justice”.