Reconciling Philosophy and Scripture in Renaissance Italy:

Obadiah Sforno's Hebrew and Latin Versions of the *Light of the Nations*

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Symon Lee Foren
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Supervisor: Joanna Weinberg

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of Obadiah Sforno's (c. 1475–c. 1550) philosophical-theological treatise, *Light of the Nations*, entitled in Hebrew *Or ammim* (1537), and in Latin, *Lumen gentium* (1548). The purpose is to provide an in-depth examination of the author's response to a particular variety of Aristotelian-Averroan philosophy—such a study has not yet been undertaken. The dissertation maintains that the key to understanding the author's approach to this work is to examine which sources he used and how he read them. Three aspects of the treatise are discussed. The first is the author's heavy reliance on Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's conceptual framework even as he sought to undermine its central theses from within. This study argues that Sforno's seemingly negative attitude toward philosophy should be viewed in terms of his reading strategies by which he made every effort to ensure that his examination of philosophy agreed with his religious beliefs. For this, the twelfth inquiry—proving the intellective soul's immortality—is taken as a case study to look at how Sforno interpreted and modified Averroes' mature noetic doctrine. The second aspect is the author's relationship to the medieval Judeo-Arabic philosophical tradition. Using his discussions on epistemology and moral philosophy, his system is evaluated in terms of certain positions advocated by Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon—the only Jewish philosophical authorities cited in the Hebrew text of the treatise. The third aspect is scriptural exegesis. The dissertation explores how Sforno attempted to achieve a reason-based assent to the tenets of religion through an allegorical reading of Scripture. It argues that the author's approach to the interpretation of biblical passages is determined by his desire to resolve the contradictions between philosophy and religion so that his reader could draw from both systems of thought. It analyses how Sforno followed in the footsteps of his medieval forebears in imposing the concepts and terminology of Greco-Arabic philosophy onto the biblical text in order to achieve a reconciliation of the Peripatetic and scriptural traditions. Throughout the study, the author's appreciation of his disparate readerships is evaluated by examining the differences between the Hebrew and Latin texts.

Table of Contents

Introduction		1
1.	Readers, Texts and Traditions	
1.1	Introduction	13
1.2	Faith and Reason	14
1.3	Philosophy and Scripture	22
1.4	*Prisca Sapientia*	27
1.5	Structure and Contents	37
1.6	Method and Modes of Discourse	43
1.7	Conclusion	48
2.	Philosophical Sources	
2.1	Introduction	51
2.2	The Legacy of Averroes in the West	52
2.3	Citing Aristotle and Averroes	56
2.4	Hebrew Philosophical Sources	70
2.5	Latin Philosophical Sources	74
2.6	Conclusion	84
3.	Reading Aristotle and Averroes	
3.1	Introduction	85
3.2	Averroes' Noetic Theories	88
3.3	Sforno's Noetic Theory	97
3.4	Emanation from the Gods	103
3.5	Generated or Created	110
3.6	Many or One	116
3.7	Human Souls and Celestial Spheres	121
3.8	Conclusion	126

4. Averroes and Beyond
4.1 Introduction 128
4.2 The Material Intellect 130
4.3 The Agent Intellect 135
4.4 A Break from Tradition 141
4.5 "After the Likeness of God" 147
4.6 Perfection through Moral Virtue 150
4.7 The Cosmic Status of Humankind 157
4.8 Conclusion 162

5. Reconciling Philosophy and Scripture
5.1 Introduction 164
5.2 Scripture as Syllogistic Premise 166
5.3 Anthropomorphism 172
5.4 Translating Creation 175
5.5 Divine Names as Proofs 184
5.6 Reasoning by Analogy 189
5.7 Conclusion 193

Conclusion 195
Appendix: Analytical Summary of *Quaestio* XII 201
Bibliography 224

INTRODUCTION

OBADIAH SFORNO'S *LIGHT OF THE NATIONS*

I

This dissertation examines the *Light of the Nations* by the Italian rabbi, Obadiah Sforno (c. 1475–c. 1550). The philosophical-theological treatise takes the form of a scholastic *quaestio disputata*, and may be regarded as a Jewish response to the old problem that confronted Western scholars of adapting Greco-Arabic philosophy to a Judeo-Christian religious context. Its contents relate specifically to controversial elements of the Averroan interpretation of the Aristotelian corpus, which had engaged the attention of Jewish and Christian philosophers and theologians since the Western reception of Averroes' works through Hebrew and Latin translations from the thirteenth century onwards, and which resurfaced in Italy when his writings regained popularity there during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Sforno published a Hebrew text of the treatise, the *Or ammim*, in 1537. A single complete manuscript has survived; it is located in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and was copied in 1572.[1] There are two partial manuscripts: the first is an autograph version, which comprises the final few pages of the work;[2] the second is a late seventeenth-century copy located in the Hebrew Union College Library in Cincinnati, Ohio.[3] Eleven copies of the *editio princeps* are scattered in collections across Europe.[4] The Hebrew title page indicates that partners in a company of silk

[1] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms. héb. 1007.
[2] This manuscript described in Florian Dunklau's doctoral dissertation (University of Hamburg) is now housed in St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, IOM B 169.
[3] Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Library, ms.729.
[4] I would like to thank the library staff of the Archiginnasio Municipal Library for permitting me to examine their copy and for providing me with a digitized version (SBN code: UBOE053314). The

weavers printed the book—they also published nine other books including the second Judeo-Italian prayer book, entitled *Tefillot Latini*.[5] According to the colophon, Sforno himself participated in the printing and he helped produce the list of errata included at the end of the treatise.[6]

There is also a manuscript copy of an unpublished Hebrew commentary on the *Or ammim*, authored by a certain Elijah of Butrio, which Malachi Beit-Arié has dated to the second half of the sixteenth century.[7] In her study of booklists of Mantuan Jews at the end of the sixteenth century, Shifra Baruchson-Arbib noted the presence of twenty-one copies of Sforno's *Or ammim* in 430 family libraries. This gives some indication of the treatise's considerable popularity, when considered in the light of such classical Hebrew philosophical works as Moses Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* (55 copies), Joseph Albo's *Book of Principles* (57 copies), and Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* (68 copies).[8]

Sforno published a Latin translation of the treatise, the *Lumen gentium*, in 1548. It survives in a single manuscript, which is housed in the Municipal Library of Reggio Emilia; the manuscript and the printed edition are completely identical.[9]

Bodleian Library has three copies of the text: *Opp. 4°. 917(2)*; *Opp. add. 4°. IV. 546*; *MS. Canon*. Or. 16.

[5] See Marvin J. Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book: an Abridged Thesaurus* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:225, 227. See also David Werner Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy* (London: Holland Press, 1963), 230-234.

[6] Obadiah Sforno, *Or ammim* (Bologna: Soci dell'arte della seta, 1537) [hereafter cited as *Or*], 64r-v.

[7] The commentary is also part of Dunklau's doctoral research. On this manuscript, see Benjamin Richler, and Malachi Beit Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma Catalogue* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library, 2001), 361, no. 1323.

[8] See Shifra Baruchson-Arbib, *Books and Readers: The Reading Interests of Italian Jews at the Close of the Renaissance* [Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1993), 149; Id., *La culture livresque des juifs d'Italie à la fin de la Renaissance*, trans. Gabriel Roth (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2001), 120.

[9] Reggio Emilia, Biblioteca municipale "A Panizzi," mss. vari E. 5. See Vittore Colorni, "Spigolature su Obadià Sforno: la sua laurea a Ferrara e la quasi ignota edizione della sua opera OR 'AMIM nella versione latina," *La Rassenga Mensile di Israel* 28 (1962): 78-88, 83, n. 32. See also Saverio Campanini, "Un intellettuale ebreo del Rinascimento: Ovadyah Sforno a Bologna e i suoi rapporti con i cristiani," in *Verso l'epilogo di una convivenza: gli ebrei a Bologna nel 16. Secolo*, ed. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli (Firenze: Giuntina, 1996), 99-128, 120, n. 94.

Although Paul Grendler speculated that one thousand copies of the *Lumen gentium* were originally sponsored for publication,[10] only nine copies of the book remain extant.[11] Sforno dedicated the Latin text to King Henri II of France, a fact that led Saverio Campanini to suggest that Sforno was addressing his work to a circle of Christian Hebraists active in France, which may have included Guillaume Postel.[12] Campanini also identified the drafter of the *Lumen gentium* as Giulio della Rovere, whom he described as a Calvinist pastor who had been at one time expelled from Bologna and at another time imprisoned in Venice for his controversial preaching, and eventually sought refuge in Switzerland where he became pastor of the Reformed community of Poschiavo (Graubünden) in 1547—a full year before Sforno explicitly mentioned him in his dedication. As Campanini remarked, it would be naive to think that Sforno was ignorant of the storm that was shaking the foundations of the Church.[13] However, Sforno offers no hint of his awareness of the Protestant Reformation in the *Light of the Nations*.[14]

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[10] See Paul F. Grendler, "The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 103-130, 113-114. There, he discusses fines by the *Esecutori* levied against Benetto Bora da Padua of 200 ducats for sponsoring the publication of two books, one of which is described as "Opere del forni in latino" published by (Giovanni) "Griffio." Grendler suggests that this may have been the *Lumen gentium*.

[11] I would like to thank the library staff at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem for making their copy available to me. I would also like to thank the library staff at the University Library of Bologna for making their copy available for me to examine in person, and for allowing me to photograph select pages (Cat. no. A. V. Tab. I, F. I. 402, 3). Finally, I would like to thank Jean Baumgarten for obtaining a scanned version of the copy from the Mazarin Library in Paris (4°15228-2 [Res]).

[12] See "Un intellettuale ebreo del Rinascimento," 125. See also, Id., "The Quest for the Holiest Alphabet in the Renaissance," in *A Universal Art: Hebrew Grammar Across Disciplines and Faiths*, ed. Nadia Vidro, Irened E. Zwiep, and Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 196-245, esp. 225. Stephen Burnett notes that Paris was a center of Hebrew study during the sixteenth century: "The Collège Royale had a nearly unbroken string of professors of Hebrew from its foundation through the end of the Reformation era, many of them extremely capable scholars." See Stephen G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500-1660): Authors, Books, and the Transmission of Jewish Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 28-29.

[13] Campanini hypothesizes that Sforno's explicit reference to an "overt heretic" may hint at the theological-political complexity present in Bologna at the time of the printing of the *Lumen gentium*. He notes that until the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, King Henri II did not hesitate to pursue a policy of alliances with the German Protestant princes against Charles V, and that the papal legate of Bologna during the period of 1545-1548 was none other than Cardinal Giovanni Morone, who was later accused of Lutheran heresy and imprisoned by Pope Paul IV. Therefore, it would have been possible for Sforno

Both texts of the treatise clearly exhibit antagonism toward conclusions reached by the Peripatetic philosophers, as indicated by the paratexts and introductions, in which the author proposes to use rational demonstration in order to refute the opinions of Aristotle and his commentators who argued against certain tenets of religion. These tenets relate to central philosophical-theological notions: how the universe originated and operates, the nature of its cause, and the status and purpose of humankind. Particularly striking in this regard is the author's exclusive reliance on the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus as well as the special authority that Averroes commands. Each and every page is filled with citations from the works of these two philosophers, and they are presented to the reader as reliable premises for the author's own arguments. Although a variety of other Greek and Arabic philosophers are also mentioned by name, only the works of these two thinkers are explicitly cited in the philosophical investigations.[15]

Sforno's philosophical demonstrations, however, are only a preliminary part of his project. A second element, which represents the main purpose of the treatise, occurs at the conclusion of each *quaestio*. Here, the author offers his own exegesis of passages from Hebrew Scripture, which, in his view, also relate to the religious tenet being discussed. In this part of the inquiry, Sforno reconciles his earlier reading of the statements of Aristotle and Averroes with allegorical interpretations of the Bible. This particular feature of the work led me to interpret the *Light of the Nations* as an attempt to harmonize Aristotelian-Averroan philosophy with Scripture. Since Sforno

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to seek the protection from men such as Giulio della Rovere without arousing suspicion or mistrust. See "Un intellettuale ebreo del Rinascimento," passim.

[14] Further research on the historical facts surrounding the treatise is required. In this dissertation, my purpose is to focus primarily on understanding the way the philosophical arguments work.

[15] The exceptions to this comprise a few citations of and references to Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and a single citation of Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Lexicon of Philosophical Terminology*. These exceptions only occur in the Hebrew text of the *Light of the Nations*; they are absent from the Latin text. I discuss these citations in the first chapter herein.

produced the treatise in both Hebrew and Latin—doubtless for two different readerships—I scrutinize both texts, and attempt to account for the evident discrepancies between them.

II

Born in Cesena, Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century, Obadiah ben Jacob Sforno underwent traditional rabbinical training and then studied medicine, obtaining a degree from the University of Ferrara in 1501.[16] He resided in Rome, where he privately taught Hebrew to the famous German humanist Johann Reuchlin, for which he is identified and praised in the dedicatory epistle to Reuchlin's *De rudamentis hebraicis*.[17] After the sack of Rome in 1527, Sforno relocated to Bologna, and became involved in a rabbinical court, a school, and a printing business.[18] Notarial documents from the Bologna State Archive, which include Sforno's last will and testament, show that he was a wealthy man with diverse social connections.[19]

[16] For a recent biographical sketch of Sforno, see Saverio Campanini, "Sforno, Ovadyah," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Alberto M. Ghisalberti, and Serena Andreotti (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2018), 92:397-399. For the text of Sforno's diploma, see "Spigolature su Obadià Sforno," 86-88. As Paul Grendler notes, this is the university from which Nicolaus Copernicus obtained his doctorate in canon law in 1503 (two years later). He also observes that Ferrara was a place where degrees were obtained quickly and inexpensively, describing it as "something of a diploma mill." See Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 104-105.

[17] Johann Reuchlin, *Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel*, ed. Ludwig Geiger (Hildesheim: Olms, 1962), 92: "Post vero legatus Rhomam [sic.] ad Alexandrum sextum qui reliqui fuerant ea in lingua canones eos a Cesinatensi Judaeo, scilicet Abdia filio Jacobi Sphurno petivi, qui me quotidie toto legationis tempore perquam humaniter in Hebraicis erudivit, non sine insignis mercedis impendio." On this, see Campanini, "Un intellettuale ebreo del Rinascimento," 112-113. See also David H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 67-68. Stephen Burnett counts three Jews who tutored Reuchlin in Hebrew before 1500: a Jew named Kalman (1486), Jacob be Jehiel Loans, who was the personal physician to Emperor Frederick III (1492), and Obadiah Sforno (1498-1500). See *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500-1660)*, 23-24.

[18] See "Un intellettuale ebreo del Rinascimento," 104.

[19] See Andrew D. Berns, "Ovadiah Sforno's Last Will and Testament," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 68 (Spring 2017): 1-33.

Indeed, as Andrew Berns observed, one of Sforno's two family homes was located in Piazza Santo Stefano, just steps away from the famous Two Towers.[20]

Only three of Sforno's works were published in his lifetime: the two texts of the *Light of the Nations* (Bologna, 1537; 1548) and his commentary on tractate *Avot* (Bologna, 1540). His exegetical works were all published posthumously. These included his commentaries on the Pentateuch, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes (Venice, 1567), Job (Venice, 1580), Psalms (Venice, 1586), and short commentaries on Jonah, Habakkuk, and Zechariah (1602).[21] In the first half of the eighteenth century, Sforno's biblical commentaries were inserted into *Kehillot Moshe*, the Rabbinic Bible of Amsterdam (1724–1727),[22] thus enhancing his fame as a biblical commentator.[23] A Hebrew translation of Euclid was for centuries wrongly attributed to Sforno; the work was actually produced by Moses Ibn Ezra.[24] A partial collection of Sforno's correspondence, legal decisions, and homilies were published in the twentieth century.[25]

III

[20] Ibid., 5.
[21] For a list of Sforno's literary production, see Ephraim Finkel, *R. Obadja Sforno als Exeget* (Breslau: Druck von T. Schatzky, 1896), 15-40. See also Obadiah Sforno, *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, ed. Zev Gottlieb (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1980), editor's introduction, 17-21; 60-67.
[22] See Ernest Cowley, *A Concise Catalogue*, 514.
[23] Thus, Obadiah Sforno is best known in modern scholarship as a Bible commentator. See, for example, Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 13, *Inquisition, Renaissance, and Reformation* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), 182; Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 155; Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 151; Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish* Literature, vol. 4, *Italian Jewry in the Renaissance Era*, transl. Bernard Martin (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1974), 94; Robert Bonfil, *Jewish life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 150; Andrew Berns, "Ovadiah Sforno's Last Will and Testament," 1.
[24] For instances of this misattribution, see Finkel, *R. Obadja Sforno als Exeget*, 15; Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, 94; Avie Goldberg, and Ariel Toaff, "Sforno, Obadiah Ben Jacob," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum, and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 18:333-334.
For the clarification of the issue, see *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, editor's introduction, 21, n. 113.
[25] Obadiah Sforno, *Kitvei Rabbi Obadiah Sforno*, ed. Zev Gottlieb (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1987), 511-543.

There have been two modern editions of the Hebrew *Or ammim*.[26] The first, a facsimile edition, was published in 1970;[27] the second, Zev Gottlieb's revised edition, in 1987.[28] No editions of the *Lumen gentium* have appeared after its initial publication in 1548. However, critical editions and English translations of both the Hebrew and Latin texts are currently being prepared at the Institute for Jewish Philosophy and Religion at the University of Hamburg.[29] In 2000, Charles Manekin translated the thirteenth *quaestio* of the Hebrew text into English.[30]

Scholarship on the *Light of the Nations* has been, for the most part, generic and superficial. Certain polemical statements contained in the introduction to the treatise have led many scholars to characterise it as completely antagonistic to philosophy in general and to Aristotelian philosophy in particular.[31] They see the work in categorical terms: as a defence of a Scripture-based theology, whose purpose is to disprove Aristotle's heretical opinions in order to nullify the Philosopher's role in religious thought. This is how Ephraim Finkel depicted the work in his *R. Obadja Sforno als Exeget* published in 1896,[32] and the next generation of scholars followed

[26] Gottlieb mentions a third edition, with an introduction by a certain David Slutzki, which was not ultimately published. For this, Gottlieb's cites Weiner's unfinished bibliographical listing of the Moshe Aryeh Leb Friedland Collection, entitled *Kehillat Moshe* (St Petersburg, 1893-1902), p. 64, #508. See *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, editor's introduction, 65. For a discussion of David Slutzki and his publishing project, see Nathan Cohen, "Distributing Knowledge: Warsaw As a Center of Jewish Publishing, 1850–1914," in *Warsaw, the Jewish Metropolis Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*, ed. Glenn Dynner, François Guesnet, and Antony Polonsky (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 180-206, esp. 183.

[27] Obadiah Sforno, *Or ammim* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1970).

[28] Obadiah Sforno, *Kitvei Rabbi Obadiah Sforno*, ed. Zev Gottlieb (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1987), 399-508.

[29] Giuseppe Veltri chairs this project and Saverio Campanini acts as an advisor. Giada Coppola works on the *Lumen gentium*; Florian Dunklau on the *Or ammim*.

[30] Obadiah Sforno, "Obadiah Sforno, *Light of the Peoples* (1537) [On Morality]," trans. Charles Manekin, in *The Jewish Philosophy Reader*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, Oliver Leaman, and Charles H. Manekin (London: Routledge, 2000), 295-297.

[31] These statements of the treatise are carefully examined in the first chapter herein.

[32] *R. Obadja Sforno als Exeget*, 16-17: "אור עמים, ein religions-philosophisches Werk, das den Zweck hat, die ewigen Wahrheiten der heiligen Lehre den Völkern zu erschliessen und ihnen gleichsam als Leuchte (אור) dienen soll, damit nicht finsterer Wahn ihre klare Einsicht verdunkele, sondern sie durch die in diesem Buche enthaltenen Ausführungen im stande seien, die Gottesleugner zu bekämpfen und zu widerlegen... Deshalb will er es versuchen, mit Hilfe der Wahrheiten und der Vernunftbeweise, die in der Thora niedergelegt sind, Aristoteles vollends zu bekämpfen, was ihm um so wichtiger erscheint,

suit.[33] Such an assessment, however, relies exclusively on statements from the work's prefaces and introductions, and fails to take into account the author's complex attitude toward Aristotelian-Averroan philosophy as reflected in the body of the treatise.

Scholars such as Herbert Davidson have highlighted the medieval character of the *Light of the Nations*,[34] whereas others have considered it to be heavily informed by trends in Renaissance philosophy. Thus, Hava Tirosh-Rothschild called it "a typical example of Jewish Aristotelianism in the first half of the sixteenth century in Italy."[35] Similarly, Mauro Zonta saw the treatise as exhibiting "the persistence of an interest in Latin scholasticism," noting however that Jewish philosophy in Greece and Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries should be distinguished from medieval Jewish Aristotelianism.[36] The assessments of both Tirosh-Rothschild and Zonta rely on Robert Bonfil's research, in which he focused on Sforno's theory of the human soul and its fate as articulated in the twelfth *quaestio* of the treatise.[37]

Bonfil produced two studies on the *Light of the Nations*. In his 1976 article, he recognized that Sforno was participating in a larger philosophical debate raging in Italy at the time—a debate that had significant theological implications.

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als einer der grössten Männer der Juden, Maimonides, den Ausspruch gethan habe, dass alles, was Aristoteles in Bezug auf die sublunarische Welt gesagt habe, unbedingt wahr sie."

[33] See Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, 94; Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 80-81; Colorni, "Spigolature su Obadià Sforno," 85; Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 11, *Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion 1200 - 1650* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), 185. For a less dogmatic assessment, see Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, 310.

[34] See Herbert A. Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy in the Sixteenth Century," in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 106-145. See also Barry S. Kogan, "The Problem of Creation in Late Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. Arthur Hyman, and Ruth Link-Salinger (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 159-173, esp. 170-173.

[35] See Hava Tirosh Rothschild, "Jewish philosophy on the eve of modernity," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), 499-573, esp. 518. See also Id., "Theology of Nature in Sixteenth-Century Italian Jewish Philosophy," *Science in Context* 10 (1997): 529-570, esp. 537.

[36] See Mauro Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism in the Fifteenth Century: A History and Source Book* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 30, esp. n. 129.

[37] Robert Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul and Its Holiness in the Thought of R. Obadiah Sforno," [Hebrew] in *Eshel Beer-Sheva*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1976), 200-257.

Acknowledging Sforno's heavy reliance on Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle, he suggested a connection to "Averroistic mysticism"[38] and to the ideas of Renaissance thinkers such as Coluccio Salutati, Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Pomponazzi, and Agostino Nifo. He also raised the possibility that Sforno read Augustine, Philo, Philoponus, and Dante when composing the treatise.[39] Finally, he asserted that Sforno relied on the Christian Scholastic authorities, primarily Thomas Aquinas, for many of his arguments often quoting them almost verbatim.[40] Bonfil's general claims are intriguing. However, since Sforno does not explicitly cite Thomas, Salutati, Ficino, Nifo, Pomponazzi, Augustine, Philo, Philoponus or Dante, it is difficult—if not impossible—to establish with certainty whether he read these sources. Two decades later, Bonfil published a second study, in which he reiterated Sforno's faithfulness to the Averroan philosophical framework and described his tendency to harmonize the Aristotelian, Platonic, and Maimonidean worldviews.[41]

As this overview demonstrates, there has been little careful research on Sforno's *Light of the Nations*. The present study aims to address this gap by providing, for the first time, a detailed consideration of Sforno's statements and demonstrations in both the Hebrew and Latin texts of the treatise.[42]

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[38] Bonfil repeats this characterization of Sforno's thought in his various studies. For example, see Robert Bonfil, *Jewish life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 162-163; Id., *Rabbis and Jewish communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford. U.K.: Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 2004), 292-293. Bruno Nardi employs the phrase "La mistica Averroistica" in connection with Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola; perhaps Bonfil had this in mind. See Bruno Nardi, *Saggi sull' aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1958), 127-146.

[39] See Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul," passim.

[40] Ibid., 210. See also Josef Sermoneta, "Pour une histoire du thomisme juif," in *Aquinas and Problems of his Time*, ed. Gerard Verbeke, and Daniel Verhelst (Louvain, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1976), 130-135, esp. 134.

[41] See Robert Bonfil, "Il Rinascimento: la produzione esegetica di 'O. Servadio Sforno," in *La lettura ebraica delle Scritture*, ed. Sergio J. Sierra (Bologna: EDB, 1995), 261-277.

[42] Over the course of my research, I have encountered studies on Sforno's philosophical-theological positions and exegetical methods, which are rather general for popular readership. I will not cite or refer to them herein. For example, Yehudah Ari Volgemut, "An Appraisal of Mankind in Sforno's Commentary to the Book of Genesis," [Hebrew] in *Scritti in memoria di Sally Mayer (1875-1953): saggi sull'Ebraismo italiano* (Jerusalem: Fondazione Sally Mayer, Scuola superiore di Studi Ebraici,

IV

This study will begin with the aims of the treatise, which come to the fore in the Hebrew and Latin paratexts and introductions—the differences between the two texts are significant. I will call attention to the work's polemical nature and describe its structure and subject matter in terms of the author's position on faith versus reason and the role of demonstrative argumentation in religious discourse. I will consider Sforno's assertion that the statements of Scripture are a form of demonstration on a par with syllogistic or logical reasoning, thereby setting the stage for an assessment of his endeavour to reconcile what he portrays as two traditions of wisdom—Greco-Italian philosophy and the Hebrew Bible.

In the second chapter, I will identify the sources of the treatise, outlining which books of the Aristotelian corpus are cited in the Hebrew and Latin texts. I will establish the authoritative role played by Averroes' works in the body of the treatise despite the antagonistic attitude that Sforno adopts toward Aristotle and his disciples in his epistles and introductions. I will highlight his use of Latin translations of Averroes' Long Commentaries on certain books of Aristotle given that they were not part of the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition. I will seek to explain Sforno's complex attitude toward his philosophical sources by proposing that it was rooted in his perception of Averroes' status among both of his intended readerships in sixteenth-century Italy, a period in which his works had achieved great prominence. I will also discuss which other sources Sforno may have read.

Milano, 1956), 120-125; Joseph Walk, "R. Obadiah Sforno: Exegete and Humanist," [Hebrew] in *Sefer Neiger: ma'amarim be-ḥeker ha-TaNaKH: le-zekher Dayid Neger ZaL*, ed. Arthur Biram (Jerusalem: Kiryat sefer, 1959), 277-302; Ḥayim Shain, *Man, Society and Law in the Thought of Rabbi Ovadyah Sforno*, [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Shaʻare mishpaṭ, 2001); Hayyim Angel, "Text and Historical Motivations behind the Commentary of Rabbi Obadiah Sforno on the Torah," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 42 (2014): 73-82.

The third chapter is dedicated to a consideration of how Sforno actually pursued his aims through his reading of the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus. I will take the twelfth inquiry of the treatise—demonstrating the intellective soul's immortality—as a case study, and look at Sforno's reception of Averroes' noetic doctrine. I will argue that although Sforno explicitly cites only Aristotle and Averroes as sources for his philosophical premises in the *Light of the Nations*, as is the case with many works of his contemporaries in Renaissance Italy, closer scrutiny of his system reveals that it is characterized by an eclectic blend of ideas from which he draws in order to achieve his purposes while remaining somewhat faithful to a Peripatetic conceptual framework. In order to demonstrate this syncretic tendency, I will examine the elements of Sforno's noetic theory in relation to Averroes' mature doctrine of the material intellect, showing that, whilst Sforno cites Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* to prove various aspects of his theory, he actually reinterprets the Commentator's basic concepts of intellection so that they conform to his conclusions. He restructures his cited material into a form that is foreign to Averroes' mature system of thought, demonstrating a series of arguments whose ultimate objective is to undermine central theses of the Aristotelian-Averroan worldview in order to advocate his own religious beliefs.

The fourth chapter takes a closer look at Sforno's noetic theory by examining his epistemology and moral philosophy in relation to his concept of the *summum bonum* and cosmic status of humankind. As the logical continuation of his treatment of the immortality of the individual intellective soul, his discussion of the subject begins at the conclusion of his twelfth *quaestio* where he cites Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Averroes' Middle Commentary thereon, but continues into the final three inquiries (XIII-XV). In this chapter, I will highlight Sforno's

endorsement of a form of intellectual beatitude—this despite his apparent rejection of the traditional Judeo-Arabic philosophical notion of a conjunction of the human intellect with a cosmic agent intellect.

In the fifth and final chapter of this dissertation, I will evaluate how philosophy and Scripture correlate in the *Light of the Nations*. I will explore how Sforno brings about a reconciliation of his reading of Aristotle and Averroes with his own allegorical interpretation of the Bible in light of his opinion regarding the pre-eminence of the Hebrew tradition on divinity and creation. I will analyse the exegetical methods that he employs in order to achieve this reconciliation, which also satisfy his call for a reason-based assent to the tenets of religion. In this chapter, I will examine Sforno's opinion on the superiority of the Hebrew text of the Bible as well as his use of the Vulgate.

Citations from the *Or ammim* and the *Lumen gentium* throughout this study appear in my own English translation, which is based primarily on the Hebrew text. The Hebrew and Latin are given in the footnotes and are transcribed from the sixteenth-century printed editions. My transcription of the Hebrew text is faithful to the *editio princeps*; I have not altered the punctuation or orthography. However, for the sake of clarity, I have attempted to normalize the punctuation, capitalization, and orthography of the Latin text.[43] For other works cited in this study, I have used the available English translations with discretion. Finally, when transliterating Hebrew, I have followed the guidelines laid out in *Encyclopedia Judaica*.[44]

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[43] For Latin abbreviations and orthography, I have relied on the following works: Adriano Cappelli, Mario Geymonat, and Fabio Troncarelli, *Lexicon abbreviaturarum : Dizionario di abbreviature latine ed italiane usate nelle carte e codici specialmente del Medio-Evo riprodotte con oltre 14000 segni incisi : con l'aggiunta di uno studio sulla brachigrafia medioevale, un prontuario di sigle epigrafiche* (Milano: Hoepli, 2011); Charlton T. Lewis, William Freund, E. A. Andrews, and Charles Short, *A Latin dictionary: founded on Andrew's edition of Freund's Latin dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

[44] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum, and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 1:197-199.

CHAPTER ONE

READERS, TEXTS AND TRADITIONS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Obadiah Sforno offers an explanation for the title of his first published work, the *Or ammim,* at the conclusion of the introductory epistle: "Therefore, I said: Behold, I have come with a scroll book which I have called אור עמים (*Light of the Nations*), since its purpose is to kindle an eternal lamp before humankind and remove the dust from between the eyes of the poor of the nation of Abraham's God."[1] A similar explanation is offered to the reader of the Latin rendering of the treatise at the end of the first part of the introduction: "In this particular work, for the sake of God's honour, I have chosen to demonstrate some passages of sacred Scripture, produced for the divine illumination of humankind. Therefore, I have rightly taken care to call it *Lumen gentium* (*Light of the Nations*)."[2]

These two formulations make one point clear: the author did not intend to disseminate his discourse to a limited readership; his message was universal. Such declarations notwithstanding, an examination of the title pages, epistles, and introductions of the Hebrew and Latin texts of the treatise demonstrates the author's appreciation of the fact that his readers belonged to dissimilar worlds. Although Sforno proposes to use his book as a lamp to illuminate all humankind, he transmits that light differently through its two versions, endeavouring to adapt his message to his readers' intellectual contexts. In this chapter, I explore those differences through

[1] *Or*, 2v-3r: "על כן אמרתי הנה באתי במגלת ספר קראתיו אור עמים בהיות תכליתו העלות נר תמיד נגד בני אדם ולגלות עפר מבין עיני עניי עם אלהי אברהם..."

[2] Obadiah Sforno, *Lumen gentium* (Bologna: Anselmo Giaccarelli, 1548) [hereafter cited as *Lumen*], 7: "In hoc scilicet opusculo, quo sacrae scripturae documenta nonnulla, in humani generis lumen divinitus edita, ad Dei reverentiam, revelare decrevi. Quare id merito Lumen gentium appellare curavi."

an examination of how the author conveys his positions on faith and reason, Scripture and philosophy, and how he fashions his intellectual discourse.

1.2 FAITH AND REASON

In the first paragraph of the introductory epistle to the *Or ammim*, Sforno articulates for his Hebrew reader the treatise's apologetic purpose in terms of a conventional Jewish trope—the critical perspective of certain "gentile sages" (חכמי הגוים). He states that these sages, upon attempting to ascertain the merit of a tradition maintained by Jewish scholars who meditate on the letters of Scripture, Mishnah, and Talmud, are left embittered and aggrieved by its intellectually uninspiring quality. Their unfavourable assessment is reflected by the questions they ask: "How can a person understand its way? What does a man such as this know if he cannot turn right or left? Does he not have intelligible proof? Will he be useful or pleasing to God or not? Surely his fear of and zeal for the Teaching and Testimony will be merely a human directive if its foundation is derived from a father's narrative to his children or from the writings of the earlier sages that recount the glory of God?"[3]

Sforno thus begins to account for the production of his treatise by lamenting the dilapidated state of Israel's religious legacy. His description of the "suffering of the survivors of the holy nation" (עני שרידי עם קודש)[4] also sets the tone, at the very outset of the work, for his argument regarding the correct relationship between tradition, faith, and rational demonstration. Indeed, immediately upon describing the dismal situation, he casts the entire rationale for his project in terms of that

[3] *Or*, 2r: "...כי ברבים היו חכמי הגוים הבאים לחקור במה יזכה את ארחו ההוגה באותיות מקרא ומשנה ותלמוד. והמה מרו ועצבו באמרם מה יבין דרכו ומה ידע איש אשר כזה אם איש להימין ולהשמיל הלא אין אצלו מופת מודיע הלאל יסכון ויפיק רצון מאתו אם אין ותהי יראתו וזריזותו לתורה ולתעודה מצות אנשים מלמדה אשר יסודה בספור אב לבנים ומכתבי ראשונים מספרים כבוד אל."

[4] Ibid.

relationship, arguing for the obligation to apprehend intellectually the tenets of religion. He asserts that a non-rational assent to such fundamental truths is insufficient for establishing a proper connection between God and humankind.[5]

In order to explain such an assertion, Sforno contrasts for his Hebrew reader his own position with that of the renowned medieval Jewish proponent of rational theology, Moses Maimonides. He makes reference to the twenty-eighth chapter of the third book of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, in which, Maimonides seems to classify belief or faith in the tenets of religion as a divine commandment.[6] Although Sforno goes on to criticise what he sees as Maimonides' inconsistent stance on the matter, since "he apparently abandoned this opinion at the beginning of his *Book of Knowledge*,"[7] he uses this citation to clarify his own rejection of the notion that mere belief could be a sufficient form of assent to religious truth. Unlike Maimonides' advocacy for a faith-based assent—according to Sforno's understanding of the passage in the *Guide*—the correct apprehension of these truths, he asserts, is built on intellectual cognisance and rational demonstration: "Such faith is not voluntary and cannot be classified as a commandment at all because a person certainly cannot have faith voluntarily, all the more so if he is actually commanded to believe. This—despite any declaration of faith on his part in an effort to conform to the desire of the masses."[8] Sforno, therefore, sees his own opinion on the requirement for the rational knowledge of religious tenets as even more stringent than that of Maimonides.

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[5] For a discussion on the relationship between faith and reason in medieval Jewish philosophy, see Tamar M. Rudavsky, "On Achieving Truth: Science, Philosophy, and Faith," in ead., *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Science, Rationalism, and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 56-76.

[6] Ibid: "...הן רבים עתה אמרו שמצוה עלינו להאמין כל שרשי תורתנו ומהם הרמבם ז"ל בספר המורה מאמ' ג' פרק כ"ח"

[7] Ibid: "...גם שנראה שברח מזה בתחילת ספרו ספר המדע"

[8] Ibid, 2v: "...אמונה כזאת בלתי בחיריית ובלתי נופלת תחת מצוה כלל כי אמנם לא יוכל האד' להאמין כרצונו בהחלט כל שכן כאשר יצווה גם כי אולי יפצה פיהו ברצון ההמון ויבטא בשפתיו."

Sforno's rejection of the idea of volitional faith is similar to the opinion of Ḥasdai Crescas, who argued that beliefs are not subject to choice. See Ḥasdai Crescas, *Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)*, trans. Roslyn Weiss (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018), book II, part V, chapter 5, 200-204. For a discussion about

It should be noted that Sforno does not actually quote these two sources verbatim in the *Or ammim* and, as will be discussed shortly, these references to Maimonides—indeed the entire line of reasoning—are altogether absent from the *Lumen gentium*. The reader of the Hebrew text must retrieve and analyse the relevant passages for himself. The statement to which Sforno refers reads as follows:

> One of the things of which you must be aware is that you should know that with regard to the true opinions that result in ultimate perfection, the Torah has communicated only their end and commanded us to believe in them in a general way—namely, the existence of God, His unity, His knowledge, His power, His will, and His eternity. All these are ultimate ends, which can be made clear in precise detail only after knowing many opinions... With regard to the other true opinions about general existence—opinions that constitute the many kinds of theoretical disciplines through which the opinions forming the ultimate end are validated—the Torah does not command one to consider them in detail as it does with regard to [the opinions forming the ultimate ends]. Rather, it does this in a general way by saying: "To love the Lord."... We have already explained in the *Mishneh Torah* [*Book of Knowledge*, *Fundamentals of the Torah*, chapter 2] that this love can only become possible through the apprehension of the whole of existence and through the discernment of His wisdom in it.[9]

The book from his legal compendium, the *Mishneh Torah*, that Maimonides cites in this passage of the *Guide* contains in its introduction an unambiguous formulation of his opinion on the scriptural duty to apprehend intellectually God's

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the reception of Crescas in the sixteenth century, see Mauro Zonta, "The Influence of Ḥasdai Crescas's Philosophy on some Aspects of Sixteenth-Century Philosophy and Science," in *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Jürgen Helm, and Annette Winkelmann (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 71-78.

[9] Maimonides, *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, Hebrew trans. Samuel Ibn Tibbon, ed. Yehudah Even-Shmuel (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1987), 3:28: "ממה שצריך שתתעורר עליו הוא שתדע שהדעות האמתיות אשר בהם יגיע השלמות האחרון אמנם נתנה התורה מהן תכליתם וצותה להאמין בהם בכלל, והוא מציאות הש"י, וייחודו, וידיעתו, ויכלתו, ורצונו, וקדמותו, אלו כלם תכליות אחרונות, לא יתבארו בפרט מוגבלות אלא אחר ידיעת דעות רבות... ואמנם שאר הדעות האמתיות בכלל זה המציאות, אשר הם החכמות העיוניות כלם כפי רוב מיניהם אשר בהם יתאמתו הדעות ההם אשר הם התכלית האחרון, לא צותה התורה עליהם בפירוש כמו שצוה על הראשונות אבל צוה עליהם בכלל והוא אמרו לאהבה את ה'... וכבר בארנו במשנה תורה שזאת האהבה לא תתכן אלא בהשגת המציאות כלו כפי מה שהוא ובחינת חכמתו בו."
Cf. Id., *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 2:512-513.

existence. He articulates the commandment as: "To know that there is a God."[10] In subsequently addressing the commandments to love God and to fear Him, Maimonides there asserts, as he reiterates in the passage of the *Guide* cited by Sforno, that they are contingent on the contemplation and rational apprehension of God and His creation.[11] In order to convey to his reader a sense of that apprehension, he devotes four chapters to surveying the metaphysical and physical parts of the universe, identifying the former branch of knowledge as the "Account of the Chariot" (מעשה מרכבה)[12] and the latter as the "Account of Creation" (מעשה בראשית)[13]—terms which he derives from a discussion in the Babylonian Talmud regarding the law of transmitting the secret teachings contained in the books of Ezekiel and Genesis, respectively.[14] In light of the full context of Maimonides' statement in the *Guide* as well as his articulation and lengthy exposition on the subject in the *Mishneh Torah*, Sforno's proposed contrast between his own viewpoint and that of Maimonides loses some of its clarity since both seem to affirm an individual's obligation to apprehend rationally the tenets of religion.

This is not the only instance in which Sforno cites Maimonides' opinion with a somewhat critical tone in his *Or ammim*. Later, in the Hebrew introduction, Sforno again cites the *Guide of the Perplexed*—also absent from the Latin rendering—in order to justify his reliance on the Aristotelian corpus throughout the treatise. This justification is indeed required, since Sforno invests a good portion of his introduction into crafting an account of two separate channels for the transmission of ancient wisdom, the latter of which—comprising gentile philosophers including Aristotle

[10] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Sefer hamada, hilkhot yesodei hatorah* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1993), 1:1: "א) לידע שיש שם אלוה... יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון והוא ממציא כל הנמצא וכל הנמצאים משמים וארץ ומה שביניהם לא נמצאו אלא מאמתת המצאו."
[11] Ibid., 2:2.
[12] Ibid., 2:11.
[13] Ibid., 4:10.
[14] See *Hagigah* 11b.

himself—are characterised as devoid of any knowledge about the creator's existence.[15] Nevertheless, he relies on that second channel of transmission throughout the treatise, defending his reliance on it by appealing to Aristotle's reputation. For this, he also directs his Hebrew reader's attention to Maimonides:

> The words of Aristotle and his disciples are exceedingly precious in the eyes of many respectable people, to such a degree that in their view one who disagrees with Aristotle and his aforementioned disciples is like one who challenges sense perception or decisive demonstration. The Rambam, of blessed memory, wrote in the *Guide* (book 2, chapter 22) as follows: "The rule is that everything that Aristotle has said about all that exists below the sphere of the moon to the center of the earth is undoubtedly true. The only one who will deviate from it is one who does not understand it, or one who has preconceived opinions that he wants to preserve and reject refutations thereof, or those opinions lead him to deny a thing that is obvious."[16] Thus far his words. Therefore, I have decided to adduce proof in order to resolve the doubt of each inquiry using certain principles of the aforementioned Aristotle—his words, demonstrations and assessments.[17]

Here, Sforno omits the full context of Maimonides' statement, leaving out the conclusion of his evaluation of Aristotle's philosophical system, which, as will be seen shortly, is very relevant to a treatise dealing with the kind of subject matter treated in the *Light of the Nations*. Maimonides continues:

> However, everything that Aristotle says with regard to the lunar sphere and what is above it is like conjecture and hypothesis, except for some things. All the more does this apply to what he says about the order of the intellects and some of the opinions regarding the divine that he believes, in which there are substantial incongruities and deficiencies that become clearly

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[15] *Or*, 3v; cf. *Lumen*, 5. Sforno's twofold account of *prisca sapientia* is treated later in the present chapter.

[16] Cf. *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2:319.

[17] *Or*, 4v-5r: "ובהיות כי יקרו מאד דברי ארסטו' ותלמידיו בעיני רבי' ונכבדי' עד היות אצלם מי שיחלוק על אריסטו' ותלמידיו הנזכ' כחולק על החוש או על מופת חותך באופן כי הרמבם ז"ל כתב בספר המורה מאמר ב' פרק כב וז"ל והכלל הוא שכל מה שאמר ארסטו' בכל הנמצא מגלגל הירח ולמטה הוא אמת ולא יטה ממנו אלא מי שלא יבינהו או שקדמו לו דעות ירצה להרחיק מהם כל סותר ולשמרם או שימשכוהו הדעות ההם להכחיש ענין נראה עד כאן לשונו על כן אמרתי להביא ראיה בהתר ספק כל חקירה מקצת יסודות ארסטו' הנז' ודבריו ומופתיו ומשפטי פיהו."
Cf. *Lumen*, 6-7, where any reference to Maimonides is omitted.

> apparent to all the nations who engage with those opinions; he has no proof concerning them.[18]

This continuation of the passage highlights the fact that even Maimonides, who was renowned for his confidence in Aristotle, considered his opinions on superlunary subjects to be uncertain and sometimes false. Sforno's omission of Maimonides' immediate and rather explicit statement regarding the limits of the Philosopher's knowledge is probably related to his dialectical purpose for citing this passage of the *Guide*—the explanation for his own use of Aristotle. The *Light of the Nations* (the contents of which are surveyed in the present chapter) deals primarily with metaphysical subjects, for which the full spectrum of Aristotle's writings are cited, including works like the *Metaphysics*, *De caelo*, and *De anima*, which treat topics pertaining to the superlunary spheres. Sforno's argument for relying on Aristotle for such discussions on the basis of his reputation among Jewish authorities like Maimonides would seem to lose its persuasiveness in light of this latter statement from the *Guide*, in which the conceptual boundaries of the Philosopher's authority are more precisely defined.

These two criticisms of Maimonides reveal Sforno's fundamental opinion on the intellectual status of scriptural discourse and its correct relation to the kind of rational investigation as exemplified by the writings of Aristotle and his disciples. In the first criticism, he expresses his disagreement with Maimonides' assessment of the biblical text as merely a general call for belief or faith in the tenets of religion. He sees Maimonides' statement regarding the necessity for faith as an endorsement of the position that the Bible does not contain everything required for a rationally

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[18] *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 2:22: "...אמנם כל מה שידבר בו אריסט"ו מגלגל הירח ולמעלה, הוא כדמות מחשבה וסברא, מלבד קצת דברים, כל שכן במה שיאמרהו בסדר השכלים וקצת אלו הדעות האלהיות אשר יאמינם, ובהם ההרחקות העצומות וההפסדים הנראים המבוארים בכל האומות והתפשטות הדעות, ואין מופת עליהם."
Cf. *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2:319-320.

demonstrated religious system. By contrast, Sforno asserts that the Bible, interpreted correctly, is a comprehensive and sufficient framework that does not require faith in order to provide its adherents with all the details necessary for a fully rational theology. Accordingly, the purpose of the treatise is to show how the Bible should be interpreted in order to achieve a proper understanding of its intellectual dimension.

In the second criticism, he turns his attention to the external source advocated by Maimonides—Peripatetic philosophy. He disputes the idea that a correct conception of the tenets of religion can only be achieved through careful reflection on non-scriptural works. However, because of the reputation of Aristotle and his disciples among eminent authorities like Maimonides, Sforno explains that he has adopted the concepts, statements and arguments of this foreign system throughout his inquiries in the *Light of the Nations* in order to show how the truths of Scripture can be translated into philosophical parlance. Consequently, this element of the treatise could be regarded as merely a kind of intellectual scaffolding, allowing the author to achieve the real purpose of the work: the conveyance of a rational apprehension of scriptural passages that relate to the fundamental truths concerning creation, its creator, and humankind.

One other work of Jewish philosophy is subjected to Sforno's criticism in this preliminary section of the treatise. This criticism ties together his two previous criticisms of Maimonides; accordingly, it is also absent from the text of the *Lumen gentium*. Here, his reproach is not directed at Maimonides himself, but rather at his famous disciple and translator of the *Guide* from Arabic into Hebrew, Samuel Ibn Tibbon. The text in question is Ibn Tibbon's *Lexicon of Philosophical Terms*, an introduction to the terminology of Arabic philosophy that Ibn Tibbon deemed

indispensible for an informed understanding of Maimonides' *Guide*. Upon outlining the over-all structure of his own treatise, Sforno writes:

> With these [inquiries and summaries] every reader will clearly recognize the error of those who think that sacred Scripture does not contain anything that causes the acquisition of knowledge, but that the believer must have faith without knowing, about which every philosopher laughs and mocks. The sage, Rabbi Samuel Ibn Tibbon [promotes this false opinion] in the *Lexicon of Philosophical Terms*, which he produced after he translated the *Guide of the Perplexed*, under the entry of the letter *ḥet*, and this is what he says: "The master of blessed memory [i.e., Maimonides] said that the wisdom of nature is what our rabbis of blessed memory called the "Account of Creation" (מעשה בראשית). He then went on to say: "The fundamental books for this discipline are the extant books of Aristotle." He continued: "I myself am only able to see chapter headings in the discussion of Genesis, a tiny fragment of what is contained in these books [by Aristotle]—not even a hundredth or two hundredth part." Thus far his words.[19]

As with his criticisms of Maimonides, Sforno continues to focus his attention on what he perceives to be a dismissive evaluation of the content of Scripture. In this instance, Samuel Ibn Tibbon's declaration replicates Sforno's second criticism of Maimonides, since he actually measures the content of the scriptural "Account of Creation" (מעשה בראשית) against the knowledge imparted by Aristotle in his works on the subject. This third criticism, therefore, brings into sharp relief Sforno's dissatisfaction with a certain approach to the relation between Scripture and philosophy, underscoring the apologetic tone of his project. Despite his advocacy for the rational demonstration of the tenets of religion, he indicates that the proper method of that demonstration does not accord with the one endorsed by such figures

[19] *Or*, 5v: "ובאלה יתבאר אצל כל מעיין טעות החושבי' שאין בכתבי הקדש דבר מקנה ידיעה אבל דברים יאמינם המאמין לא שידעם אשר על זה כל פילוסוף ישחק וכל חולק ילעג למו עד שהחכם ר' שמואל אבן טבון בבאור המלות שעשה אחר שהעתיק ספר מורה הנבוכים כתב באות החית וזה לשונו חכמת הטבע אמר הרב ז"ל שהוא מה שקראוהו רבותינו ז"ל מעשה בראשית והוסיף ואמר זה לשונו ואמהות ספרי החכמה הזאת הם הספרים הנמצאים לארסטו' בה והוסיף ואמ' ואני איני רואה בפרש' בראשי' כי אם ראשי פרקי' מעט מזער ממה שבאלו הספרים אינו חלק ממאה ולא חלק ממאתים עד כ"ל."
Cf. Samuel Ibn Tibbon, *Perush ha-milot ha-zarot asher bemaamar ha-rav z"tzl*, in Maimonides, *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, ed., Yehudah Even-Shmuel (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1987), 1-92, 50-51.

as Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon. Whereas their method, as Sforno would have it, places Aristotelian philosophy on a higher level than Scripture, he champions Hebrew Scripture, arguing for its intellectual superiority over traditions predicated on human inquiry. His opinion about the Bible in relation to Aristotle's writings would thus represent the antithesis of his assessment of the opinions of Maimonides and Ibn Tibbon. For Sforno, Scripture not only outranks Aristotle in terms of intellectual correctness but also in terms of the quantity of its philosophical content.

1.3 PHILOSOPHY AND SCRIPTURE

As mentioned, Sforno's Latin text of the *Light of the Nations* does not contain these citations from the works of Maimonides or Samuel Ibn Tibbon, nor does it make reference—critical or otherwise—to any medieval Jewish authorities in its dedicatory epistle or introduction. Altogether, Sforno's message is packaged differently for his Latin reader. These instances illustrate a feature that distinguishes the Latin from the Hebrew: there is not, unsurprisingly, any derogatory portrayal of Jewish scholarship. Instead, Sforno praises the original Hebrew version of Scripture in contrast to many of its Latin translations, which he classifies as deficient, thereby emphasising the importance of his treatise since it accesses the Bible through the original Hebrew text.[20] Unlike the above criticisms, which occur in the *Or ammim* but are omitted in the *Lumen gentium*, this statement regarding the superiority of Hebrew Scripture is

[20] *Lumen*, 7: "Septimo, ut sacrarum loca ostendamus, ubi huiusmodi concluse sententiae demonstrative docentur phylosophorumque opiniones nonnullae, cum suis rationibus harumque redargutiones divinitus inferuntur, saepe etiam secundum Latinam translationem, quae scilicet in plurimis procul dubio deficit. Quare omnia in originali Hebreorum testu rectius apertiusque fulgere patet."

directed exclusively at the Latin reader and is absent from the Hebrew text[21]—a point which will be discussed more fully in the fifth chapter of this study.[22]

As the negative appraisals of Jewish scholarship disappear from the *Light of the Nations* upon its transition from Hebrew into Latin, so does one of its foundational elements. In the *Lumen gentium*, Sforno no longer frames his project in terms of a dichotomy between faith and rational assent even though this element continues to play a role in the development of the text in terms of its underlying structure. In its place, Sforno turns the attention of his Latin reader entirely to the second major problem: the disparities that exist between the two authoritative sources of knowledge in both Jewish and Christian scholarship: the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy, which he identifies primarily as the Aristotelian corpus. Since the premises and conclusions involved in these two systems of knowledge are incongruent, he argues, it is necessary to make sense of and respond to them. Such is the task of the treatise—so he informs the Latin reader.[23]

In fact, he makes that assertion immediately in the form of a prominent declaration on the title page of the *Lumen gentium*—a feature that is absent from the Hebrew text:

> A recently published little work [whose purpose is] to disprove demonstratively some of the opinions of the Peripatetic philosophers, especially regarding creation, the origination of the universe, divine providence over human beings, and the immortality of human souls, which they shamefully reject, utterly

[21] *Or*, 5v: "שביעית נגיד בכל חקירה מקומות כתבי קדש מורים במופת הדעת האמתי בחקירה ההיא וקצתם מגידים דעות החולקים וטענותם וסתירתם."

[22] See 5.4 "Translating Creation."

[23] Like Averroes, the main philosophical authority relied on in the *Light of the Nations* (as demonstrated in the following chapter), Sforno implicitly advocates the idea that there can be only one truth and that truth cannot contradict truth. This is in contrast to certain medieval "Averroists," who attributed to Averroes a notion of *duplex veritas* ("double truth"), maintaining that a person could simultaneously respect the truth of contradictory opinions, each in its own separate domain: philosophical and religious. On Averroes' position, see Richard Taylor, "'Truth does not contradict truth': Averroes and the Unity of Truth," *Topoi* 19.1 (2000): 3-16. On the various medieval theories of *duplex veritas*, see Bartosz Brożek, *The Double Truth Controversy: An Analytical Essay* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2010).

> ridiculing religions. Therefore, I rightly call it the *Light of the Nations*.[24]

This lucid and succinct statement of purpose promises the reader a forceful polemic against certain conclusions reached by Aristotelian philosophy. Instead of highlighting the rational character of a Scripture-based religion, the author targets the Peripatetic philosophers with regard to three subjects: creation, providence, and immortality.

An aggressive tone is maintained throughout the dedicatory epistle of the *Lumen gentium*, where Sforno moves into the second phase of his attack, exploding the logical development of these heretical opinions as if from the perspective of the "ancient and modern Aristotelians" themselves.[25] Unlike the epistle of the *Or ammim*, which does not offer a single mention of Aristotle or Greek philosophy—for this, the Hebrew reader must wait for the introduction—the Latin epistle concentrates almost exclusively on the chain of reasoning that leads the Peripatetic philosophers to their heretical worldview. The three subjects enumerated on the title page thus become a seamless logical progression of five principal falsehoods of philosophy. The first of these, which Sforno regards as the point of departure for the remaining four, is the contention that the universe is eternal and uncaused. This leads to the second proposition, that all things contained in the universe are involuntarily and coeternally emanated from the universe itself. Hence, the third claim: there is no divine management of existence, which could result in any form of recompense for human

[24] *Lumen*, title page: "Opusculum nuper editum contra nonnullas Peripateticorum opiniones demonstrative docens, praesertim circa creationem, et universi novitatem, et divinam de mortalibus curam, et humanarum animarum immortalitatem, quas ipsi turpiter respuunt religiones penitus irridentes. Quare illud merito Lumen gentium appello."

[25] This is how I translate Sforno's depiction of the Peripatetic philosophers in his dedicatory epistle. A more literal rendering would be: "...the ancient and modern Aristotle, that is to say, the opinions that follow [his], having been guided by the explanations of that same [man]..." For the Latin text, see subsequent note.

beings during their lifetime. Another corollary of the second proposition, with regard to the co-eternity of all substances, is the fourth assertion that the souls of human beings must be perishable, otherwise there would be an infinite number of them existing simultaneously. The fifth and final conclusion inevitably follows: upon the death of the body, nothing deserved or merited occurs, and therefore all good deeds are utterly meaningless and even absurd.[26]

It is only in the concluding paragraph of the Latin epistle that Sforno offers a glimmer of any hopeful alternative to the bleak existence postulated by Peripatetic philosophy. There, he turns to the Bible, saying: "Since I have found the opposite of such opinions and explanations as these demonstratively proven in God's holy Scripture, I have published this little book..."[27] For the Latin reader, then, this single sentence must suffice for what amounts to a much fuller exposition in the Hebrew epistle, where Sforno invests some effort into proving that Scripture possesses a rational dimension using Scripture itself as evidence for his claim. In the conclusion to the Latin epistle, Sforno does not linger; he pushes forward with an equally terse

[26] *Lumen*, 3: "Antiqui quidem sacra maiestas modernique Aristotelis, scilicet opiniones sequentes eiusdem rationibus ducti, universum ab aeterno et ingenitum esse aperte ferunt. Quare licet dicant illud nonnullam habere causam omnium primam, reliqua tamen ab ipsa causa seriatim emanantia, non voluntarie sed naturaliter, tantum ab eadem emanare sequitur. Et per consequens, licet dicant ipsam primam causam esse substantiarum primam, cuius presentia universi partes ordo et colligatio conservantur cum tamen horum esse ab ipsa prima non scilicet voluntarie fiat. Immo, praeter eiusdem intentum, cum omnia sint sibi coaeterna semper. Ergo, et eodem modo, ab eadem emanare necesse est. Quare nec minimam universi partem ad libitum mutare procul dubio posset, et sic falso diceretur ipsam primam substantiam quam dicunt esse Deum de mortalibus operibus habere curam, qua propter natura merita vel demerita voluntarie retribuat illud. Enim suo naturali processui ab eadem substantia necessario emananti penitus repugnaret. Cumque ad huiusmodi philosophorum opinionem, quam scilicet dicunt universum fuisse ab aeterno omnino, sequatur ut similiter ab aeterno fuisset homo, et per consequens, infiniti fuerunt homines. Quare si individuae hominum animae ad horum numerum numerabiles essent quid immortale, sequeretur ut darentur substantiae numero infinite simul tempore existentes, quod est falsum et penitus impossibile oportuit eos. Necessario dicere huiusmodi animas esse quid mortale; et sic sequitur secundum eos ut post hominis mortem nihil meriti vel demeriti dari contingat. Quare tota religio piorumque operum cura quid penitus vanum et quodammodo ridiculum esse videretur."

[27] Ibid.: "Cumque horum huiusmodi opinionum harumque rationum oppositum in sacris Dei scripturis, demonstrative probatum esse invenirem, hoc edidi opusculum..."

synopsis of the method by which he intends to accomplish the purpose outlined on the title page:

> ...I published this little book, particularly at the request of Julius de Rovere,[28] in which such opinions and explanations of the philosophers are fully shown with citations indicating where they are more fully discussed in their various books. They are demonstratively refuted by means of their own established foundations, and the opposite is clearly proven to be true in Holy Scripture.[29]

The *Lumen gentium*'s formulation of the treatise's aims thus begins to align with that expressed in the *Or ammim*. However, the Latin reader must wait for a sense of the author's evaluation of the true import of Scripture, since, as mentioned, he has received neither a preliminary argument for rational apprehension of religious tenets nor any exposition on the intellectual aspect of scriptural discourse. On the other hand, the Latin reader has obtained a clear appreciation of the project's polemical nature from the very outset since he has been thrust directly into the fray of Peripatetic philosophy; this is delayed for the Hebrew reader. Although Sforno does not initially draw attention to the scriptural element of his project in the *Lumen gentium*, it nevertheless acts as the organizing principle of the work. As the essential structure of the treatise begins to take shape, this element inevitably becomes more prominent.[30] In fact, although the title pages, epistles, and introductions of the Hebrew and Latin texts are quite different from one another, the structure and content of the bodies of the works are much more similar than what these introductory sections might suggest.

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[28] For a possible identification of Julius de Rovere, see the introduction, p. 3.

[29] *Lumen*, 3: "...hoc edidi opusculum, praesertim instante illustrissimo Domino Julio de Rovero, in quo scilicet huiusmodi phylosophorum opiniones harumque rationes diffuse ostenduntur cum citatione locorum, ubi talia in suis diversis libris diffusius disputantur. Quas tamen iactis eorum fundamentis demonstrative redarguuntur, et in sacris scripturis oppositum probari aperte docetur."

[30] This is especially so in the final section of the treatise (entitled כלל העולה in the *Or ammim* and *summarium* in the *Lumen gentium*), in which Sforno summarizes the positions of the philosophers and compares them to those of Scripture. See *Or*, 58r-63v; cf. *Lumen*, 67r-71v.

1.4 *PRISCA SAPIENTIA*

In both texts of the *Light of the Nations*, considerable attention is given to describing an ancient transmission of wisdom, one of whose strands is comprised of biblical figures and the other of gentile philosophers.[31] Sforno calls these mediators חכמי הדורות in the *Or ammim*, which he renders *priscorum sapientes* in the *Lumen gentium*. Such a notion of an enduring tradition of ancient knowledge, a *prisca theologia* or *prisca sapienta*, was a well-developed topos among Italian scholars in the sixteenth century. Charles Schmitt traced the related term, *philosophia perennis*, to the title of a treatise produced in 1540 by Sforno's contemporary, Agostino Steuco, noting that his account of an enduring tradition of philosophy and religion drew upon earlier sources such as the works of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.[32] These scholars formulated various accounts of the transmission of ancient religious truths through texts written by theologians of antiquity including Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, and Orpheus.[33] The pagan traditions, in turn, were claimed to derive from the Judeo-Christian forefathers Moses, Noah, and Enoch, spoken of in Hebrew Scripture.[34] Such accounts were often supplemented with later philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, depending on the particular leaning of the author.[35]

Not surprisingly, Sforno begins his account with biblical figures derived from the book of Genesis, attributing to them the first intellectual investigations into the

[31] Sforno's account of *prisca sapientia* takes up over a quarter of the Hebrew introduction and over a third of the Latin introduction. This would seem to demonstrate the author's high regard for this account in preparing the reader for the upcoming inquiries.
[32] Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27.4 (1966): 505-532.
[33] James Hankins and Ada Palmer, *The Recovery of Ancient Philosophy in the Renaissance: A Brief Guide* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 2008), 68-71.
[34] Daniel P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 1.
[35] Martin Mulsow, "Ambiguities of the *Prisca Sapientia* in Late Renaissance Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65.1 (2004): 1-13, especially 1-2.

causes of existence. What is surprising, however, is that he explains their motivation by an appeal to Aristotle's famous opening line in the *Metaphysics*: "All men have a natural desire to know."[36] He offers a rough paraphrase of Aristotle's carefully reasoned investigation into what such knowledge ought to comprise. However, whereas Aristotle advocates an approach in which four different explanatory modes or kinds of causality are addressed, Sforno dispenses with the initial two—the formal and material causes—preferring to engage solely with Aristotle's third and fourth causal principles, namely, the efficient and final causes. In short order, he identifies these two causes of existence in general as God and His ultimate purpose for creating the world, which he subsequently defines as a human being's moral and intellectual emulation of the creator.[37]

Bearing in mind this identification of humankind's final cause, only four biblical figures get included in Sforno's list: the antediluvian Enoch and Noah, and the postdiluvian Eber and Abraham. For each of these four figures, Sforno cites verses from Genesis in order to demonstrate their attainment of the final cause intended by the world's efficient cause, namely, an intellectual apprehension of the "origin of all beings" (ראשית לכל הנמצאות; *principium omnium primum*).[38] According to his exegesis,

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[36] *Or*, 3r: "ובכן אקדים ואומר כי אמנם מודעת זאת בנסיון ומדברי הפילוסוף בהצעתו בספר מה שאחר היות כל אדם בטבעו מתאוה לדעת..."
Lumen, 4: *Lumen*, 4: "Sensu enim puto, et Phylosophi auctoritate procul dubio patet, quod omnes homines natura scire desiderant." Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1, 980[a]22, in Id., ed. Jonathan Barnes, *Complete works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford translation*, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[37] In the *Or ammim*, Sforno distinguishes between the conclusion reached by the biblical figures about the First Cause and the conclusion reached by Aristotle and Averroes, indicating that whereas the latter saw God as merely the formal and final cause of creation, the former group correctly understood that God is a voluntary efficient cause who acts intentionally in order to achieve a final cause. In the Hebrew text he cites Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (X.7) in order to make this point. In the *Lumen gentium*, he also highlights this distinction between the conclusions reached by these two schools of thought, but instead of identifying Aristotle or Averroes by name, he refers only generally to "some of the philosophers" (*prout phylosophorum nonnulli putarunt*), omitting the citation. See *Or*, 3r-v; cf. *Lumen*, 4-5. For a treatment of Sforno's identification of the final cause of creation as the human being's moral and intellectual emulation of God, see the fourth chapter of this study (4.5 "After the Likeness of God" and 4.6 "Perfection through Moral Virtue").

[38] *Or*, 3r; cf. *Lumen*, 4.

each instance of such attainment is expressed by the scriptural formulation "walking with God." He also links this phrase to the directive of Genesis 1:26: "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness,"[39] thereby weaving the biblical text into both his account of *prisca sapienta* and his theory regarding human immortality. This verse of Genesis 1:26 represents a conceptual base to which Sforno returns time and again in order to remind his reader of the ultimate perfection of existence, the attainment of which is aided by his treatise.

Of the four sages, Sforno focuses especially on Abraham, whose opinions about these matters he traces to Eber—a point that he highlights for both his Hebrew and Latin reader with an etymological derivation: "Abraham was wiser than [*lit.* "the father in wisdom of"] all the Chaldeans; he studied directly from Eber (עבר) and held his opinions. Therefore he is called "Hebrew" (עברי; *Hebraeus*), which denotes "of *Eber*," as it is said (Genesis 14:13): *And he told Abram, the Hebrew* [*i.e., the disciple of Eber*]."[40] Sforno's associating Abraham with the Chaldeans is noteworthy because it provides him a bridge for connecting his Scripture-based account of *prisca sapientia* to Aristotle's account.[41] He does this with a further reference to the *Metaphysics*, in which, he claims, Aristotle discusses the investigations of the Chaldean sages, calling them "forefathers" (אבות; *patres*).[42]

Upon turning to the indicated text of the *Metaphysics*, it is clear that Aristotle does indeed treat the subject of an ancient transmission of knowledge: "However, all

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[39] *Or*, 3r-v; cf. *Lumen*, 4-5.

[40] *Or*, 3r: "...ואברהם אב בחכמה מכל הכשדים אשר למד מפי עבר והחזיק בדעותיו ולכן נקרא עברי כמו שנאמר (בראשית י"ד) ויגד לאברם העברי."
Lumen, 4: "Et Abraham Chaldaeorum sapientissimus eiusdem, Heberis doctrinam sequens. Quare Hebraeus dicebatur, prout in libro Genesis, capite 14."

[41] Such an association is not made in the verse cited by Sforno here (Genesis 14:3). However, earlier in the biblical narrative, it is stated that Abram initially resided with his father Terah and his wife Sarai in their native land of *Ur Kasdim*. See Genesis 11:28-31.

[42] *Or*, 3v: "וגם כי ארכו ימי חכמי הכשדים הנקראים אבות אצל הפילוסוף בספר מה שאחר מאמר י"ב פרק נ"א..."
Lumen, 5: "Cumque Chaldaeorum cognitio, quos Phylosophus, Metaphysicorum xii t.c. 51, patres appellat..."

of what has preceded is the opinion of the forefathers (*sententia patrum*), to the extent that it has been revealed to us..."[43] However, it is also evident from this text that although Aristotle attributes certain opinions to these *patres*, he makes no mention of any such Chaldeans.[44] Where does Sforno derive the identification of *patres* with the Chaldean sages? It is found in Averroes' interpretation of this passage in his Long Commentary: "Since this question is the noblest of all questions concerning God, and consists in knowing what is His object of intellection, which is what every man desires by nature [to know], and since the Chaldeans had already investigated this, he called it "the opinion of the forefathers" (*sententiam patrum*)..."[45]

Sforno subsequently uses this identification of the Chaldean sages with Aristotle's "forefathers" in order to create the dichotomy needed for the main purpose of his treatise as a whole. First, he asserts that the ancient wisdom of these forefathers was lost: "Indeed, their wisdom vanished, was lost, and corrupted over time in the way that corruption occurs to other generable and corruptible things, as the aforementioned Philosopher testified (*Metaphysics* book 12, chapter 50)."[46] He attributes the disappearance of this knowledge to the opinions of the worshippers of the heavenly host (צבא השמים), aptly called "the cult of the *Sabians*" (כת אנשי הצב"א), which he renders into Latin as *opiniones caelicolarum et zabiorum*—an attribution

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[43] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII.51, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, vol. VIII, 334v: "[*textus*:] Sententia autem patrum praecedens omnia est haec, et quantum declaratum est nobis ex illa..." Cf. Averroes, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Lām*, trans. Charles Genequand (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 190; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 8, 1074b13, in ed. J. Barnes, *Complete works of Aristotle*, vol. 2.

[44] Michael Scot translates Aristotle's term from the Arabic as "*sententia patrum*," whereas William of Moerbeke renders it from the Greek "*priorum opinio*." This is evidence that Sforno used Scot's translation; I examine this issue more fully in the following chapter of this study.

[45] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII.51, 335r: "[*commentum*:] Quia ista quaestio est nobilissima omnium, quae sunt de Deo, scilicet scire quid intelligit, et est desyderata ab omnibus naturaliter, et quia Chaldaei valde sunt perscrutati de ea, vocavit eam sententiam patrum..." Cf. Id, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, 191.

[46] *Or*, 3v: "אמנם נסרחה חכמתם אבדה ונפסדה במשך הזמן על דרך ההיפסד הקורה לשאר ההווים ונפסדים כמו שהעיד הפילוסוף הנזכר במאמ' הנזכר פרק נ' [בספר מה שאחר מאמר יב']..."

Lumen, 5: "...mortalium more per plura perissent saecula, prout idem Phylosophus, ibidem t.c. 50, refert quod scilicet et scientiis contingit, quoquomodo corruptio."

that is not found in the cited discussion of Aristotle but does occur in the explications of his Commentator.[47] Next, he maintains that the progeny of the final figure from this line of wisdom, Abraham, retained possession of it: "For, indeed, the knowledge of the Creator's existence, exalted be He, remained among them, [knowledge] which was concealed from the eyes of both recent and ancient gentile sages, who say that He does not exist."[48] Thus, the reader is left with a conception of two ancient traditions, only one of which has preserved any knowledge of the world's divine cause. Sforno's account of the preservation of metaphysical truth by the Jews and the loss of that truth by the gentiles is somewhat different from Maimonides' opinion as expressed in the *Guide*—that although philosophical truth was once known among the ancient rabbis, it was lost because of time, persecution, and the legal prohibition against revealing it to the masses.[49]

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[47] Averroes mentions this ancient Pagan group earlier in the same chapter in connection with an error their scholars made regarding eternal motion. See Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII.41, 325r: "Si autem aliquod aeternum est in sua substantia, existimatum erit, quod necesse est potentiam eius manentem esse aeternae motionis. Et in hoc loco erraverunt Zabii et sapientes eorum." Cf. *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, 166. As Sarah Stroumsa observes, this group first appears in Arabic, Islamic literature. Its members are sometimes described as monotheists who worship celestial bodies. She notes that in Maimonides' *Guide*, the term "Sabians" does not designate a specific people but rather a broad phenomenon. See Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 84-105. Sforno mentions the Sabians again in his seventh *quaestio*, where he discusses God's incorporeality. On this, see the fifth chapter of the present study, 5.3 "Anthropomorphism."

[48] *Or*, 3v: "...כי אמנם נשארה אצלם ידיעת מציאות הבורא יתעלה אשר נעלם מעיני חכמי הגוים חדשי' גם ישני' ויאמרו לא הוא."

Lumen, 5: "Abrahae successores tantum remansisse videtur, qui scilicet praefatam Heberis doctrinam et opiniones sequentes, merito Hebraeorum nomine appellati sunt."

[49] See *Guide of the Perplexed*, I.71, 175-176; II.11, 276. Sforno's position on the Jewish and Greek traditions of wisdom may be compared to that of the twelfth-century Jewish scholar, Judah Halevi. In the *Kuzari*, he presents a transmission of ancient philosophical wisdom, comprising Adam, Noah, the Chaldeans, the Persians, and the Greeks. However, the two accounts are not identical and there is no evidence to suggest that Sforno relied on that text. See Yehudah HaLevi, *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, trans. N. Daniel Korobkin (Northvale, N.J.: J. Aronson, 1998), I.63-64, 22-23. For a discussion on the reception of the *Kuzari* in Renaissance Italy, see Adam Shear, *The Book of the Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 95-133. See especially 119-120, where he cites the *Or ammim* as an example of a sixteenth-century text that contains no explicit references to the *Kuzari*. For a general treatment of the myth of the Jewish origins of knowledge in the Renaissance, see Abraham Melamed, *The Myth of the Jewish Origins of Science and Philosophy* [Hebrew], (Haifa: Hotsa'at ha-sefarim shel Universiṭat Ḥaifa, 2010), 223-298.

Sforno's correlation of his own assertion about the vanishing or corruption of this *prisca sapientia* with Aristotle's opinion as derived from the *Metaphysics* is somewhat problematic. Aristotle states:

> There are things that have been received from very ancient men and have remained for those who came after them, as celebrated in myth, that these are gods and that God encompasses all things of nature... But if one were to abstract from those sayings, and only to accept the first, i.e. that [these very ancient men] regarded the first substances as gods, then it will be thought that this saying is divine and proper, since every statement made in the arts or philosophy has probably already been said many times, as far as possible and yet they perish, whereas these opinions of theirs have survived to some extent until now.[50]

Sforno seems to have re-interpreted Aristotle. First, in contrast to Aristotle's point about the preservation of this particular tradition, Sforno highlights its disappearance from among the Italian and Greek philosophers who represent the second channel of his *prisca sapientia*, the culmination of which, he subsequently contends, is Aristotle himself—the very authority he is now citing. The fact that Aristotle describes this tradition would seem to contradict Sforno's assertion that the tradition had been lost to him and his forebears. Secondly, the tradition being discussed by Aristotle contains the assertion that the ancient philosophers regarded the first substances as gods, whereas Sforno views that tradition through a monotheistic lens, insisting that the ancients had achieved knowledge of the existence of the one God. This example demonstrates Sforno's tendency to impose new meaning on his cited sources,

[50] Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII.50, 333v: [*textus*:] "Et accepta sunt ab antiquissimis valde aliqua, quae sunt in posterioribus, sicut fabulosa, quod ista sunt Dii, et quod Deus continet omnia naturalia... si igitur aliquis distinxerit ex istis, et acceperit primum tantum, opinabantur quod primae substantiae sunt Dii, et secundum quod oportet, cum iam dictum sit multoties in eo quod possibile est cuilibet artificio et philosophiae, et etiam corrumpuntur, et istae sententiae eorum remanent usque modo, quasi reliquiae." Cf. *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, 188; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 8, 1074b1-1074b14, in ed. J. Barnes, *Complete works of Aristotle*, vol. 2.

construing them in such a way that they are easily incorporated into his own discourse regardless of their original context.[51]

The second strand of his account of the transmission of wisdom consists of two stages: The first includes the ancient philosophers who resided in Italy; and the second, the later Greek philosophers. He elaborates on the Italian figures:

> Surely, these were the men of renown, as the Philosopher testified in his *Metaphysics* (book 1,[52] chapter 5), who resided initially in the kingdom of Italy. They included Pythagoras and his disciples, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and subsequently the cult of Herculeans, who claimed that all knowledge is impossible, and afterwards, Socrates about whom the Philosopher said that his only purpose was to teach ethical and political principles that a person ought to perform and by which he ought to live.[53]

In the Hebrew text of the treatise, Sforno attributes his list exclusively to the Philosopher himself. However, as with his earlier identification of the forefathers with the Chaldeans, here too, he derives the chief elements of his account not from Aristotle's own statements, but from Averroes' elaboration in his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*.[54] His use of this Arabic-to-Latin text is further demonstrated by his references to Democritus and the Herculeans, which represent a corruption of Aristotle's Cratylus and Heraclitus.[55] As Dag Nikolaus Hasse observed, the Spanish

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[51] Sforno's method of reading his sources will be examined more carefully in chapter 3.

[52] In the *Or ammim*, the citation is incorrectly recorded as book 2, chapter 5, but is correctly cited in the *Lumen gentium* as book 1, chapter 5.

[53] *Or*, 3v: "...הלֹא הם אנשי השם כפי אשר העיד הפילוסוף בספר מה שאחר מאמר ב' פרק ה' היושבים ראשונה במלכות איטאליא מהם פיטאגורס ותלמידיו ואנכסאגורס ואימפידוקליס ודימוקריטוס ואחריהם כת האירקוליאי אשר אמרו היות כל ידיעה נמנעת ואחריהם סוקראטיס אשר לפי דברי הפילוסוף שם לא עשה מאמר זולתי להורות מדות והנהגות אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם."

Lumen, 5: "Quorum primi, ut Phylosophus Methaphysicorum primi, t.c. 2, narrare videtur fuerunt Itali, de quorum numero, ut Commentator ibidem ait, fuerunt Anaxagoras, Empedocles et Democritus; deinde Herculei, qui tandem negarunt ut contingat aliquid sciri; deinde Socrates, qui scilicet, ut Phylosophus ait, moralia tantum edidisse videtur."

[54] See Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, I.5, 7r-v; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.6, 987a29-987b2.

[55] Thus, for example, Sforno identifies the latter as "Herculeans" (האירקוליאי; *herculei*), which conforms to Michael Scot's rendering from the Arabic as *opinio Herculeorum*; it does not match William of Moerbeke's *Heracliti opinionibus*. See Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, I.5, 7r. W. D. Ross translates the phrase from the Greek as "the Heraclitean doctrines." See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 6,

humanist Juan Luis Vives criticizes Averroes for this particular mistake in his *De causis corruptarum artium*, published in 1531.[56] Unlike Vives however, Sforno does not notice Averroes' faulty version. For his Latin but not his Hebrew reader Sforno explicitly identifies Averroes as his source, prefacing his list with the phrase "as the Commentator states there" (*ut Commentator ibidem ait*).[57]

In Sforno's account of the latter part of the gentile transmission of wisdom, he switches his focus to the Greeks; like Averroes, he considers only two philosophers worthy of mention: Plato and Aristotle.[58] Although, as will be seen later in this study,[59] Plato's ideas about psychogony and creation are important to Sforno's philosophical demonstrations on the immortality of the intellective soul, here he glosses over Aristotle's teacher, whom he briefly characterizes as a follower of Pythagoras and the other Italian sages.[60] Again, Sforno credits this statement to Averroes only in the Latin text; the attribution is absent from the corresponding passage of the Hebrew.[61]

In both texts of the treatise, Sforno concludes his account of the gentile line of *priscorum sapientes* with Aristotle:

987a31-34. Ephraim Finkel renders Sforno's "Herculeans" as *Heraklit*, but indicates his puzzlement regarding the matter. See Ephraim Finkel, *R. Obadja Sforno als Exeget* (Breslau: Druck von T. Schatzky, 1896), 16.

[56] See Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 229-241.

[57] *Or*, 3v; cf. *Lumen*, 5.

[58] Ibid.; cf. Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, I.5, 7r-v.

[59] See chapter three herein (3.4 "Emanation from the Gods," 3.5 "Generated or Created," 3.6 "Many or One.").

[60] On this point too, Vives criticizes Averroes' use of a corrupt translation of Aristotle. He observes that the Greek text reads "beyond" the philosophy of the Italians, rather than "in accord with" the belief of the Italians. See Hasse, *Success and Suppression*, 231-234.

[61] *Or*, 3v-4r: "ולקץ ימים בפרוח ראשי עם ויציצו מערי יון גדולים חקרי לב בתוכם אפלטון אשר נמשך אחר דעות פי"טאגוראס ויתר חכמי אי"טליאה ואזן וחקר תקן דעותיו על ספר מספר ומורה מה שרש דבר נמצא בו."

Lumen, 5: "Cumque post plura secula, nonnulli apud Graecos floruissent scrutantes, de quorum numero fuit Plato, Socratis discipulus, prout habetur ab Aven Roy in commento libri De caelo tertii, capite lxi, Pythagorae et aliorum Italorum considerationibus ductus, horumque opiniones in quibusdam sequens, prout Phylosophus in praeallegato loco testatur. Scrutandorum nonnulla diligenter contemplasse librumque circa illa edidisse videtur."

> Finally, a man rose up—Aristotle the son of Nicomachus the Greek, famous throughout all nations of the earth. He marshaled his words more correctly than any of his predecessors, as befitting someone who is last in line. He had a manner of responding more aptly and correctly than any of those who preceded him, as Aristotle himself elucidated in the book *De caelo et mundo* (book 4, chapter 11). He destroyed and shattered the foundations of his predecessors' statements that he found to be far from the truth, bringing proofs against them on the basis of sense perception and logical demonstration, as Ibn Rushd testified in his commentary to the book *Meteorologica* (book 3, chapter 2).[62]

This "final man" (אדם אחרון מכלם; *his tempore posterior*) represents for Sforno the ultimate link in a chain, both in terms of his account of the transmission of ancient wisdom and in terms of his argument for producing the *Light of the Nations*. Having established the exceptional acumen and therefore apparently warranted authority of Aristotle, Sforno proceeds to justify his project in terms of the Philosopher's denial of certain tenets of religion. How he articulates that denial, however, speaks to the complexity of his attitude toward Peripatetic philosophy: "The aforementioned Aristotle—according to how his commentators understand him and according to what is derived from his opinions—denies many important things, the absence of even one of which will uproot the Torah in its entirety..."[63]

Upon delineating some of these heretical opinions, he again points his finger primarily at Aristotle's interpreters rather than at the Philosopher himself: "As his

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[62] *Or*, 4r: "ובקום עלימו אדם אחרון מכלם הוא אריסטוטיליס בן ניקומאקו היוני המפורסם לשם ולתהלה בכל עמי הארץ. וכלכל דבריו במשפט יותר מכל הקודמים כראוי לכל אחרון כי לו יאות להשיב אמרים נכוחים וישרי' יותר מן הקודמים בזמן כמו שביאר אריסטוטיליס הנזכר בספר השמים והעולם מאמ' רביעי פרק י"א. אבד ושבר מוסדי דברי הקדמונים אשר מצא רחוקים מן האמת בהביאו ראיות על הפכם מן החוש והמופת כאשר העיד אבן רשד בביאור ספר אותות השמים מאמר ג' פרק ב'..."

Lumen, 5-6: "Cum autem Aristoteles Stagirita, Nichomachi filius, natione Graecus, his tempore posterior, cuius sermo prioribus rectior et acutior non immerito fuit, prout idem in libro De caelo, 4 t.c. xi, posteriorem decere infert quaedam antiquorum dicta invenisset sensu et ratione penitus reprobanda. Quare Aven R. in commento libri Metheorologicorum tertii, t.c. 2, ait..."

[63] *Or*, 4r: "אמנם בהיות שאריסטוטל' הנז' לפי מה שהבינו ממנו מפרשיו ולפי הנמשך מדעותיו מכחיש דברי' רבים ונכבדים אשר בהעדר אחד מהם תעקר התורה בכללה..."

Lumen, 6: "Cum autem idem Aristoteles licet interdum caute, secundum tamen illud quod sui expositiones ex suis intelligunt verbis, et ad eiusdem opiniones sequi videtur, nonnulla penitus neget, quorum uno vere destructo religionum radices et ius commune nonnullum turpiter extirperentur."

opinions are understood by many of his students, he also denies the existence of the individual human intellective soul, and certainly its immortality."[64] This criticism directed at the Peripatetic commentators could be taken as an indication that Sforno considers these later interpreters—rather than the Philosopher himself—to be the main target of his treatise. On the other hand, as has been already demonstrated, he tends to conflate Aristotle's original views with those of Averroes, suggesting that he is comfortable with evaluating Aristotle's opinions in terms of the interpretations of his medieval commentator. Moreover, as will be seen throughout this study, Sforno cites copiously from both Averroes' commentaries and his independent treatises in order to prove his arguments. Indeed, in his Hebrew description of the philosophical propositions that he intends to use in his investigations, Sforno reiterates that his polemical focus is in fact on Aristotle because of his reputation—especially among sixteenth-century scholars:

> Secondly, we shall present propositions taught by the aforementioned Philosopher, the majority of which he has proven in various places in his books, which we shall cite. Using these propositions, we shall endeavour to present proofs and demonstrations in order to resolve the doubts that will arise over the course of the [fifteen] inquiries. The complaint made by many people, particularly in our generation, who regard anyone who disagrees with Aristotle as challenging sense perception or logical proof, will thereby be dispelled.[65]

This statement is further evidence that Sforno considers his citations of Averroes as equivalent to citations of Aristotle himself, since the former represents

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[64] *Or*, 4r: "...ולפי המובן מדעתו אצל רבים מתלמידיו הוא מכחיש גם מציאות נפש אנושית שכלית אישיית, כל שכן השארותה."
Lumen, 6: "...et ut quidam eiusdem Aristotelis sequaces de mente eius inferunt humanarum animarum immortalitatem penitus neget."

[65] *Or*, 5r: "שנית נערוך הנחות שהורה בהם הפילוסוף הנזכר והביא ראיה עליהם או על רובם במקומות מספריו אשר נזכירם ובהנחות הנזכ' נשתמש להביא ראיה ומופת על המכוון בהתרת ספקות החקירות הנזכר' ותכל מעלנו תלנת רבים בפרט בזמננו החושבים היות החולק על דברי ארסטוטי' כחולק על החוש או על המופת."
Lumen, 7: "Secundo, ut quasdam praesupponamus sententias a phylosophis concessas et ut plurimum probatas quibus intenta concludamus, citantes loca ubi ab eisdem phylosophis tractantur et demonstrative probantur."

such a significant proportion of the treatise's demonstrations. Accordingly, his account of *prisca sapientia* stops with Aristotle; in both texts of the treatise, he cites Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Meteorologica* in order to establish the Philosopher's undisputed reputation.[66] Even with such explicit reliance on Averroes' testimony about Aristotle, he does not defend or even mention the authority of the Commentator himself. As we shall see in the following chapter,[67] Sforno may have felt that such a defense was unnecessary because Averroes was a trusted interpreter of the Aristotelian corpus among so many Christian and Jewish scholars in Europe throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods. This would explain why he conveys his message exclusively through citations of Averroes' writings. This would also clarify why he never justifies his use of Averroes' works in either text of the *Light of the Nations*. Finally, it would make sense of his tendency to conflate the elucidations of the Commentator with the original statements of the Philosopher.

1.5 STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The initial sections of both texts of the *Light of the Nations* characterise the treatise as an apologetic or polemical work. The dedicatory epistle of the *Lumen gentium* emphasizes the need to defend monotheistic religion against certain heretical conclusions reached by the Peripatetic philosophers; the goal highlighted by the epistle to the reader of the *Or ammim* is to demonstrate the superior intellectual status of the Hebrew Bible by revealing its rational quality with regard to its articulation of the fundamental tenets of religion. The stated goals of both texts come together in the introductions, where Sforno's account of *prisca sapientia* culminates with Aristotle

[66] *Or*, 4r; *Lumen*, 5-6. Cf. Averroes, Middle Commentary on the *Meteorology*, III.2, in Aristotle, *Omnia quae extant opera* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), vol. V, 205v.
[67] 2.2 "The Legacy of Averroes in the West."

who rejects certain truths recognized by the progeny of Abraham. The reader is offered an introductory description of the overall structure and contents of the treatise, which the author claims will result in the achievement of these goals.[68] In the Hebrew text, this is presented as a sevenfold structure to which a final section is added; this final section functions as a synopsis of the entire work.[69] In the Latin text, however, the final section is ranked equally with the previous seven sections and is accordingly listed as the eighth section of the work. The structure of the treatise is presented in Table 1.1 with clarifying comments.[70]

Table 1.1

Section	Description of Content
(1)	A list and succinct description of each of the fifteen inquiries investigated in the treatise. These are formulated as questions, beginning with the word "whether" (אם; *utrum*). Sometimes, only one position is presented in this list; at other times, an alternative is also offered.
(2)	A list of twenty-seven premises or propositions (הנחות; *praesuppositiones*) taken exclusively from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus. Sforno indicates that these propositions will be employed throughout the work in order to rebut the provisional arguments presented in the beginning of each of the fifteen individual inquiries (i.e., in section (3) = [i]). Accordingly, they are mainly relevant to section (6) (i.e., section [iv] of each inquiry).
(3) [i]	The fifteen inquiries (חקירות; *quaestiones*) that comprise the main body of the treatise are themselves made up of five parts. Within each inquiry, the first part is dedicated to the opinions of the Peripatetic philosophers together with their proofs. Clearly these philosophical positions are incompatible with the author's understanding of the tenets of religion. Therefore, they are merely provisional arguments, whose incorrectness is later demonstrated by means of rebuttals given in section (6) (i.e., section [iv] of each inquiry).
(4)	Demonstrations for the alternative side of the argument. This subsection of

[68] This section is entitled סדר in the *Or ammim* (f. 5v), and *Ordo* in the *Lumen gentium* (p. 8). In both texts, the title occurs on the top of the page rather than in the body of the text.
[69] This sevenfold structure presented to the Hebrew reader may relate to that of Maimonides' *Guide*. See *Guide of the Perplexed*, introduction, xi-xiii.
[70] Note that since sections three to seven actually represent subsections of each of the fifteen inquiries, the work as a whole can be viewed as consisting of four parts, the third of which contains five subsections. I have indicated this through the use of square brackets. This is not how the author presents the structure of his work to his readers in either of the two texts, but in my opinion, it clarifies the organisation of the work as a whole.

[ii]	each inquiry agrees with the actual position maintained by Sforno, and is elaborated on in section (5) (i.e., section [iii] of each inquiry).
(5) [iii]	A formulation of the author's own philosophical theory regarding the issue. In this subsection of each inquiry, Sforno uses statements derived exclusively from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus.
(6) [iv]	Rebuttals of the provisional arguments presented in section (3) (i.e., section [i] of each inquiry) that support Aristotle's opinion on each topic. The author does this by applying his own theory generated in section (5) (i.e., section [iii] of each inquiry) in order to refute the arguments, thereby recasting the whole conceptual framework so that it no longer supports those initial positions.
(7) [v]	The author's innovative exegesis of various scriptural passages, which he characterises as a form of logical demonstration in support of his own philosophical theory generated in section (5) (= [iii]). He indicates that this section will sometimes address dissenting opinions, their arguments, and their refutations.
(8)	The final section of the overall treatise represents the author's synopsis of the reasoning and conclusions of the philosophers together with those of Scripture. Sforno promises that this summary will enable the reader to decide easily which system is more correct by providing a clear contrast between the two.

As indicated in the above table, Sforno's first order of business is to list the fundamental inquiries addressed in the treatise. This list is reproduced in Table 1.2.[71]

[71] In table 1.2, I distinguish between the Hebrew and Latin formulations since they are compared and discussed below.

Or, 6r: "אמנם החקירות העקריות הנזכר לעילא הן הנה: ראשונה אם סדר ההויה וההפסד קדמון. שנית אם היסודות קדמונים. שלישית אם החמר הראשון קדמון. רביעית אם השמים קדמונים. חמשית אם התנועה קדמונית. ששית אם יש נמצא קדמון בורא וממציא יש אחר האפיסות המוחלט והוא עשה אינו ישנו. שביעית אם הוא גוף או כח בגוף אם אין. שמינית אם הוא אחד בלבד אם אין. תשיעית אם הוא יודע כל. עשירית אם יש לו יכולת בשוה על שני ההפכים ובוחר באחד מהם בכונה וברצון. אחת עשרה אם הוא משגיח באישי ההווים ונפסדים. שתים עשרה אם הנפש האנושי' השכלי' האישיי' היא בלתי נפסד'. שלש עשרה אם המעשים הטובים הם מועילים או הכרחיים בהצלחת הנפש השכלית הנזכר. ארבע עשרה אם שלמות הנפש יושג בכח אנושי בלבד ולא יושג בכח אלהי או טבעי. חמש עשרה אם תכלית המכוון מן השמים וצבאם ומהעולם המוחש בכללו הוא המין האנושי ושלמותו."

Lumen, 8-9: "Quaestiones ergo in processu disputande sunt tales sunt: 1. Utrum motus generationis et corruptionis habuisset esse ab aeterno. 2. Utrum corruptibilium elementa habuissent esse ab aeterno. 3. Utrum materia prima habuisset esse ab aeterno. 4. Utrum caelum habuisset esse ab aeterno. 5. Utrum motus habuisset esse ab aeterno. 6. Utrum detur creatio qua scilicet tam materia et forma quam totum compositum habuissent esse post merum non esse. 7. Utrum data creatione et per consequens creatore idem creator sit quid corporeum vel sit quid incorporeum. 8. Utrum unus tantum detur creator vel plures aeque primi dentur creatores. 9. Utrum idem creator omnia sciat vel econtra. 10. Utrum idem creator habeat liberam ad utrumque contrariorum potentiam quorum alterum voluntarie eligat. 11. Utrum de mortalium individuis habeat sollicitudinem sive curam. 12. Utrum intellectiva individui humani generis anima sit quid immortale vel econversa. 13. Utrum pia intentio et conatus ad pia opera exequenda concurrat ad eiusdem animae perfectionem. 14. Utrum eiusdem intellectivae animae perfectio per humanum virtutem tantum non autem per naturalem vel divinam acquiri contingat. 15. Utrum caelestium horumque motuum finis sit mortalium opportunitas ad humanam perfectionem necessaria."

Table 1.2

Inquiry	Subject-matter
(I)	Hebrew: "Whether the order of generation and corruption is eternal." Latin: "Whether the motion of generation and corruption has existed eternally."
(II)	Hebrew: "Whether the elements are eternal." Latin: "Whether the elements of corruptible beings have existed eternally."
(III)	Hebrew: "Whether the first matter is eternal." Latin: "Whether the first matter has existed eternally."
(IV)	Hebrew: "Whether the heavens are eternal." Latin: "Whether the heavens have existed eternally."
(V)	Hebrew: "Whether motion is eternal." Latin: "Whether motion has existed eternally."
(VI)	Hebrew: "Whether there is an eternal being who creates and brings forth something after absolute nothingness, who made nothing into something." Latin: "Whether it is conceded that creation (matter and form as well as the entire composite) existed after pure non-existence."
(VII)	Hebrew: "Whether He is a body or a power in a body, or not." Latin: "Whether, having conceded the fact of creation and hence [the existence of] a creator, that creator is something which is corporeal or something which is incorporeal."
(VIII)	Hebrew: "Whether He is only one, or not." Latin: "Whether only one creator is conceded or many equally first creators are conceded."
(IX)	Hebrew: "Whether He knows everything." Latin: "Whether that creator knows all things, or the opposite."
(X)	Hebrew: "Whether He has an equal ability for two opposites and chooses one of them intentionally and voluntarily." Latin: "Whether that creator has unrestricted power for each of two opposites, one of which he voluntarily chooses."
(XI)	Hebrew: "Whether He supervises individual generable-corruptible beings." Latin: "Whether He has concern or care about the individuals [belonging to the class] of mortal beings."
(XII)	Hebrew: "Whether the individual human intellective soul is incorruptible." Latin: "Whether the individual intellective soul of humankind is immortal or the opposite."
(XIII)	Hebrew: "Whether virtuous deeds are advantageous or necessary for the beatitude of the aforementioned intellective soul." Latin: "Whether pious intention and desire for pursuing pious deeds coincide with the perfection of that soul."
(XIV)	Hebrew: "Whether the perfection of the soul is achieved solely by human power and is not achieved by divine or natural power." Latin: "Whether the perfection of that intellective soul is attained solely through human but not through natural or divine ability."
(XV)	Hebrew: "Whether the intended purpose of the heavens and their host as well as of the perceivable world generally is humankind and its perfection." Latin: "Whether the purpose of the heavens and their motions is a necessary advantage of mortal beings for human perfection."

These fifteen inquiries provide the treatise with its basic framework, and roughly correspond to the various other occasions in which the author formulates a summary of the contents of his work. As mentioned, in the *Lumen gentium*, the first such formulation occurs on the title page, where the central components of religion demonstrated by the treatise are reduced to three: (i) the creation of the universe *ex nihilo*; (ii) divine providence over human beings; (iii) and the immortality of human souls.[72] This three-fold formulation of the treatise's contents may be related to the more detailed formulation presented here as follows: the first of the three topics comprises six inquiries (I–VI); the second comprises a single inquiry (XI); and the third comprises four inquiries (XII–XV). An additional topic, which is apparently left unmentioned on the Latin title page, deals with the existence and character of the world's creator and comprises the middle four inquiries (VII–X). This omission could be a reflection of the initial difference in focus between the Hebrew and Latin texts. As discussed, whereas the treatise is initially introduced to the Hebrew reader as a demonstration of the rational quality of Hebrew Scripture, the Latin reader begins with a different vantage point—the rebuttal of the errors of the Peripatetic philosophers. Accordingly, the dedicatory epistle of the *Lumen gentium* is devoted to a synopsis of the Peripatetic arguments, which are based on the initial premise that the universe is eternal and uncaused. In this context, an engagement with the attributes of a first cause would not be immediately relevant. Hence, the title page of the Latin text may reflect this five-fold frame of reference despite the inclusion of these middle topics in the full list of the fifteen *quaestiones*.

Another perspective is possible. It may also be that the author regards the middle inquiries as included in their adjacent topics. For example, the sixth inquiry,

[72] Cited above in 1.3 "Philosophy and Scripture."

which treats the existence of a creator, could be taken as the conclusion of the first general topic of creation since positing a cause of creation depends on establishing the fact of creation itself. This hypothesis is supported by how Sforno articulates his summary of the sixth inquiry in both the *Or ammim* and the *Lumen gentium*, in which he links the sixth inquiry to the preceding five, although in each of the two texts he does this in a different way.[73] In the *Or ammim*, he signals a change of focus from the created to the creator, but he highlights the link between the sixth inquiry and the previous five through a persistent and arguably purposeful employment of the Hebrew term קדמון ("eternal")—a term which occurs in all of the initial five summary statements as well as in the sixth statement. This repetition in the *Or ammim* contrasts with Sforno's formulation of his summary statements in the *Lumen gentium*, where he translates the Hebrew קדמון with the Latin *ab aeterno*, repeating the phrase in each of the initial five summary statements but omitting it in the sixth, where he leaves out the notion of a creator along with the concept of eternity. The reason for this omission could be because the rhetorical link is not needed in the Latin text, where the grammatical subject of the sixth summary statement remains consistent with the initial five since that *quaestio* is portrayed as continuing a discussion on the subject of creation. In the *Lumen gentium* there is no substantial break in continuity between the first six summary statements; hence, no rhetorical device is needed to show the link between the sixth statement and its predecessors. The shift of focus from creation to creator does occur, however, in the *Lumen gentium*'s summary of the seventh inquiry, as reflected in its formulation.[74] In both texts of the treatise, the summaries of the eighth to the eleventh inquiries maintain their focus on the creator. These middle inquiries (VII–IX) could therefore be considered as a part of the second general topic,

[73] See Table 1.2:VI.
[74] See Table 1.2:VII.

namely, providence, since they relate to the nature, knowledge, and abilities of the creator—subjects whose treatment is logically prior to the question of actual providence.

1.6 METHOD AND MODES OF DISCOURSE

Sforno advocates a rational apprehension of the truths relating to the fundamental causes of existence in general and humankind in particular. As indicated, he proposes to accomplish this in two ways: first by establishing these truths using Aristotle's writings; secondly, by demonstrating them through a careful reading of Scripture. From the summary of the treatise's proposed structure and subject matter, it is clear that the author's definition of rational apprehension significantly affects the basic program of his work. According to his description of its eight-part structure, the first element of his method (sections 3 to 6) involves the use of a rigidly articulated literary form—the "disputed question" (*quaestio disputata*)[75]—adopted by medieval scholars in their discussions of philosophical and theological subjects, and used by Italian scholars well into the sixteenth century.[76] Certain Italian Jewish authors during

[75] For a discussion of this and related terms, see Olga Weijers, *In Search of the Truth: A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 99-105.

[76] Weijers traces the origins of this genre to antiquity and to Cicero's remark about the pleasantness and efficiency of the *quaestio disputata* for didactical purposes. See Weijers, *In Search of the Truth*, 23-44; 105. On the structure of the scholastic *quaestio disputata*, its types (e.g., *disputatio ordinaria*, *disputatio de quolibet*), and its uses for teaching law, theology, science, and medicine in Europe throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods, see Brian Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic Quaestio Disputata: With Special Emphasis on Its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993). See also Olga Weijers, *Queritur utrum: recherches sur la 'disputatio' dans les universités médiévales* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); Bernardo C. Bazán and John F. Wippel, *Les questions disputees et les questions quodlibetiques dans les facultes de theologie, de droit et de medecine* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985). For an analysis of the forms taken by this genre of disputation in the Renaissance and Reformation, see Weijers, *In Search of the Truth*, 177-207. There, she points out that Pietro Pomponazzi used this genre in his lecture notes, but preferred a more discursive form for his treatises. See ibid, 196. See also ibid, 64-70 for her comparison of this literary form to the Renaissance dialogue adopted by authors such as Petrarch, Erasmus, Thomas More and Giordano Bruno.

the late fifteenth century such as Judah Messer Leon (c.1425–1498)[77] and Elijah Del Medigo (c.1460–c.1493)[78] also adopted this mode. Sforno's use of the scholastic method has led Giuseppe Veltri to consider the *Light of the Nations* as a kind of precursor to Early Modern Jewish scepticism, classifying it as "the first step" toward scepticism and methodological doubt.[79] This hypothesis, however, seems to be contradicted by the rationale behind Sforno's project—the intellectual demonstration of the tenets of religion. I would argue that the treatise is characterised by methodological certainty rather than by doubt—a point that is made abundantly clear by the author's criticism of Maimonides' supposed advocacy for a faith-based assent.

The second element of Sforno's method, the exegesis of scriptural verses in an effort to uncover their true meaning (section 7), is a mode of discourse that was also commonly employed by religious scholars in sixteenth-century Italy.[80] The merging of these two modes of discourse is a particularly striking feature of Sforno's treatise and is based on his characterization of the second mode as a form of rational demonstration on a par with that of the syllogistic reasoning comprising the first mode. This will be discussed more fully in the fifth chapter of this study.

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[77] On Judah Messer Leon's summaries of the scholastic *quaestiones* debated in the Italian academic community, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, *Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David Ben Judah Messer Leon*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 33. For a preliminary study of Judah Messer Leon's use of this literary form in his works, as well as an examination of other "Hebrew Schoolmen" in fifteenth century Italy and Spain, see Mauro Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Springer, 2006). Zonta notes, however, that Judah Messer Leon's scholastic methods were unusual among Italian Jews in the fifteenth century. See ibid., 28.

[78] On the *quaestio* format of Del Medigo's discussion of the unicity of the material intellect, see Michael Engel, *Elijah Del Medigo and Paduan Aristotelianism: Investigating the Human Intellect* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), especially 34-36.

[79] See Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom: Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 162-167. For a more traditional description of the rise of scepticism in the sixteenth century, see Richard H. Popkin, "Theories of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Keßler, and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 668-684, esp. 678-684.

[80] On this, particularly in the works of Jewish scholars such as Abraham Portaleone and David de' Pomi, see Andrew D. Berns, *The Bible and Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy: Jewish and Christian Physicians in Search of Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). On the assumptions made by sixteenth-century Italian Jewish thinkers on the relation between nature and the Torah and their regard for the study of nature as a hermeneutical activity, see Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Theology of Nature in Sixteenth-Century Italian Jewish Philosophy," *Science in Context* 10 (1997): 529-570.

In the Hebrew epistle, basically an invocation for a rational assent of religious tenets, Sforno offers what he claims to be an alternative to Maimonides' advocating for assent by faith. As mentioned, he argues that the fundamental assertions of Scripture—that the universe has an incorporeal cause that supervises human beings, who, in turn, possess the eternal form of that cause—must be apprehended by the intellect. According to Sforno, however, such intellectual apprehension is not optimally achieved through the human investigation of nature or through a study of the works of the philosophers, but rather, through a contemplation of Scripture itself. He elaborates on this for his Hebrew reader:

> However, every utterance of God is purified with demonstrative proof (ראיה מופתית) that accompanies every conceptual part of it, as a judgment informing every wise man from the beginning of every hidden [matter]. [This is] because it is appropriate to enlighten and teach [humankind] His intention using clear proofs (ראיות ברורות). This is certainly appropriate for the God of knowledge, may He be praised, teacher of righteousness, to whom wisdom and strength belongs, [since] the gladness of His path and the wisdom of His order lie in the existence of a desire for the sake of His righteousness, since it is within His holy Torah. [Therefore,] He would not obscure anything. For once God made known His existence and the glory of His sovereignty with intellectual demonstrations (מופתים שכליים) that are straightforward to the discerning one, leaving no room for doubt, He [then] instructed them regarding His covenant and His commandments.[81]

Sforno presents this characterization of Scripture in the Latin dedicatory epistle and throughout the Hebrew introduction, citing various scriptural passages in its support. He argues that the directive contained in the verse "And know this day

[81] *Or*, 2v: "אמנם כל אמרת אלוה צרופה בראיה מופתית באה על כל חלק עייוני ממנה כמשפט לכל חכם מגיד מראשית כל נעלם כי לו יאות להבין ולהורות כוונתו בראיות ברורות הלא יותר יאות זה לאל דעות יתעלה המורה לצדקה די חכמתא וגבורתא די ליה היא. הן הוא משוש דרכו וחכמת סדרו במציאות חפץ למען צדקו היות בתורת קדשו ולא חשך ממנה מאומה. כי אמנ' אחרי הודיע אלקים מציאותו וכבוד מלכותו במופתים שכליים נכוחים למבין עד אפס מקום ספק בם, צוה לעולם בריתו ומצותיו..."

and return to your heart that the Lord, He is the God,"[82] would be disingenuous if such knowledge were not present within Scripture itself.[83] Sforno is unambiguous in his depiction of biblical statements as a kind of intellectual demonstration or logical proof. In the *Or ammim*, he describes these assertions using terms such as "demonstrative proof" (ראיה מופתית), "lucid proofs" (ראיות ברורות), and "intellectual demonstrations" (מופתים שכליים).[84] Likewise, in the *Lumen gentium*, he expresses this with phrases like "it is demonstratively proven in God's Holy Scripture" (*in sacris Dei scripturis demonstrative probatum esse*) and "the opposite is explicitly proven in Holy Scripture" (*in sacris scripturis oppositum probari aperte docetur*).[85]

The definition of scriptural discourse as a kind of logical demonstration relates back to Sforno's criticisms directed at Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon. In contradistinction to their opinions as he understands them, Sforno views Scripture as a self-sufficient system, which requires neither faith nor external sources for support. It would seem that, for Sforno, these scriptural proofs enjoy an equal or higher epistemological status than that of demonstrative syllogisms, whose premises are based on sense perception or axiomatic principles.[86] He ostensibly discards the conventional Peripatetic distinction between demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical arguments discussed by Maimonides in his *Treatise on the Art of Logic*[87] as well as by Averroes in his *Decisive Treatise*.[88]

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[82] Deuteronomy 4:39.
[83] *Or*, 2v.
[84] Ibid., 2v; 3v; 4v.
[85] *Lumen*, 3.
[86] This will be explored more fully in chapter five herein.
[87] See Moses Maimonides, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic: Critically Edited on the Basis of Mss. and Early Ed. and Transl. into English*, ed. and trans. Israel Efros (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1938), 47-49. On the basis of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *On Sophistical Refutations*, Maimonides distinguishes between five kinds of demonstration: (i) demonstrative (premises are apodictic); (ii) dialectic (premises are conventional); (iii) rhetorical (premises are derived from tradition); (iv) sophistic (premises are fallacious or syllogistic moods are invalid); (v) poetic (premises are based on imitations). For Maimonides, I believe that Sforno's scriptural proofs would be rhetorical and his philosophical proofs would be either demonstrative or

In connection with this, Sforno offers an allusion to tractate *Avot* 5:21 in the introduction of the *Or ammim*—an allusion that does not appear in the *Lumen gentium*: "Would it not be good for us to return to the Torah and to the Teaching and investigate its honor, delving into it and continuing to delve into it (הפוך בה והפך בה)[89] until its truth emerges like a glow, for by its light shall we see light?"[90] In Sforno's own commentary to tractate *Avot*, published together with Maimonides' commentary in the *Roman Maḥzor*, (Bologna, 1540), the author's second published work, he elucidates this dictum with the following insight:

> Delve into the Torah in order to understand and see wonders from it, and you will not need the books of the philosophers of the nations or their investigators, for everything is in it. Continue to delve into it, for you will see intellectual proofs (מופתים שכליים) regarding true opinions on the subject of the Divine and the immortality of the soul, and other such things, which are the fundamental subjects of investigation, appropriate for the love and fear of God, blessed be He....[91]

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sophistic. For a discussion of Maimonides' opinions about the types of demonstrations, see Arthur Hyman, "Demonstrative, Dialectical and Sophistic Arguments in the Philosophy of Moses Maimonides," in *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, ed. Eric L. Ormsby (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 35-51.

[88] See Averroes, *Averroes,* the Decisive Treatise*: The Connection between Islamic Religious Law and Philosophy*, ed. Massimo Campanini (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2017), introduction, 31. Averroes delineates three disparate modes of discourse, each of which is reserved for a different class of thinker. He holds that members from each of the three classes assent to truth on the level proper to them. The first mode of discourse, which is represented by the literal meaning of Scripture, is rhetorical and is appropriate for the masses; the second is dialectical discourse, which is the kind of debate in which theologians engage; the third and highest mode is intellectual demonstration, which is reserved for philosophers. Sforno presents to his reader philosophical disputation and exegesis-based proof, classifying both of these methods as intellectual demonstration. The first of these (syllogisms whose premises are derived primarily from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus) should fall under Averroes' third mode of discourse, reserved in the *Decisive Treatise* solely for philosophers. However, as we shall see in the third chapter of this study, even Sforno's syllogistic demonstrations, which are defined by his apologetic-polemical agenda, arguably would have been classified by Averroes as the second mode of discourse—namely the dialectical—reserved for theologians. Sforno's exegesis-based proof would fall under Averroes' first and second modes of discourse, which he would have considered appropriate for non-philosophers.

[89] Here, he alludes to *Avot* 5:21: "Ben Bag Beg says: Delve into it [the Torah] and continue to delve into it (הפוך בה והפך בה) for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and grey over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it."

[90] *Or*, 4v: "הלא טוב לנו שוב לתורה ולתעודה וחקר בתורה בהפוך בה והפך בה עד יצא כנגה אמת לאמתו באורה נראה אור..."

[91] Obadiah Sforno, *Commentary on* Pirkei Avot, in *Roman Maḥzor* (Bologna, 1540), 18^{6}v: "הפוך בתורה להבין ולהביט נפלאות ממנה, ולא תצטרך לספרי פילוסופי האומות וחוקריהם. דכולא בה ובה תחזי, תראה מופתים שכליים על דעות אמיתיות בענין האלוקי ובהשארות הנפש וזולתם, שהם עיקרי המחקר, הראוי לאהבה וליראה את האל יתברך..."

Accordingly, in his commentary on the Pentateuch (Venice, 1567), Sforno cites Jewish sources almost exclusively.[92] This, in sharp contrast to the *Light of the Nations*, a project for which the author explains the particular need to offer his reader an alternative mode of discourse that addresses these same topics using authoritative philosophical sources.

1.7 CONCLUSION

A consideration of the preliminary sections of Sforno's treatise, which contain statements critical of Aristotelian philosophy as well as the formulation of a dichotomy between the scriptural and philosophical traditions, have led some scholars to characterise the *Light of the Nations* as advocating a total opposition to Greek philosophy.[93] As I have shown in this chapter, Sforno appeals to his readers to respond dialectically to certain claims made by the Peripatetic philosophers that contradict the fundamental tenets inherent in the scriptural tradition. For his Latin reader, this takes the form of an immediate and exclusive focus on the claims of Aristotle and his disciples, which are presented on the title page and in the dedicatory epistle of the *Lumen gentium*. Sforno provides a synopsis of their chain of reasoning, in which one heretical claim gives rise to and necessitates the next, ultimately effecting the very crumbling of human social order. For his Hebrew reader, the need for a rational approach to religion is highlighted, which is accomplished by conveying

[92] On the classical and medieval Jewish sources of Sforno's biblical commentaries, see *R. Obadja Sforno als Exeget*, 45-52, esp. 48, where Finkel notes two exceptional references to "Berossus the Chaldean" (ברוסי הכלדיי). As Albert Baumgarten demonstrates, this is a reference to the fifteenth-century forgery by the Italian Dominican monk, Johannes Annius of Viterbo. See Albert I. Baumgarten, "Sforno and Berossus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25, no. 2 (1974): 313-315. Joanna Weinberg refers to Sforno's use of Annius in her discussion of Azariah de' Rossi. See Joanna Weinberg, "Azariah de' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo," in ed., David B. Ruderman, *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 252-279, especially 255-256.

[93] See the introduction herein for a critical survey of modern scholarship on the *Light of the Nations*.

the disappointment of certain gentile sages in their supposed discovery of the non-rational basis of Jewish tradition, as well as a series of criticisms launched against the Jewish proponents of Aristotelian philosophy, Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon.

For his Latin and Hebrew readers, a twofold transmission of ancient wisdom is described, in which the truth about the divine order of existence is characterised as having been lost to all but the progeny of Abraham. This account of a *prisca sapientia* furnishes the author with a historical basis for advocating two different modes of discourse, both of which he classifies as rational demonstration. These inform the method and structure of the work.

According to Sforno's stated aims in both texts of the *Light of the Nations*, he regards the methods and conclusions of Scripture to be at odds with those of the Peripatetic philosophers. However, as I shall demonstrate throughout this study, Sforno's position on Greco-Arabic philosophy is a complex one and should not be considered an outright rejection of either its conceptual framework or its content.[94] The fact that the philosophical propositions upon which the conclusions of the treatise depend are derived solely from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus alerts the reader to this complexity.[95] Sforno's professed task is to refute the opinions of the philosophers that contradict the tenets of religion; he does this through a careful analysis of the arguments both for and against these tenets, which he bases on his own innovative reading of Aristotle and Averroes. As has been demonstrated somewhat in the present chapter and will be more fully explored in the third chapter of this study, Sforno often

[94] Although I have found no explicit reference to the Aristotelian corpus in Sforno's exegetical works, ancient Peripatetic philosophy and its medieval interpretations obviously inform his scholarly apparatus. He does not rely solely on rabbinic literature; rather, he presents many of his ideas using the technical vocabulary of Aristotelian philosophy, such as substance and accident, the four causes, the four elements, the four levels of the soul, and transcendental intellects. A clear instance of this is his philosophical explanations of the creation narrative in his commentary to the initial chapters of the book of Genesis. I agree with Gottlieb, who concludes that Sforno did not use alternative systems of thought such as the kabbalah. On this, see Obadiah Sforno, *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, ed. Zev Gottlieb, (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1980), editor's introduction, 25.

[95] See the following chapter herein.

interprets his sources in ways that would not accord with the original intentions of their authors. Nevertheless, he presents himself throughout as adhering to the Aristotelian-Averroan conceptual framework even as he sets about to deconstruct and rework many of its finer points.

CHAPTER TWO

PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Sforno characterises the *Light of the Nations* as a rational investigation into the tenets of religion in response to certain conclusions reached in the Greco-Italian philosophical tradition. He identifies Aristotle as the culmination of that tradition—describing him as a revolutionary thinker who challenged and improved on many of the ideas of his predecessors. Bearing in mind the significant presence of Aristotle in both Hebrew[1] and Latin[2]

[1] On medieval Jewish Aristotelianism, see Norbert M. Samuelson, "Medieval Jewish Aristotelianism: an introduction," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), 228-244; Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 141-155. See also, Daniel H. Frank, "Maimonides and medieval Jewish Aristotelianism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 136-156. For a list of medieval Hebrew translations of ancient philosophical works including translations of Aristotle, see Mauro Zonta, "Ancient philosophical works and commentaries translated into Hebrew," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. Robert Pasnau and Christina Van Dyke (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 826-832. On the persisting influence of medieval Jewish philosophy including its Aristotelian forms throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Herbert Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy in the Sixteenth Century," in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 106-145. See also Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish philosophy on the eve of modernity," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, 499-573.

[2] For an overview of the reception of Aristotle in medieval Latin philosophy, see Robert Pasnau, "The Latin Aristotle," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, ed. Christopher John Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 665-690; C. H. Lohr, "The medieval interpretation of Aristotle," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, ed. Norman Kretzman, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 80-98. For a list of Medieval Latin translations of Greek Aristotelian works, see Michele Trizio, "Greek Aristotelian works translated into Latin," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 2:793-798; See also Bernard G. Dod, "Aristoteles latinus," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, 45-79. On the reception of Aristotle in the Renaissance, Charles Lohr remarks that more Aristotelian commentaries were written in the period from 1500 to 1650 than in the entire preceding millennium. See Charles H. Lohr, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries II: Renaissance Authors* (Firenze: Olschki, 1988), xiii. On editions of Aristotle's works produced in the sixteenth century, see Edward F. Cranz, and Charles B. Schmitt, *A Bibliography of Aristotle editions 1501-1600* (Baden-Baden, West Germany: Valentin Koerner, 1984). Regarding the complexities involved in ascertaining the precise number of editions of Aristotle produced in the Renaissance, see Jill Kraye, "The printing history of Aristotle in the fifteenth century: a bibliographical approach to Renaissance philosophy," in ead., *Classical Traditions in Renaissance Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), Article XV.

philosophy throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods, it is not surprising that his authority would provide the basis for Sforno's project. One might, therefore, expect to find citations taken directly and solely from the Philosopher's works. This is not the case; instead, Sforno prefers to read Aristotle through the commentaries and independent treatises of his twelfth-century Spanish-Arabic commentator, Averroes.[3] For Sforno, it is through Averroes that Aristotle's intentions are clarified, and in many cases it is Averroes who has the final word. This consideration of Averroes' works as an essential adjunct to Aristotle's philosophy reflects an intellectual trend, which began in the medieval period and continued into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the Averroan corpus achieved great prominence, and according to some scholars became a movement in its own right.[4]

2.2 THE LEGACY OF AVERROES IN THE WEST

In his nineteenth-century book, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, Ernest Renan recognized the significance of Averroes' works for the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition: "It is to the Jews that Averroes owes his reputation as commentator."[5] This statement must be emended, however, to reflect the enormous influence that Averroes

[3] For a general survey of Averroes, his philosophy, and his works, see Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and His Philosophy* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998); Majid Fakhry, *Averroes (Ibn Rushd): His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008); Dominique Urvoy, *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*, trans. Olivia Stewart (London: Routledge, 2016).

[4] On the argument for the existence of such a movement on the basis of evidence suggesting the presence of "a doctrinal debate about the correct interpretation of Averroes," see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "*Averroica Secta*: Notes on the Formation of Averroist Movements in Fourteenth-century Bologna and Renaissance Italy," in *Averroes et les averroïsmes juif et latin: actes du Colloque International (Paris, 16-18 juin 2005)*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 307-331.

[5] Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* (Frankfurt am Main: Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1985), 184: "C'est aux juifs qu'Averroès est redevable de sa réputation de commentateur." Cited in English translation by Steven Harvey in his critical review of the book. See Steven Harvey, "On the Nature and Extent of Jewish Averroism: Renan's Averroès et l'averroïsme Revisited," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2000): 100-119, esp. 100-101. For a historiographical perspective of Renan and his work, see Craig Martin, "Rethinking Renaissance Averroism," *Intellectual History Review* 17, no. 1 (2007): 3-28. See also John Marenbon, "Ernest Renan and Averroism: The Story of a Misinterpretation," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anna A. Akasoy, and Guido Giglioni (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 273-283.

also had on medieval Latin philosophy through the thirteenth-century translations of Michael Scot, Hermannus Alemannus, and William de Lunis.[6] Scholastic authorities such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas referred to him as "the Commentator" (*Commentator*), a title that was later made famous by Dante in the early fourteenth century.[7] Nevertheless, Renan's statement does convey the important role played by medieval Hebrew readers of Aristotle in the preservation of the Averroan corpus. As Harry Wolfson observed, between 1232 and 1337 almost all of Averroes' thirty-eight commentaries on Aristotle were translated into Hebrew whereas only fifteen of his works were rendered from Arabic into Latin during the same period.[8]

Although Samuel Ibn Tibbon's 1210 translation of Aristotle's *Meteorology*[9] was the first scientific book to be translated from Arabic into Hebrew, it remained one of only three of Aristotle's original texts to be translated as independent works.[10]

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[6] See Alfred Ivry, "Averroes and the West: The First Encounter/Nonencounter," in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. Arthur Hyman, Ruth Link-Salinger Hyman, and Jeremiah Hackett (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 142-158. On an alternative route of transmission of Averroes' works to the Christian West, see Charles Burnett, "The "Sons of Averroes with the Emperor Frederick" and the Transmission of the Philosophical Works by Ibn Rushd," in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126-1198): Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Averroicum (Cologne, 1996)*, ed. Gerhard Endress, Jan Aertsen, and Klaus Braun (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 259-299.

[7] Steven Harvey observes that despite the widespread belief that Dante used this epithet for Averroes in his *Divine Comedy*, it is actually found in his *Quaestio de aqua et terra* 5 and 18. See Steven Harvey, "When did Jews begin to consider Averroes The Commentator," in *Florilegium mediaevale: Études offertes à Jacqueline Hamesse à l'occasion de son éméritat*, ed. José Meirinhos, and Olga Weijers (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2009), 279-296, esp. 279.

[8] Harry Austryn Wolfson, "Plan for the Publication of a *Corpus commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*," in id., *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973) 1:430-454, esp. 431-432. There, he cites the great number of extant manuscript copies and literary material such as super-commentaries as evidence for the immense popularity of Averroes' works among medieval Jews. For a list of the medieval Arabic-to-Latin translations of Averroes' works produced between 1238 and 1328, see Charles Burnett, "Arabic Philosophical Works Translated into Latin," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 2:814-822, esp. 820-821.

[9] In the introduction to her critical edition and translation of the text, Resianne Fontaine cites Aviezer Ravitzky's explanation for Ibn Tibbon's interest in this particular work by Aristotle as connected with his understanding of Maimonides' explanation in his *Guide* of the Aristotelian theory of the four elements and the account of the division of water and dry land in Genesis 1:9. See Samuel Ibn Tibbon, *Otot Ha-Shamayim: Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew Version of Aristotle's Meteorology*, ed. and trans. Resianne Fontaine (Leiden: Brill, 1995), introduction, xi-xii.

[10] Steven Harvey, "Arabic into Hebrew: The Hebrew translation movement and the influence of Averroes upon medieval Jewish thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish*

Medieval Hebrew translators focused their attention instead on Averroes' commentaries on the writings of the Philosopher. This is in contrast to the medieval Latin tradition, for which the entire *corpus Aristotelicum* was made available by the end of the twelfth century.[11] Following Renan's lead, Steven Harvey argued that it was Maimonides' recommendation of Averroes in a letter to Samuel Ibn Tibbon, which resulted in the widespread translation and study of the Spanish-Arabic commentator among Jews.[12] Regardless of the cause, there is a consensus in modern scholarship that between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, Jewish philosophers relied primarily upon the commentaries of Averroes in reading Aristotle's works.[13]

Philosophy, ed. Daniel H. Frank (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 258-280, esp. 258. Harvey notes that the two other works of Aristotle translated from Arabic into Hebrew were Zerahyah ben Isaac Shealtiel Hen's thirteenth-century translations of the *De generatione et corruptione* and the *De anima*. The remainder of the Aristotelian corpus was only available in Hebrew through Averroes' commentaries. However, in his chronological table of Hebrew translations of philosophical texts, Mauro Zonta also lists some later Latin-to-Hebrew translations of Aristotle's works, such as Judah Messer Leon's fifteenth-century translation of William of Moerbeke's Latin rendering of books I-IV of Aristotle's *Physics*. See Mauro Zonta, "Medieval Hebrew Translations of Philosophical and Scientific Tetxs: A Chronological Table," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17-73.

[11] See Pasnau, "The Latin Aristotle," 665-669.

[12] See Steven Harvey, "Did Maimonides' Letter to Samuel Ibn Tibbon Determine Which Philosophers Would Be Studied by Later Jewish Thinkers?" *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. 83, no. 1-2 (1992): 51-70. See also Harvey, "When did Jews begin to consider Averroes the Commentator," 282-283, where he translates the relevant passage in Maimonides' letter: "[The works of Aristotle are] the roots and foundations of all works on the sciences... these works can only be understood fully with the help of the commentators, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and Averroes." For the Hebrew version of the letter, see Maimonides, "Letter to Samuel Ibn Tibbon on translating the Guide," [Hebrew] in *Iggerot ha-Rambam*, ed. Isaac Shailat (Jerusalem: Shailat Publishing, 1995), 1:530-554.

[13] For general surveys of Jewish Averroism in the Medieval and Renaissance periods, see Harvey, "Arabic into Hebrew: The Hebrew translation movement and the influence of Averroes upon medieval Jewish thought;" Oliver Leaman, "Jewish Averroism," in *Routledge History of World Philosophies*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2001), 769-780; Alfred Ivry, "Remnants of Jewish Averroism in the Renaissance," in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 243-265. Elijah Del Medigo has received the most attention in recent scholarship. See Aryeh Motzkin, "Elia Del Medigo, Averroes and Averroism," in *Philosophy and the Jewish Tradition: Lectures and Essays by Aryeh Leo Motzkin*, ed. Yehuda Halper (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 51-62; Josep Puig Montada, "Eliahu del Medigo, the Last Averroist," in *Exchange and Transmission Across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*, ed. Haggai Ben-Shammai, Shaul Shaked, and Sarah Stroumsa (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2013), 155-186; Michael Engel, *Elijah Del Medigo and Paduan Aristotelianism: Investigating the Human Intellect* (Bloomsbury, 2017). On Jewish Averroism in connection with medieval Jewish-Christian polemics, see Daniel J. Lasker, "Averroistic Trends in Jewish-Christian Polemics in the Late Middle Ages," *Speculum* 55, no. 2 (1980): 294-304.

From the end of the fifteenth through the sixteenth century, a "second revelation" of Averroes, as Harry Wolfson dubbed it, occurred in Western philosophy.[14] This resurgence of Averroes' popularity and the dissemination of his works was centred in Italy. Charles Schmitt remarked: "It seems as though the writings of Averroes had an influence during the Renaissance equal to those of Plato."[15] Despite the humanists' intention to replace the medieval versions of Aristotle with new eloquent translations directly from the Greek, collected editions of Aristotle regularly included vulgate versions of the Philosopher accompanied by Averroes' commentaries.[16] According to Edward Cranz, "...in the period from 1470 through 1542, there appeared ten complete, or nearly complete, editions of the Latin Aristotle accompanied by the commentaries of Averroes."[17] The highlight of the Renaissance interest in Averroes' commentaries and treatises was the eleven-volume Giunta edition (Venice, 1550-52), which contained a greater number of Averroes' works in Latin translation than had been previously available. The underlying premise of this edition was the singular importance of Averroes' interpretations of Aristotle.[18]

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[14] See Harry Wolfson, "The Twice-Revealed Averroes," in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1:371-401, esp. 383. See also Charles Burnett, "The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science: 1492-1562," in *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Charles Burnett, and Anna Contadini (London: Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1999), 185-198.

[15] Charles B. Schmitt, "Renaissance Averroism Studied Through the Venetian Editions of Aristotle-Averroes (with particular reference to the Giunta edition of 1550-2)," in *L'averroismo in Italia* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1979), 121-142, esp. 123. On Averroes' success in the Renaissance, see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "The Attraction of Averroism in the Renaissance: Vernia, Achillini, Prassicio," in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen, and M. W. F. Stone (London: Inst. of Classical Studies, 2004) 2:131-147. For a recent treatment of the role played by Averroes in sixteenth-century philosophy, see Kara Richardson, "Averroism," in *The Routledge Companion to Sixteenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund, and Benjamin Hill (New York: Routledge, 2017), 137-155.

[16] Edward Cranz, "Editions of the Latin Aristotle Accompanied by the Commentaries of Averroes," in *Philosophy and humanism: Renaissance essays in honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller and Edward P. Mahoney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 116-128, esp. 117. On the complex reception of Averroes among humanists, see Craig Martin, "Humanism and the Assessment of Averroes in the Renaissance," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath*, 65-79.

[17] See Cranz, "Editions of the Latin Aristotle Accompanied by the Commentaries of Averroes," 117.

[18] See Schmitt, "Renaissance Averroism Studied Through the Venetian Editions of Aristotle-Averroes," 132-133. See also Charles Burnett, "Revisiting the 1552-1550 and 1562 Aristotle-Averroes Edition," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath*, 55-64.

In addition to consolidating the corpus of medieval translations of Averroes, a great number of Averroan texts were translated for the first time from Hebrew into Latin by a small group of Hebrew scholars.[19] In light of this resurgence of interest in Averroes' works, which resulted in a confluence of the Latin and Hebrew textual transmissions of the corpus, Sforno's heavy reliance on Averroes in his Hebrew and Latin texts of the *Light of the Nations* is not surprising.[20]

2.3 CITING ARISTOTLE AND AVERROES

Both versions of the *Light of the Nations* are packed with references to and citations of the works of Aristotle and Averroes. Sforno cites a total of ten books from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus: Porphyry's *Isagoge* (ספר המבוא; *liber Praedicabilium*),[21] *Posterior Analytics* (ספר המופת; *liber Posteriorum*), *Physics* (ספר שמע טבעי; *liber Physicorum*), *On the Heavens* (ספר השמים והעולם; *liber De caelo*), *Meteorology* (ספר אותות השמים; *liber Metheorologicorum*), *On Generation and Corruption* (ספר ההוויה וההפסד; *liber De generatione*), *On the Soul* (ספר הנפש; *liber De anima*), *Metaphysics* (ספר מה שאחר; *liber Methaphysicorum*), *Nicomachean Ethics* (ספר המדות; *liber Ethycorum*), and the *Politics* (ספר הנהגת המדינה; *liber Polyticorum*). In addition, he cites two of Averroes' independent treatises: *On the Substance of the*

[19] See Wolfson, "Plan for Publication," 432-433. On the combination of circumstances in which these Hebrew-to-Latin translations of Averroes were produced, see Burnett, "The Second Revelation," 192-195. For a recent discussion of this translation movement, see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 69-133.

[20] Although there is no evidence to suggest that Sforno participated directly in the Hebrew-to-Latin translation movement, he did translate his own Hebrew work into Latin in 1548. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate, it seems likely that he also translated excerpts of his source texts from Latin into Hebrew a decade earlier for his *Or ammim*.

[21] Porphyry's *Isagoge* is one of only three non-Aristotelian works on which Averroes wrote commentaries. A student of Plotinus produced it in the third century as an introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*; it was then incorporated into the *Organon* as its first volume. On this, see Averroes, *Middle commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge*, trans. and ed. Herbert Davidson (Cambridge, Mass: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1969), translator's introduction, ix-x.

Celestial Sphere (ספר עצם הגלגל; *liber De substantia orbis*) and the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (ספר הפלת ההפלה; *liber Destructionis destructio*).

In his citations, Sforno generally distinguishes between statements made by Aristotle himself, whom he refers to by name (אריסטוטיליס; *Aristoteles*) or by the epithet "the Philosopher" (הפילוסוף; *Phylosophus*), and the elucidations of Averroes, whom he calls Ibn Rushd (אבן רשד; *Avẽ. R.*).[22] Conforming to the Latin tradition, he also refers to Averroes in the *Lumen gentium* as "the Commentator" (*Commentator*). Only occasionally does he refer to the opinions of other philosophers from the Greek and Arabic traditions, such as Plato, Ghazali, and Avicenna—these are all derived from the works of Aristotle and Averroes. Thus, with respect to philosophical statements, Sforno generally cites four types: (i) Aristotle's statements; (ii) Averroes' elucidations; (iii) Averroes' independent statements; (iv) other Greek or Arabic philosophers' opinions cited by Aristotle or Averroes.

As is well known, Averroes composed three types of commentaries on Aristotle's works: a Short Commentary or Compendium, a Middle Commentary or Paraphrase, and a Long Commentary.[23] Whereas the Short and Middle Commentaries are extant for almost all of the corpus, the Long Commentaries are extant for only five treatises: *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics*, *De caelo*, *De anima*, and *Metaphysics*.[24] Sforno does not explicitly indicate whether he read Aristotle directly from his own works or through the *lemmata* of Averroes' commentaries. Moreover, he does not

[22] This tendency to transliterate the Commentator's Arabic name is consistent with the medieval Hebrew philosophical tradition. In this study, however, I have chosen to use the name Averroes rather than Ibn Rushd, since this is the modern convention when discussing his literary incarnation in the Latin West. For a recent discussion on this, see Guido Giglioni, "Introduction," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath*, 1-34, esp. 1-3.

[23] See Ruth Glasner, *Averroes' Physics: A Turning Point in Medieval Natural Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1. See also Averroes, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics: an annotated translation of the so-called Epitome*, trans. Rüdiger Arnzen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), translator's introduction, 1-2.

[24] For an inventory, see Wolfson, "Plan for the Publication," 433-434.

identify which type of commentary he used in his citations of Averroes; he merely refers to them as "commentary" (ביאור; *commentum*).[25]

In order to identify which sources Sforno is citing, I shall focus primarily on the twelfth *quaestio* of the *Light of the Nations*, which discusses the immortality of the individual human intellective soul.[26] His fundamental source for this topic is the *De anima*, the most frequently quoted text in the *quaestio*. What is immediately striking is that his citations of the text match neither the sole known medieval Hebrew translation of that work from the Arabic by Zeraḥyah ben Isaac ben She'altiel Ḥen (ספר הנפש לארסטו, Italy, 1284),[27] nor do they match the *lemmata* from the only extant Hebrew translation of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*, believed to have been produced by Barukh Ibn Ya'ish (ספר הנפש עם פירוש בן רשד האורך, Spain or Italy, before c. 1470).[28] This is demonstrated in Table 2.1, which compares passages from these two Hebrew versions of Aristotle's text with Sforno's citations in his *Or ammim*.[29]

[25] For example, see *Or*, 7v; *Lumen*, 11 (proposition 27).
[26] Likewise, in the third chapter herein, I shall continue using the twelfth *quaestio* as a case study for examining Sforno's method of reading those sources.
[27] See Zonta, "Medieval Hebrew Translations of Philosophical and Scientific Texts," 38, no. 207.
[28] Ibid., 67, no. 524.
[29] For my comparison of Sforno's citations of Aristotle's *De anima* to Zerahyah Hen's Arabic-to-Hebrew translation, I used Gerrit Bos' critical edition. See Aristotle, *Aristotle's* De anima, trans. Zerahiah ben Isaac ben Shealtiel Gracian, ed. Gerrit Bos (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994). For my comparison of Sforno's citations of Aristotle's *De anima* to the *lemmata* contained in Baruch Ibn Ya-ish's Latin-Hebrew translation of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*, I used Berlin O. Fol. 1387, a digital version of which has been made available online by the Thomas-Institute of the University of Cologne (DARE: Digital Averroes Research Environment). For William of Moerbeke's Latin rendering, I used Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 6, Long Commentary on the *De anima* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550). For Michaels Scot's translation, I used Averroes, *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, Mass: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953). I have also examined the translations by Sophianus and Mantino; they are dissimilar to Sforno's Latin citations.

Table 2.1

Sforno's Citation of Aristotle from the *De anima*	**Aristotle's *De anima***	**Aristotle's *textus* in the Long Commentary on the *De anima***
בהיות שאין לשכל האנושי שום טבע זולת זה שהוא כוחיות א"כ זה החלק מהנפש הנקרא שכל רצוני לומר אותו הדבר אשר בו נבדיל ונחשוב אינו בפעל דבר מהנמצאות קודם שיתבונן עכ"ל *Or*, 45r	אבל זולתו יהיה לו טבע זולתי זה, כלומר שהוא איפשר. והדבר גם כן מן הנפש הנקראת שכל, וארצה לומר בשכל הדבר אשר בו נכיר בני אדם ונבדיל, אינו הוא בפועל שום דבר מן הדברים הנמצאים קודם שנשכיל. Zeraḥyah Ḥen 's translation of the *De anima*, ed. Bos, L. 3, C. 4, ll. 224-227, p. 127	וכפי זה לא יהיה לו טבע אחר זולת זה. רצוני שהיא כחיי חלק מהנפש אשר יאמר שכל. וארצה בשכל הדבר אשר בו נבדיל ונחשוב. ואיננו בפועל דבר מהנמצאות טרם השכילו: 15th c. Hebrew translation, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Fol. 1387, 56v
Et si non habet aliam naturam nisi istam, scilicet quod est possibilis. Illud igitur de anima quod dicitur intellectus (et dico illud per quod cogitamus et distinguimus) non est in actu aliquod entium antequam intelligat. *Lumen*, 57r	*Quare neque ipsius ulla est natura, nisi haec, quod possibilis. Qui igitur vocatur animae intellectus (dico autem intellectum, quo intelligit et existimat anima) nihil est actu eorum, quae sunt, antequam intelligant.* William of Moerbeke's translation of Aristotle in *Omnia quae extant opera*, L. 3, C. 5, 160v	*Et sic non habebit naturam nisi istam, scilicet quod est possibilis. Illud igitur de anima quod dicitur intellectus (et dico intellectum illud per quod distinguimus et cogitamus) non est in actu aliquod entium antequam intelligat.* Michael Scot's translation of Aristotle in the Long Commentary on the *De anima*, ed. Crawford, L. 3, C. 5, ll. 1-6, p. 387

The example illustrates Sforno's lexical choices and syntactical constructions in his citations of Aristotle's statements that differ from those of the two medieval Hebrew translators. This does not definitively prove that he did not read either or both of these Hebrew versions of Aristotle, but it is clear that he does not quote them verbatim in his *Or ammim*. Furthermore, Sforno's citation style—how he divides each work into books and chapters in his citations and references—also does not match the divisions used in either of these two Hebrew translations.[30]

[30] On the divisions of the Latin-Hebrew translation of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*, Wolfson writes: "First, the three books of the *De anima* are divided into seventeen *Summae* (Hebrew

For the *Lumen gentium*, however, it is obvious that Sforno did use Michael Scot's early thirteenth-century Arabic-to-Latin rendering of the Long Commentary on the *De anima* as a basis for his translation of Aristotle's statements.[31] As shown in Table 2.1, his citation of Aristotle is almost identical to the *textus* contained in Michael Scot's rendering rather than, for instance, the vulgate translation of William of Moerbeke from the Greek *Vorlage*, which was included in the Aristotle-Averroes Venetian editions of 1483 and 1496[32] and was later retained in the 1552-50 Giunta edition.[33] The divisions used in these fifteenth and sixteenth century editions of

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kelalim) and each *Summa* is subdivided into chapters (Hebrew *perakim*). From Bouyges' edition of Averroes' Long Commentary on *Metaphysics* it may be gathered that no such divisions and subdivisions are used by Averroes in his Long Commentaries. Nor, as I am told by Crawford, are there any such divisions and subdivisions in the manuscripts of the Latin translations of the Long Commentary on *De anima*. Nor, again, are there such divisions and subdivisions in the 1483 edition of the Latin translations of the Long Commentaries. They do appear, however, in the sixteenth century Latin editions, but, in the case of the Long Commentary on *De anima*, which I have examined, they do not agree with those in the Hebrew manuscript." See "Plan for the Publication," 449.

[31] I rely on Hasse's linguistic analysis in which he concludes that Michael Scot was the translator of all four thirteenth-century Arabic-to-Latin translations of Averroes' Long Commentaries (*De caelo*, *Physics*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysics*). See Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2010). On this, Richard Taylor observes: "The *Long Commentary on the De Anima* has but one unequivocal attribution to Michael from among the fifty-seven manuscripts used by Crawford [in his critical edition of *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis de Anima Libros*]." See Averroes, *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, trans. Richard C. Taylor, ed. Therese-Anne Druart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), translator's introduction, cviii. However, Crawford notes that he himself was not able to confirm this: "Codicem Parisinum Bibl. Nat. lat. 16156 (C) verba "Michael Scottus super libros de caelo et mundo et de anima" exhibere testatur Grabmann. Hoc quoque non confirmavimus." See Averroes, *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, Prolegomena, xi.

[32] See Averroes, Long Commentary on the *De anima*, in Aristotle and Averroes, *Opera lat. c. comm. Averrois* (Venice, 1483); Id., Long Commentary on the *De anima*, in Aristotle and Averroes, *Aristotelis Opera* (Venice: O. Scotus, 1496).

[33] In the 1562 Giunta edition, these two medieval translations were supplemented by the sixteenth-century translations of Michael Sophianus (the entirety of Aristotle's *textus*) and Jacob Mantino (both Aristotle's *textus* and Averroes' comments for book 3, chapters 5 and 6), the latter of which was also included in the 1552-50 edition. Thus, three translations of Aristotle's statements regularly occur in the 1562 Giunta edition of the Long Commentary on the *De anima*, and for some parts of the text a fourth translation of Aristotle is offered (together with a new translation of Averroes' commentary from Baruch Ibn Ya'ish's fifteenth-century Hebrew rendering): (1) Moerbeke's rendering, under the heading *Antiqua translatio*; (2) Sophianus' rendering, under the heading *Michaelis Sophiani Interpretatio*; (3) Scot's rendering, under the heading *Averrois Textus* in a larger font than the subsequent comments by Averroes himself; (4) Jacob Mantino's translation. These translations of Aristotle's statements are distinguished by their font style as well as the spacing: Moerbeke's is in roman font; Sophianus' is in italics; Scot's is in roman; Mantino's rendering of Aristotle is also in roman font followed by his translation of Averroes in italics; these are set in a second parallel column of text. The comments of Averroes are identified using Arabic numerals throughout the entire work. This numerical division is common to both Giunta editions as well as the 1483 and 1496 editions, and is what is presently being

Michael Scot's translation are the same as those employed by Sforno in both his Hebrew and Latin versions of the *Light of the Nations* not only for his citations of Averroes but also of Aristotle.[34]

These observations also hold true for Sforno's citations of Averroes' expositions on Aristotle. His Hebrew citations do not match the extant Hebrew translation of the Long Commentary on the *De anima*;[35] his Latin citations are almost identical to Michael Scot's translation. In other words, Sforno read both Aristotle and Averroes from Michael Scot's translation of the Long Commentary on the *De anima*. In the case of the *Lumen gentium*, he copied his citations virtually verbatim; for the *Or ammim*, it would seem that he himself rendered the relevant passages into Hebrew. This is illustrated in Table 2.2, in which a comparison is made of an example of Sforno's citation of Averroes' comments and the corresponding passages from the Hebrew and Latin translations of the Long Commentary on the *De anima*.

Table 2.2

Sforno's Citation of Averroes' comments on Aristotle's *De anima*	**Averroes' Comments in his Long Commentary on the *De anima***
אם היה כח בגוף, הנה אז היה לו תכונה אחרת ואיכות אחר, או היה מתייחס אל הקור או החום, כלומר אל המזג באשר הוא מזג או לאיזה איכות במזג בלבד נוסף על המזג, כמו שהוא הענין בנפש המרגשת והדומים לה, ואם כן היה לו איזה כלי	ואם היה כח בגשם הנה אז היה תכונה מה ואיכות מה. ואם היה לו איכות הנה האיכות ההוא או שייוחס לחום ולקור. רצוני למזג מצד היותו מזג. או היה איכות נמצא במזג ונוסף על המזג כמו שהענין עליו בנפש המרגשת והדומים לה. ואם היה

discussed. See Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 6a, Long Commentary on the *De anima* (Venice: Giunta, 1562), 1r.

[34] These divisions are used in the Long Commentary on the *De anima* contained in the Venetian editions of 1483 and 1496, both Giunta editions, and Crawford's critical edition.

[35] Although Sforno's citations consistently correspond to Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*, I have also examined the relevant passages from Moses Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of Averroes' Middle Commentary; the contents do not match. In addition, the texts are structured differently. For this, I used Alfred Ivry's critical edition. See Averroes, *Averroes' Middle Commentary on Aristotle's* De Anima *in the translation of Moses Ibn Tibbon: Critical edition with an introduction, notes and a glossary*, trans. Moses ben Samuel Ibn Tibbon, ed. Alfred L. Ivry (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2003), 107, ll. 18-26; 110, ll. 72-75. Cf. Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima: A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text with English Translation, Notes, and Introduction*, trans. and ed. Alfred L. Ivry (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 2002), 109, ll. 11-19; 112, ll. 20-25.

גשמי, ובהיות שאין לו איכות שיתייחס אל חום או אל קור ואין לו גם כן כלי גשמי, אם כן אינו כוח בגוף', עכ"ל. *Or*, 46r	כן הנה היה לו כלי גשמי ... אבל אין לו איכות מיוחס לחום ולקור בם ... א"כ איננו מעורב עם הגשם. 15th c. Hebrew translation, Berlin Or. Fol. 1387, 60r
Si esset virtus in corpore, tunc esset alia dispositio et alia qualitas; aut attribueretur calido vel frigido (scilicet in eo quod est complexio), aut esset qualitas existens in complexione: tantum addita complexioni, sicut est de anima sensibili et sibi similibus, et sic haberet instrumentum corporale. Sed non habet qualitatem attributam calido vel frigido, neque habet instrumentum corporale; ergo non est mixtum cum corpore, etc. *Lumen*, 58r	*Idest, si enim esset virtus in corpore, tunc esset aliqua dispositio et aliqua qualitas corporalis; et si haberet qualitatem, tunc illa qualitas aut attribueretur calido aut frigido (scilicet complexioni in eo quod est complexio), aut esset qualitas existens in complexione tantum addita complexioni, sicut est de anima sensibili et sibi similibus, et sic haberet instrumentum corporale. Deinde dixit: Sed non est ita. Idest, sed non habet qualitatem attributam calido et frigido, neque habet instrumentum; ergo non est mixtum cum corpore.* Michael Scot's translation in the Long Commentary on the *De anima*, ed. Crawford, 3 t.c. 6, ll.16-25 (p. 414)

It is particularly significant that Sforno cites Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* in his demonstrations because unlike the Compendium, which was translated into Hebrew by Moses Ibn Tibbon as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century (כללי ספר הנפש, Provence, 1244),[36] or the Middle Commentary, of which two Hebrew translations were made, the first by Shem Tov ben Isaac of Tortosa (ביאור בן רשד לספר הנפש, Spain, c. 1260)[37] and the second by Moses Ibn Tibbon (ביאור ספר הנפש, Provence, 1261),[38] the Long Commentary on the *De anima* played an almost non-existent role in medieval Jewish philosophy.[39] Herbert

[36] See "Medieval Hebrew Translations of Philosophical and Scientific Texts," 30, no. 119.
[37] Ibid., 32, no. 149.
[38] Ibid., 33, no. 154.
[39] For the testimony of Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508) regarding the existence of an Arabic-to-Hebrew translation of the Long Commentary on the third book of the *De anima*, see Wolfson, "Plan for the Publication," 445-447. For a careful study on the Hebrew translations of the Aristotelian corpus through manuscripts of Italian libraries, see Giuliano Tamani, and Mauro Zonta, *Aristoteles Hebraicus: versioni, commenti e compendi del Corpus Aristotelicum nei manoscritti ebraici delle biblioteche italiane* (Venice: Supernova, 1997).

Davidson observed that Moses of Narbonne, Levi ben Gershon, and Shem Tov Ibn Shem Tov all read Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *De anima*. Moreover, although Hillel ben Samuel of Verona accessed Averroes' elucidations from his Long Commentary through Thomas Aquinas' *De unitate intellectus*, it was not until the fifteenth century, that a Jewish philosopher—Elijah del Medigo—would base his system of philosophical psychology directly on Averroes' Long Commentary.[40] This is in contrast to the Scholastic philosophers who only read the Long Commentary and were not at all familiar with Averroes' Compendium or his Middle Commentary on the *De anima*.[41] The implications of this will be discussed in the next chapter of this study.

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[40] Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 298-300. Nevertheless, some medieval Jewish scholars did read Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* through Hebrew transcriptions of the Arabic text. On this, see Colette Sirat and Marc Geoffroy, "La version arabo-hébraïque médiévale du Grand Commentaire d'Averroès sur le De anima d'Aristote et Shem Tov b. Joseph b. Shem Tov," in *Florilegium mediaevale: études offertes à Jacqueline Hamesse à l'occasion de son éméritat*, ed. José Francisco Meirinhos, and Olga Weijers (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2009), 541-561; David Wirmer, "Essay-Review: Le Grand Commentaire d'Averroès au *De anima* et ses lecteurs juifs," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 17 (2007): 135-158. Michael Engel concludes that although Elijah del Medigo did use Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*, he employed Scot's Latin translation rather than the fifteenth-century Hebrew translation. See Michael Engel, *Elijah Del Medigo and Paduan Aristotelianism*, 26-28.

[41] On the availability of Latin translations of the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus in the medieval and Renaissance periods, see Cranz, "Editions of the Latin Aristotle Accompanied by the Commentaries of Averroes;" Gerhard Endress, "Averrois Opera. A Bibliography of Editions and Contributions to the Text," in *Averroes and the Aristotelian tradition: sources, constitution, and reception of the philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126-1198): proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Averroicum, Cologne, 1996*, ed. Gerhard Endress, Jan Aertsen, and Klaus Braun (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 339-384. On later translations, see Pierce Butler, "Fifteenth Century Editions of Arabic Authors in Latin Translation," in *The Macdonald presentation volume, a tribute to Duncan Black Macdonald, consisting of articles by former students, presented to him on his seventieth birthday, April 9, 1933* (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1933), 63-71. Crawford notes the presence of a single manuscript of the Middle Commentary in Latin: "In Aristotelis *De Anima* libros tria commentaria scripsit Averroes, *Compendium* scilicet, et *Medium* et *Magnum*, quorum extant versiones latinae Mediii et Magni tantum. [n. 2:] In unico codice Vat. lat. 4551, ff. 1r-67v. Incipit "*Et quia vidimus quod noticia speculativa est ex utilibus.*"" See *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, prolegomena, xi, n. 2. On this, Ivry remarks: "The *Middle Commentary* on *De anima* has had an unusual afterlife of its own. Like a number of Averroes' other commentaries, it was neglected in the Muslim world and not known to Christian scholastics. An anonymous Latin translation did appear at some point in the fifteenth century, but it made little if any impression upon European scholars and did not find its way into any of the Renaissance editions of Averröes' commentaries. By that time, the *Long Commentary* on *De anima* had become established in Europe as the Averroan commentary on that text and had spawned an entire literature of responses, in good part, to Averroes' views." See, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's* De Anima*: A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text*, translator's introduction, xxviii.

Sforno also read Aristotle and Averroes through the latter's Long Commentaries for most of the other works of the corpus for which this type of commentary was extant. His Latin citations of the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*,[42] and *De caelo* are all identical to Scot's translations of the Long Commentaries on them.[43] This is noteworthy with regard to the Long Commentary on the *De caelo* because like that of the *De anima*, it was not available in the Hebrew philosophical tradition; it was extant only in Latin translation.[44]

When Sforno cites a work for which no Long Commentary is extant, he resorts to Averroes' Middle Commentaries. His citations in the *Lumen gentium* of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are identical to Hermannus Alemannus' medieval Latin

[42] Charles Manekin mistakenly assumes that in the thirteenth *quaestio*, Sforno cites Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Metaphysics*. In fact, Sforno cites the Long Commentary. See Obadiah Sforno, "Obadiah Sforno, *Light of the Peoples* (1537) [On Morality]," 295. For my examination of the Middle Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, I used Mauro Zonta's critical edition of the two extant Hebrew versions. See Averroes, *Il Commento medio di Averroè alla Metafisica di Aristotele nella tradizione ebraica: edizione delle versioni ebraiche medievali di Zerahyah Hen e di Qalonymos ben Qalonymos*, ed. Mauro Zonta, trans. Ḳalonimus ben Ḳalonimus ben Me'ir, and Zeraḥyah Ḥen, (Pavia: Pavia University Press, 2011), vol. II/1, libro II, pp. 9-29. With regard to Averroes' commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, Richard Taylor incorrectly asserts that the Long Commentary was absent from the medieval Hebrew philosophical tradition: "It is particularly significant that the *Long Commentaries* on the *De Anima* and on the *Metaphysics* were not included [among the works translated into Hebrew during the Middle Ages], since these contain his [i.e., Averroes'] final positions on soul, intellect, and personal immortality as well as on God and the nature of metaphysical science." See Richard Taylor, "Averroes: religious dialectic and Aristotelian philosophical thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson, and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), 180-200, 182. In fact, however, the Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* was translated into Hebrew probably by Qalonymos ben Qalonymos c. 1315, and then revised by Moses of Beaucaire in 1320-1325; these versions are extant in sixteen manuscripts. See Mauro Zonta, "Averroes' Interpretations of Aristotle's Metaphysics," in *Appropriation, interpretation and criticism: philosophical and theological exchanges between the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin intellectual traditions*, ed. Alexander Fidora, and Nicola Polloni (Rome: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études médiévales, 2017), 261-277, esp. 265-269. See also Id., "Medieval Hebrew Translations of Philosophical and Scientific Texts: *A Chronological Table*," 51, #352; 54, #378.

[43] In the case of the *Posterior Analytics*, I have been unable to identify conclusively which commentary Sforno cites. He makes reference to it once in his preliminary list of propositions, and then actually quotes that same text in his third *quaestio* on the eternity of prime matter (*Or*, 15v; *Lumen*, 23). In both instances he cites Averroes' Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, book 2, chapter 11. Upon examining Burana's translation of Averroes' Long and Middle Commentaries in the 1550 Giunta edition (vol. 1, p. 240v), I believe that Sforno is actually citing book 1, chapter 11 of the Middle Commentary. Sforno's Latin text matches in terms of content, but its wording is dissimilar. I suspect that he is actually quoting William of Luna's medieval translation of the Middle Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*. Further research is needed.

[44] See *Aristoteles Hebraicus*, 39, n. 32.

rendering of the Middle Commentary;[45] the corresponding Hebrew passages in the *Or ammim* do not match the fourteenth-century Hebrew translation of Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles.[46] This is demonstrated in Table 2.3.[47]

Table 2.3

Sforno's Citation of Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*	**Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics***
הם אמנם שתי כוונות מתנגדות זו לזו בטבע. והם הכוונה הכללית אשר היא מפאת השכל והפרטית אשר היא מפאת המתאוה עכ"ל. *Or*, 50v	הנה שתי הסברות סותרות בטבע. וכאשר הסכימו שתי הסברות בדבר מה, רצוני הסברא הכוללת אשר מפני השכל והחלקית אשר מפני התאוה... Samuel ben Judah's Hebrew Translation of the Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Berman, 7:14, ll. 182-183 (p. 234)
Duae ergo opiniones sibi invicem contradicentes sunt naturaliter. Intendo opinionem universalem, quae est ex parte intellectus, et particularem, quae est ex parte concupiscentiae, etc. *Lumen*, 62r	*Duae ergo opiniones sibi contradicentes sunt naturaliter... Intendo opinionem universalem, quae est ex parte intellectus, et particularem, quae est ex parte concupiscentiae.* Hermannus Alemannus' Latin translation of the Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Giunta (1550), 7 t.c. 3, 48v[48]

This is also the case for Sforno's citations of the *De generatione et corruptione*. His Hebrew citations do not match Calonymus ben Calonymus' 1316

[45] For linguistic evidence proving that Hermannus Alemannus translated the Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Hasse, *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century*.

[46] On Samuel ben Judah's Hebrew translation of the Middle Commentary, see Lawrence V. Berman, "Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Medieval Hebrew Literature," in *Multiple Averroès: Actes du Colloque international organisé à l'occasion du 850e anniversaire de la naissance d'Averroès, Paris 20-23 Septembre 1976* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1978), 287-321, esp. 293-297.

[47] For my comparison of Sforno's Hebrew citations of the Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* with Samuel ben Judah's translation, I used Lawrence Berman's critical edition of the text. See Averroes, *Averroes' Middle commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics in the Hebrew version of Samuel Ben Judah*, trans. Samuel ben Judah, ed. Lawrence V. Berman (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999). For the Latin citations, I used Averroes, Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Aristotle, *Opera lat. c. comm. Averrois* (Venice, 1483).

[48] Cf. Averroes, Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Aristotle, *Opera lat. c. comm. Averrois* (Venice, 1483), L. 7, C. 5, 533.

translation of Averroes' Middle commentary on the work; his Latin citations are identical to Michael Scot's thirteenth-century Latin translation.[49] An example containing Aristotle's *textus* and Averroes' commentary is presented in Table 2.4.[50]

Table 2.4

Sforno's Citation of the Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione*	**Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione***
וזה בעצמו נראה שיתבאר בראיית ארסטו' בספר ההוייה וההפסד מאמר ב' פרק מה באמרו לא יתכן שהנפש תתהוה מהיסודות כי פעולות הנפש מאין יבואו אליה ודבריו אלה ביאר אבן רשד באמרו כי היה נמנע לתת סבה לפעולות הנפש ומיני התפעלותה שיהיו מן היסודות והוסיף ואמר אין ליחס שום אחת מפעולותיה לפעולות הגשמיים עכ"ל *Or*, 46r	ומן הגונה גם כן אמרו שהנפש תהיה מן היסודות. וזה שאין דרך לו להשלים סבות פעולות הנפש ולא הפעליותיה מהיסודות... אלא שאין דבר מהפעליותיה מיוחס אל הפעליות הגשמים. Calonymus ben Calonymus' Hebrew Translation of the Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione*, ed. Kurland, 79, ll. 44-48
Et idem videtur inferri ratione et auctoritate Phylosophi in libri De generatione 2 t.c. 45, ubi dicit: Inconveniens est anima ex elementis, alterationes enim animae quomodo erunt, etc. Ubi Aven R. exponens, ait: Inopinabile enim est reddere causam actionum animae, et passionum eius ex elementis. Subdit ibidem dicens: Sed non videtur aliqua actio attribui actionibus corporum etc. *Lumen*, 58r	[*textus*:] *Inconveniens autem est, et si anima ex elementis, aut unum aliquod eorum, alterationes enim animae quomodo erunt...* [*comm.*:] *Impossibile enim est reddere causam actionum animae, et passionum eius ex elementis... Sed non videtur aliqua actio attribui actionibus corporum.* Michael Scot's Latin translation of the Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione* in *Omnia quae extant opera*, 2 t.c. 45, 172r

[49] On Michael Scot as the translator of the Middle Commentary on the *De Generatione et Corruptione*, see *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century*. I also compared Sforno's Hebrew citations with Kurland's critical edition of Moses Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of Averroes' Compendium of the same book of Aristotle. There is no evidence that Sforno employed either of these Hebrew translations in his *Or ammim*.

[50] For my comparison of Sforno's Hebrew citations of the Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione* with Calonymus ben Calonymus' translation, I used Samuel Kurland's critical edition of the text. See Averroes, *Commentarium Medium & Epitome in Aristotelis "De generatione et corruptione" [Versionum Hebraicarum]*," trans. Calonymus ben Calonymus, ed. Samuel Kurland (Cambridge Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, Semitic Department of Harvard University, 1958). For the Latin citations, I used Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 5, Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550).

When citing Averroes' independent works, the same trend occurs throughout. Table 2.5 compares an example citation of the *De substantia orbis* in the *Or ammim* with its corresponding passage from the anonymously produced medieval Hebrew translation.[51] Sforno's phrasing and terminology are dissimilar to those of the medieval Hebrew version. The corresponding passage from the *Lumen gentium* is compared to Michael Scot's rendering;[52] the Latin passages are virtually identical.

Table 2.5

Sforno's Citation of the *De substantia orbis*	**Averroes' *De substantia orbis***
וכן באר בספר עצם הגלגל פרק ד' באמרו היה בהכרח שזה הכח שהוא בלתי קל ובלתי כבד יהיה כגשם פשוט ושאין לו נושא ולא הפכי ושיהיה נפש בלתי מעורב עם חומר אבל הוא נפש של גשם נצחי באופן שזאת הנפש אינה מופשטת מן הגשם שלה ועם זה היא נבדלת ממנו *Or*, 47r	...ונפש אם היתה עם זה הטבע יחויב שיהיה זה הכח, אשר הוא לא כבד ולא קל, בגרם פשוט, ושלא יהיה לו נושא, ולא הפך, ושיהיה נפש בלא ספק בלתי מעורב עם הטבע אבל הוא נפש לגרם נצחי, ושתהיה זאת הנפש בלתי נבדלת מגשמה ושתיהיה עם זה נבדלת... Anonymous Hebrew Translation of the *De substantia orbis*, ed. Hyman, book 4, ll. 8-11 (דף מח')
Necesse est ut haec virtus, quae neque gravis, neque levis, sit in corpore simplici; et ipsam non habere subiectum, neque contrarium. Et ut sit anima, necessario non admixta materiae, sed anima corporis aeterni; ita quod ista anima sit non admixta corpori suo, et cum hoc, non separata ab ipso. *Lumen*, 59r	*Necesse fuit ut haec virtus, quae neque levis, neque gravis, sit in corpore simplici; non habens subiectum, nec contrarium. Et ut sit anima, necessario non admixta materiae, sed anima corporis aeterni; ita ut ista anima non sit abstracta a corpore, et cum hoc, separata ab ipso.* Michael Scot's Latin translation of the *Sermo de substantia orbis* in *Omnia quae extant opera*, C. 4, 6r

[51] For my comparison of Sforno's Hebrew citations of the *De substantia orbis* with the anonymous medieval Hebrew translation, I used Arthur Hyman's critical edition of the text. See Averroes, *Averroes' De substantia orbis*: *Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with English Translation and Commentary*, ed. Arthur Hyman (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Jerusalem: The Medieval Academy of America and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986). For the Latin citations, I used Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 9, *Sermo de substantia orbis* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550).

[52] On Michael Scot as the translator of this text, see *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century*.

With regard to Averroes' other independent treatise, the *Destructio destructionum*, Sforno cites the medieval Arabic-to-Latin version of Calonymos ben Calonymos of Arles rather than the sixteenth-century Hebrew-to-Latin translation of Calo Calonymos.[53] This is easily discernable because the earlier version contains only fourteen of the twenty dissertations of the original Arabic text, whereas the later translation has all twenty dissertations; hence, the divisions of the two versions are somewhat dissimilar. His citations match the earlier version both in terms of division and text.[54]

It is particularly interesting that Sforno cites Aristotle's *Politics*, which was unknown in the Judeo-Arabic philosophical tradition. He replaces Plato's *Republic*, which was the political text read by medieval Hebrew scholars.[55] He also disregards Averroes' Compendium on the *Republic*, preserved in Joseph Ibn Caspi's fourteenth-century Hebrew translation and then introduced to the Latin West through the Hebrew-to-Latin renderings of Elijah del Medigo (1491) and Jacob Mantino (1539).[56]

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[53] Beatrice Zedler notes that this is the version edited and commented on by Agostino Nifo in his 1497 edition. It was reprinted in 1529 and 1542. The later version was printed in 1527, 1550, 1560, and 1573. See Averroes, *Averroes'* Destructio Destructionum Philosophiae Algazelis *in the Latin Version of Calo Calonymos*, ed. Beatrice Hope Zedler (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Marquette University Press, 1961), 51-52; 55-56.

[54] Hence, a passage cited by Sforno from the first section of the fourteenth dissertation, for example, is indeed found in the first section of the fourteenth dissertation of Nifo's 1529 edition. Moreover, the cited passage in the *Lumen gentium* is identical to the text of that version. By contrast, the corresponding discussion in the 1552-1550 Giunta edition, which uses the sixteenth-century translation, occurs in the fifteenth inquiry. See *Lumen*, 63v; cf. Averroes, *Destructio destructionum Averrois*, ed. Agostino Nifo (Lyons: Scipio de Gabiano, 1529), 268r; cf. Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 9, *Destructio destructionum* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), 52r-52v; cf. Averroes, *Averroes' Tahafut al-tahafut (The incoherence of the incoherence) Volumes 1 and II*, trans. Simon Van den Bergh (London: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2012), 293. Note that in the discussion of the Van den Bergh's translation, the statement in question appears to be altogether absent from the text. I have also compared Sforno's Hebrew citations of the *Destructio* with Calonymos ben David ben Todros' Hebrew translation of the work—*Hapalat ha-hapalah*. Sforno does not appear to have based his own translation on that text. For this, I used Bod ms. Mich. 293.

[55] On the absence of Aristotle's *Politics* and the presence of Plato's *Republic* in medieval and Renaissance Jewish philosophy, see Abraham Melamed, "Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Political Philosophy," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), 415-449, esp. 419-421.

[56] Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, ed. Ralph Lerner (London: Cornell University Press, 1974) translator's introduction, vii. In my opinion, these observations cast doubt on Robert Bonfil's assertion that "it is very reasonable to assume that Rabbi Obadia Sforno read Plato's *Republic* in Jacob Mantino's

For his Latin citations of the *Politics*, he quotes verbatim the translation of the fifteenth-century humanist Leonardo Bruni rather than, for example, William of Moerbeke thirteenth-century translation.[57]

Another book that Sforno completely overlooks, despite his heavy reliance on the Averroan corpus, is the *Decisive Treatise*[58]—a work that addresses one of the key themes of the *Light of the Nations*, namely, the relationship between philosophy and religion.[59] Although the text was available in Hebrew from the end of the thirteenth century,[60] arguably providing a basis for Shem Tov ben Joseph Falaquera's *Epistle of the Debate* (אגרת הויכוח)[61] as well as Elijah del Medigo's *Examination of Religion* (בחינת הדת),[62] a Latin translation was never produced and it was therefore not part of the Western reception of the Averroan corpus.[63]

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translation, which was later published in the classic Venetian edition of Aristotle's writings together with the commentaries of Ibn Rushd." See Robert Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul and Its Holiness in the Thought of R. Obadiah Sforno," 222, n. 96. Note that Mantino's translation in the 1552-50 Giunta edition is actually of Averroes' Compendium on the *Republic* and not of the *Republic* itself. See Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 3, Compendium on Plato's *Republic* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), 174v.

[57] See, for example, *Or*, 57r; *Lumen*, 66v; cf. Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 3, *Politics* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), 118r; cf. *Politics* I.8.1256b16. I will briefly discuss this particular citation in the fourth chapter herein, 4.7 "The Cosmic Status of Humankind." Bruni's translation is in the 1483 Venice edition as well as the 1552-1550 Giunta edition. On this, see F. Edward Cranz, *A Bibliography of Aristotle Editions, 1501-1600*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, 2nd rev. ed. (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1984), 217. On the role of Moerbeke's translation in the Western rediscovery of Aristotle's political thought as well as the later development of political thought in Renaissance Italy (including Leonardo Bruni's writings), see Quentin Skinner, "Political Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Keßler, and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 389-452. On Leonardo Bruni, see Brian P. Copenhaver, and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 76-84.

[58] This is how Charles Butterworth translates the title of Averroes' Arabic treatise *kitab fasl al-maqal*. For his comments regarding the title, see Averroes, *The book of the decisive treatise determining the connection between the law and wisdom & epistle dedicatory*, ed. and trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2008), introduction, xix.

[59] See Averroes, *Averroes,* the Decisive Treatise*: The Connection between Islamic Religious Law and Philosophy*, ed. Massimo Campanini (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2017), introduction, 9-23.

[60] See Norman Golb, "The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' *Fasl Al-Maqal*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* (1956-1957), 25: 91-113, esp. 93; 26: 41-64.

[61] On the similarities and differences between these two works, see Steven Harvey, "The *Decisive Treatise* as a Source of Falaquera's *Epistle of the Debate*," in *Falaquera's* Epistle of the Debate: *An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Steven Harvey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 83-98.

[62] See Alfred Ivry, "Remnants of Jewish Averroism in the Renaissance," esp. 250-261.

[63] See Alfred Ivry, "Averroes and the West: The First Encounter/Non-encounter." See also Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Success and suppression: Arabic sciences and philosophy in the Renaissance*, 341-

Sforno's reliance on Latin texts, even for works that were not part of the Hebrew philosophical tradition such as Aristotle's *Politics* and Averroes' Long Commentaries on the *De anima* and the *De Caelo* suggests that he was rather engrossed in contemporary Latin scholarship. His disregard for works such as Plato's *Republic* and Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*, despite their prominence in medieval Jewish philosophy, could be taken as further evidence of this.[64]

2.4 HEBREW PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

As discussed in the previous chapter, Sforno refers to Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and his *Mishneh Torah* in the epistle to the Hebrew reader; he also offers a single quotation of the *Guide* and Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Lexicon of Philosophical Terms* in the Hebrew introduction.[65] In these references and citations, which occur only in the *Or ammim*, Sforno is critical of Maimonides and his pupil for their characterization of Aristotle's philosophy as superior to Scripture. Maimonides' *Guide* appears twice more in the body of the treatise and it is the sole Hebrew philosophical work explicitly cited in the *quaestiones* themselves. The first citation occurs in the second *quaestio* on the eternity of the four elements, where Sforno criticizes Maimonides' advocacy of Aristotle's assertion that the differences between the four elements are derived from their proximity to their encompassing celestial

345. Another possible reason for Sforno's overlooking this particular work might relate to the fact that his own designation of scriptural discourse as on a par with philosophical demonstration does not accord with the position advocated by Averroes in his *Decisive Treatise*, as discussed in the first chapter herein, 1.6 "Methods and Modes of Discourse."

[64] It is also possible that Sforno's decision to read Aristotle and Averroes from the Latin tradition could have been because of its ready availability. As discussed, multiple editions of the corpus had been produced in Latin by the middle of the sixteenth century.

[65] See the previous chapter herein, 1.2 "Faith and Reason."

sphere.[66] The second appears in the fourth *quaestio* on the eternity of the heavens, where Sforno expresses his approval of Maimonides' proof for the temporal production of the world.[67] Like the initial references and citations in the epistle and introduction, these two citations are absent from the *Lumen gentium* despite the fact that the *Guide* had already become available to Latin readers through its medieval translation and had been cited by prominent Christian scholars such as Thomas Aquinas.[68] Their absence, therefore, may be attributed to Sforno's reluctance to criticize Maimonides to his gentile readers, since the majority of these citations portray an unfavorable assessment of the medieval Jewish philosopher.

Sforno does not mention any other Jewish philosophical book. For example, he does not refer to or cite Isaac Albalag's *Improvement of the Philosophers' Doctrines* (תיקון הדעות),[69] Hillel ben Samuel of Verona's *Rewards of the Soul* (תגמולי הנפש),[70] the commentaries of Joseph Ibn Caspi,[71] Levi ben Gershon's super-

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[66] *Or*, 13v: "ומה מאד נפלאו דברי הרמבם ז"ל שכתב בספר מורה הנבוכ' מאמר ב' פרק י"ח [sic.] בהיתר זה הספק והשיב כמליץ בעד ארסטו' ואמר כי התחלפות היסודות נמשך להתחלפות המקו' בקרבתו ומרחקו מן הגלגל כאלו המקום היה סבת מציאות הצורה..."
Cf. *Lumen*, 21.

[67] *Or*, 17v: "ולזה אמר הרב בספר המורה מאמר ג' פרק י"ג וז"ל הגדולה שבראייו' על חדוש העולם הוא מה שיעמוד עליו המופת בנמצאות הטבעיות כי לכל דבר מהם תכלית. והוסיף ואמר ולא יצוייר כוונה רק עם התחדשות מחדש עכ"ל. ומזה יתחייב שמציאו' הפועל ומציאו' כוונת התכלי' אצלו קודמי' בזמן ובהכרח לפעלתם."
Cf. *Lumen*, 28.

[68] For a comprehensive study on the reception of Maimonides in the Latin West from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, see Görge K. Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses: Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2004).

[69] Oliver Leaman considers Albalag "the first clear Jewish Averroist." See Oliver Leaman, "Jewish Averroism," 772-774. On Albalag's Hebrew translation and criticism of Al-Ghazali's *Intentions of the Philosophers*, see Georges Vajda, *Isaac Albalag, Averroïste Juif, Traducteur Et Annotateur D'al-Ghazâlî* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1960). For an edition of the treatise, see Isaac Albalag, *Sefer tiqqun ha-de'ot*, ed. Georges Vajda (Jerusalem: Académie Nationale des Sciences et des Lettres, 1973).

[70] On this late thirteenth-century treatise, which draws from Avicenna, Averroes, and Thomas Aquinas in its discussion of the question of the immortality of the human soul, see Hillel ben Samuel, *Sefer tagmulé ha-nefesh (Book of the rewards of the soul, ed.* Joseph Sermoneta (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1981), esp. English summary, iv-viii.

[71] On Joseph Ibn Caspi as a "Jewish Averroist," see "Jewish Averroism," 774-775. On Ibn Caspi's literary activity and his opinion on the relationship between philosophy and religion, see Barry Mesch, *Studies in Joseph Ibn Caspi: Fourteenth-Century Philosopher and Exegete* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

commentaries on Averroes,[72] his *Wars of the Lord* (מלחמות השם),[73] Moses of Narbonne's *Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul* (מאמר בשלמות הנפש),[74] or Ḥasdai Crescas' *Light of the Lord* (אור אדני)[75]—works that engage with many of the Aristotelian-Averroan principles that Sforno discusses in his *Light of the Nations*. Likewise, he does not cite any of the medieval Hebrew encyclopaedias of natural philosophy, such as Judah ben Solomon Cohen's *Exposition of Wisdom* (מדרש החכמה)[76] or Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's *Opinions of the Philosophers* (דעות הפילוסופים),[77] which are also informed by the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus. Finally, he makes no mention of the treatises of his Jewish contemporaries who had received Averroes' writings, such as Judah Messer Leon, Calo Calonymos ben David,

[72] Ruth Glasner calls Gersonides "the most systematic Jewish commentator on Ibn Rushd," noting that he wrote super-commentaries on: (i) the Middle Commentaries on all the books of the *Organon* available to him; (ii) all the Short Commentaries on natural science; (iii) the Middle Commentaries on the natural sciences (which he did not complete); (iv) the Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (also incomplete). See Ruth Glasner, "The Evolution of the Genre of the Philosophical-Scientific Commentary: *Hebrew Supercommentaries on Aristotle's* Physics," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, 182-206, esp. 189. See also, ead., "Levi Ben Gershom and the Study of Ibn Rushd in the Fourteenth Century," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 86, no. 1-2 (Jul. - Oct., 1995): 51-90; ead., "On the Writing of Gersonides' Philosophical Commentaries," in *Les méthodes de travail de Gersonide et le maniement du savoir chez les scolastiques*, ed. Sara Klein-Braslavy, Colette Sirat, and Olga Weijers (Paris: Vrin, 2003), 90-103.

[73] On Gersonides, see Seymour Feldman, "Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, and Oliver Leaman, 379-398. See also, Id., "Gersonides' Proofs for the Creation of the Universe," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 35 (1967): 113-137. For an English translation of Gersonides' *magnum opus*, see Levi ben Gershom, *The Wars of the Lord*, trans. Seymour Feldman, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984-1999).

[74] For a discussion of this treatise, see Alfred L. Ivry, "Moses of Narbonne's *Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul*: A Methodological and Conceptual Analysis," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, no. 4 (1967): 271-297. For a critical edition, see Moses of Narbonne, *Ma'amar Bi-Shelemut Ha-Nefesh (Treatise of the Perfection of the Soul)*, ed. Alfred Ivry (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1977).

[75] On Crescas, see Daniel J. Lasker, "Chasdai Crescas," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, 399-414. On Averroes' Middle Commentaries and Long Commentary on the *Physics* as the immediate sources of Crescas' knowledge of Aristotle for his critique of Maimonides' twenty-five propositions, see Ḥasdai Crescas, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle: Problems of Aristotle's Physics in Jewish and Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Harry A. Wolfson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), introduction, 1-23.

[76] On Judah Ben Solomon Ha-Cohen's implicit use of Averroes' Middle Commentaries and Compendia in reading Aristotle in his *Midrash Ha-Hokhmah*, see Resianne Fontaine, "Judah ben Solomon ha-Cohen's *Midrash ha-Hokhmah*: Its Sources and Use of Sources," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy Proceedings of the Bar-Ilan University Conference*, ed. Steven Harvey (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000), 191-210.

[77] On Falaquera's use of Averroes in his encyclopaedia, see Steven Harvey, "Shem-Tov Ibn Falaquera's *De'ot ha-Filosofim*: Its Sources and Use of Sources," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias*, 211-237.

or Elijah del Medigo.[78] Since it is highly improbable that Sforno was unfamiliar with such works, I would argue that his disregard for them reflects the treatise's polemical purpose, namely, to respond to Aristotle and Averroes through their own texts, which were authoritative in both the Hebrew and Latin philosophical traditions. This is further supported by Sforno's indifference to Latin authors as well—a point that will be taken up shortly.

Despite the absence of explicitly cited Hebrew philosophical sources in the *Light of the Nations*, some modern scholars have speculated regarding Sforno's implicit reliance on them. For example, Robert Bonfil argued that Sforno derived certain elements of his moral philosophy from the tenth-century Jewish Neoplatonist, Isaac Israeli.[79] He also pointed out the similarities between Sforno's theory on the ultimate end of the human soul and those of the fifteenth-century Jewish philosophers, Abraham Shalom and Isaac Abravanel.[80] Similarly, Hava Tirosh-Rothschild observed that both Sforno and the fourteenth-century Jewish philosopher, Ḥasdai Crescas, responded to Maimonides' emphasis on intellectual beatitude by turning their attention to the moral and performative elements involved in human perfection.[81] The tracing of un-cited sources in a text like Sforno's *Light of the Nations* is, I believe, fraught with difficulty. This is particularly so, because by the sixteenth century, Peripatetic philosophy—the tradition from which Sforno derived his arguments—had developed in wide-ranging and varied ways.[82] Nevertheless, I shall attempt to examine some of these claims in the fourth chapter of this study.[83]

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[78] On these three Aristotelian scholars of Renaissance Italy, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish Philosophy on the eve of modernity," 512-517.
[79] See Robert Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul and Its Holiness in the Thought of R. Obadiah Sforno," 219-221.
[80] Ibid., 224; 232.
[81] See Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish philosophy on the eve of modernity," 518.
[82] For a discussion on the problems involved in tracing sources of medieval philosophical texts, see Steven Harvey, "The *Decisive Treatise* as a Source of Falaquera's *Epistle of the Debate*," in Ibn

2.5 LATIN PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

Robert Bonfil also put forward an array of possible Latin sources on which Sforno may have relied. For example, he commented on the questions raised by Sforno's contemporaries Pietro Pomponazzi and Agostino Nifo regarding creation and the immortality of the soul, suggesting parallels between some of their ideas and those of Sforno. He also proposed that Sforno's treatment of collective and individual providence is an expression of the concept of *dignitas hominis* prevalent in Renaissance humanism, recalling Coluccio Salutati's synthesis of scholasticism and humanism as well as the views of the Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino.[84] With regard to Christian Scholastic authorities, Bonfil ventured further, asserting that Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* is quoted almost verbatim in many of Sforno's arguments.[85]

In order to demonstrate this, Bonfil appended five truncated passages from the Hebrew *Or ammim* that deal with the immortality of the soul together with five sections from the sixth article of the seventy-fifth *quaestio* of Thomas' *Summa theologiae*, which also discuss this issue.[86] In his comparison, however, he only presented the Hebrew text of the *Light of the Nations* without providing the Latin rendering.[87] This omission together with the exclusion of portions of the arguments as well as the sources explicitly cited by the two authors, prevent an accurate

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Falaquera, *Falaquera's* Epistle of the Debate*: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy*," ed. and trans. Steven Harvey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 83-98, esp. 83-84.

[83] See the fourth chapter herein, 4.6 "Perfection through Moral Virtue."

[84] See Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul," passim.

[85] "The Doctrine of the Human Soul," 210: "חותמו של האריסטוטליזם הסכולאסטי טבוע עמוק בחיבורו, הן במבנהו החיצוני המורכב מחמש עשרה "חקירות" (quaestiones) טיפוסיות לעולם הסכולאסטיקה של ימי הביניים, הן בתוכנו: לא זו בלבד שאריסטו ואבן רשד מוזכרים כמעט בכל שורה כסמכויות שדבריהם הם בחינת מושכלות שאין לערער אחריהם (auctoritas phylosophi), אלא שפעמים מובאים טיעוניהם של גדולי הסכולאסטיקה הנוצרית, ותומאס בראשם, כמעט בלשונם."

[86] He did this in columnar format to facilitate comparison. See ibid., 255-257.

[87] In his third appendix to the same article, Bonfil did compare select passages of the Hebrew and Latin texts of the *Light of the Nations*, noting the differences between them. In his fourth appendix, however, he omitted the Latin text.

comparison of the passages in question. In my opinion, a careful examination of these passages suggests that there is insufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that Sforno was quoting or deriving his arguments from Thomas' *Summa theologiae* in these instances. In order to test Bonfil's claim, I shall consider two of the five sets of passages presented in the fourth appendix of his article. In Table 2.6, the first example of Sforno's argument is provided along with the proposed equivalent passage from Thomas. A Hebrew phrase omitted by Bonfil is restored,[88] as is the corresponding Latin passage from the *Lumen gentium*. The arguments are then presented according to their logical structure, analysed into premises and conclusions.

Table 2.6

Passage from the *Or ammim*	**Parallel passage from the *Lumen gentium***	**Proposed equivalent passage from the *Summa theologiae*[89]**
נחקור אם הנפש האנושית השכלית [אשר בה היה האדם מדבר בעצם] היא בלתי נפסדת אם אין. ונראה בתחלת העיון שהיא אמנם נפסדת ראשונה שכל צורת נפסד היא אמנם נפסדת והנה הנפש האנושית השכלי' היא צורת נפסד אם כן היא נפסדת.	*Dubitatur utrum intellectiva hominis anima, qua substantialiter dicitur rationalis fit, quid immortale, vel non. Et videtur quod non. Sic primo arguendo: Nulla mortalium forma est immortalis; intellectiva hominis anima est huiusmodi; ergo non est immortalis.*	*Utrum anima humana sit incorruptibilis. Ad sextum sic proceditur: I. Videtur quod anima humana sit corruptibilis. Quorum enim est simile principium et similis processus, videtur esse similis finis. Sed simile est principium generationis hominum et jumentorum... Similis est etiam vitae processus in utrisque... Sed anima brutorum animalium est corruptibilis, ergo et anima humana est corruptibilis.*
Or, 42v	*Lumen*, 55v	*Summa theologiae* (Ia. 75, 6)
(i) Every formal cause of a	(i) No formal cause of a	(i) Things that have a

[88] The section omitted by Bonfil is provided here in square brackets.
[89] For my citations of the Latin text, I rely on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume II, Man (1a75-83)*, trans. Timothy Suttor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 26-33. I have also consulted Thomas Aquinas, *The treatise on human nature: Summa theologiae 1a 75-89*, trans. Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2002), 13-16.

corruptible thing is corruptible; (ii) Every human intellective soul is the formal cause of a corruptible thing; ∴ (iii) Every human intellective soul is corruptible.	mortal thing is immortal; (ii) Every human intellective soul is the formal cause of a mortal thing; ∴ (iii) No human intellective soul is immortal.	similar beginning and process have the same end; (ii) Human beings and animals have the same beginning and life process; ∴ (iii) Human beings and animals have the same end. (iv) With regard to end, the soul of animals is corruptible; ∴ (v) With regard to end, the human soul is corruptible.

As illustrated, both authors initially state the question as an alternative, using the term "whether" (אם; *utrum*). Unlike Thomas, however, Sforno explicitly articulates the alternative at the conclusion of the statement, tacking on the phrase "or not" (אם אין; *vel non*). In the *Or ammim*, Sforno expresses the concept of the soul's immortality as בלתי נפסדת ("incorruptible"), which parallels Thomas' *incorruptibilis*; however, his use of *immortalis* in the *Lumen gentium* is dissimilar. In both texts of the treatise, Sforno describes the subject of the *quaestio* as the "human intellective soul" (הנפש האנושית השכלית; *intellectiva hominis anima*); by contrast, Thomas employs the more generic term *anima humana* ("human soul"). Sforno continues in the *Or ammim* with "by which the human being is, in substance, a speaking being" (אשר בה היה האדם מדבר בעצם), and in the *Lumen gentium* with "by which, he is said to become, in substance, rational" (*qua substantialiter dicitur rationalis fit*). Bonfil's omission of this phrase from his comparison glosses over Sforno's emphasis on the intellectual character of the human being, which is what distinguishes his subsequent argument from that of Thomas.

The logical form and substance of Sforno's and Thomas' respective arguments are dissimilar. Whereas Sforno uses a classical syllogism to demonstrate the

corruptibility of the human soul, Thomas reasons by analogy, drawing his conclusion on the basis of a similarity shared by the two subjects. The force of Sforno's deduction rests on the fact that the subject of the conclusion (the human intellective soul) is a subcategory of the subject of the major premise (the formal cause of a corruptible thing).[90] Thomas, on the other hand, asserts that since the two subjects are similar (human beings and animals vis-à-vis their beginnings and processes), and a certain predicate is explicit in one of them (corruptibility in animals' souls), then it is reasonable to conclude that it must be found also in the second subject (human souls).[91] According to both scholars, the corruptibility of the human soul is provisionally demonstrated. However, Thomas proves it by analogy, comparing man to animal; Sforno uses a classical syllogism, in which he draws the attention of his reader to the formal cause of the human being, which distinguishes him from the animal.

As is his method throughout the *Light of the Nations*, Sforno takes great care to prove each of his premises using philosophical principles derived from the *corpus*

[90] In substance, Sforno's Hebrew and Latin versions of this argument amount to the same thing. However, in terms of form, they are slightly different. In the *Or ammim*, the middle term of the syllogism occurs as the subject in the major premise and predicate in the minor premise, and the major premise contains the predicate of the conclusion. This yields a first figure direct mood, in which both premises and conclusion are universal positive propositions. The syllogism can be expressed: Every M is P; Every S is M; ∴ Every S is P (where M = form of a corruptible thing; S = human intellective soul; P = corruptible). Therefore, the mood of this syllogism falls under the medieval classification *Barbara*. As in the Hebrew version, Sforno's argument in the *Lumen gentium* takes the form of a first figure direct mood. However, rather than using the *Barbara* mood, in which both the premises and conclusion are universal positive propositions, he employs the *Celarent* mood, which contains a universal negative proposition as its major premise, a universal positive proposition as its minor premise, and a universal negative proposition as its conclusion. The syllogism can be expressed: No M is P; Every S is M; ∴ No S is P (where M = form of a mortal thing; S = human intellective soul; P = immortal). On this, see Terence Parsons, *Articulating Medieval Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 15-17. For Peter of Spain's treatment of syllogisms, see Peter of Spain, *Peter of Spain: summaries of logic: text, translation, introduction, and notes*, ed. and trans. Brian P. Copenhaver, Calvin G. Normore, and Terence Parsons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 170-195. For a discussion of the influence of this treatise on medieval Jewish philosophy, see Charles H. Manekin, "When the Jews Learned Logic from the Pope: Three Medieval Hebrew Translations of the Tractatus of Peter of Spain," *Judaism and the Sciences* (1997): 395-430.

[91] For Peter of Spain's discussion on arguing from similarity, see *Peter of Spain: summaries of logic*, 232-233.

Aristotelicum as interpreted by Averroes. First, he demonstrates his major premise, that every form of a corruptible entity is itself corruptible:

> When the form of a corruptible entity unites with its unique subject, a compound entity is substantially generated *in actu*. However, since an incorruptible entity, which is in itself a substance existing *in actu*, retains its existence after every corruptible entity has passed away, it would seem that it is impossible for it to function as a form for a corruptible entity, because a thing that exists *in actu*—as long as it remains *in actu*—cannot be substantially clothed in another form. For should it be possible for a second substantial form to come upon it, it would be necessary [to affirm] in relation to a single discrete entity two substantial forms simultaneously. From this it would be necessary [to assert] that the first form would cause the entity to retain the identity that it had prior to the arrival of the second form; it would [also] be necessary [to postulate] that the second form would cause it to be some entity other than the first. Therefore, it would be necessary [to conclude] that a single entity would, in substance, be simultaneously [both] the entity that it was before, and [something] other than the entity that it was before—[a proposition] which cannot be entertained by the mind. This is what Aristotle explained in the book *Metaphysics* (book 1, chapter 17 and book 2, chapter 7), and in the book *Physics* (book 1, chapter 71) in the name of the ancient [philosophers].[92]

In Sforno's elaboration of his major premise, he explains that its validity depends on three propositions: first, corruptible substances are comprised of an

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[92] *Or*, 42v-43r: "כי אמנם צורת הנפסד היא אשר בהתיחדה עם הנושא המיוחד לה יתהווה בעצם איזה מורכב נמצא בפעל אמנם הבלתי נפסד אשר הוא בפני עצמו עצם נמצא בפעל בהיות לו מציאות אחר הפסד כל נפסד נראה שלא יתכן שיהיה צורה לדבר נפסד כי אמנם מהדבר הנמצא בפעל כל עוד היותו בפעל לא יתכן שיתלבש בעצם צורה אחרת כי אם היה איפשר שתבוא עליו צורה שנית עצמית היה מתחייב שלנמצא אחד במספר תהיינה שתי צורות עצמיות יחדו בזמן אחד ומזה יתחייב שלפי הצורה הראשונה יהיה אותו הנמצא הוא בעצמו שהיה לפני בוא הצורה השנית ולפי הצורה השנית יתחייב שיהיה הוא איזה נמצא זולת הראשון ואם כן היה מתחייב שדבר אחד בעצמו יהיה בזמן אחד אותו הנמצא בעצמו שהיה קודם ויהיה זולת אותו הנמצא שהיה קודם אשר לא יעלה על לב. וכן ביאר ארסטו' בספר מה שאחר מאמר א' פרק י"ז ומאמר ב' פרק ז' ובספר השמע מאמר א' פרק ע"א בשם הקדמונים."

Lumen, 55v: "Quia mortalium formae sunt illae, per quarum unam quaque cum suo subiecto, fit quid unum substantialiter actu existens. Ex immortali autem, non datur quid aliud fieri; ergo, nullum immortale habet esse mortalis forma, immortale enim cum sit quid idem actu semper existens. Etiam post mortalium omnium corruptionem, non datur quid aliud cum alio fieri substantialiter, quamvis daretur cum alio coniungi. Compositio enim ad hoc facta ut inde fiat quid novum substantialiter unum, novam proculdubio requirit formam. Cum ergo ingrederetur quid immortale semper idem existens, sequeretur ut huiusmodi compositum simul et semel duabus diversis informaretur formis, per quarum unam esset idem quod prius, per reliquam vero esset non idem quod prius; et sic idem esset in eodem instanti idem et non idem, quod implicat contradictionem. Et idem habetur a Phylosopho, Methaphysicorum primi, t.c. 17, et eiusdem 2 t.c. 7, et ab eodem antiquorum auctoritate, Physicorum primi, t.c. 71."

actualising principle (i.e., the substantial form) and a potential that undergoes actualization (i.e., the matter); second, incorruptible substances, by definition, exist independently of matter and are therefore perpetually actualized; and third, a single entity cannot be informed by two actualising principles or substantial forms simultaneously. Therefore, he concludes, an incorruptible form cannot inform a material substance, since both of them already possess actualizing principles or substantial forms.[93]

In his subsequent demonstration of the minor premise of his syllogism—that the human intellective soul is the form of a corruptible entity—Sforno specifically relates the form of man to the unique intellective activities that distinguish him from the animal. This is in contrast to Thomas' provisional argument, which is contingent on the similarities between animals and human beings:

> That which we stated in the [minor] premise—that the human intellective soul is a form of a corruptible entity, namely, the human being—is demonstrated [by observing] the action proper to man that can only be attributed to his form. For, indeed, the actions of man are intellectual; accordingly, they are distinct from the actions of all non-speaking animals. Ibn Rushd explained in his *Destructio destructionum* 6:6 that the kinds of existing forms are distinguishable by their actions: "It is clear that the philosophers presented proof regarding a substrate [i.e. matter] from its affections, just as they presented proof regarding a form from its actions." This itself is clarified by the [very] definition of the human being, which Porphyry and Ibn Rushd explained in chapter 4 of the *Isagoge*.[94]

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[93] The question of how many forms can inhere in a single material substance was hotly debated among both medieval and Renaissance philosophers, and played an important part in the debate on the human soul's immortality. See Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes, 1274-1689* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 574-578. See also Lorenzo Casini, "The Renaissance Debate on the Immortality of the Soul," in *Mind, cognition and representation: the tradition of commentaries on Aristotle's De anima*, ed. Paul J. J. M. Bakker and Johannes M. M. H. Thijssen (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub., 2007), 127-150.

[94] *Or*, 43r: "אמנם מה שאמרנו בהקדמה שהנפש האנושית השכלית היא צורה בנפסד וזה הוא האדם הנה יתבאר מהפעולה המיוחדת לאדם אשר לא תיוחס זולתי לצורתו כי אמנם פעולות האדם הם שכליות ובזה יובדלו מפעולות כל בעלי חיי' הבלתי מדברים והנה מיני צורות הנמצאים יבחנו בפעולותיהם כאשר ביאר אבן רשד בספר הפלת ההפלה מאמר ו' חקירה ו' באמרו מבואר הוא שהפילוסופים הביאו ראיה על הנושא מן ההתפעלות כמו שהביאו ראייה על הצורה מן הפעולות וזה בעצמו התבאר מגדר האדם אשר בארו פורפיריאווס ואבן רשד בספר המבוא פרק ד'."

Lumen, 55v: "Quo autem ad secundam eiusdem antecedentis partem, qua scilicet dicitur quod intellectiva hominis anima est mortalis forma, scilicet probatur per propriam hominis actionem a sua

Finally, with regard to sources, Thomas explicitly bases his analogy on Ecclesiastes 3:19, whereas Sforno uses Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Physics* for his major premise, and Averroes' *Destructio* and Middle Commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* for his minor premise. Sforno concludes his demonstration with scriptural support from Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, and Proverbs; he does not mention Ecclesiastes.

The conclusions reached by Sforno and Thomas in these passages are identical, namely, that the human soul seems to be a corruptible entity that does not attain immortality. However, a precise examination of the arguments demonstrates that they are dissimilar in terms of lexicon, logical form, substance, and cited sources. Table 2.7 provides a second example of Sforno's argumentation together with Bonfil's proposed equivalent passage from Thomas.[95]

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propria forma necessario emanantem. Propria enim hominis actio qua a brutis differt est rationalis sive intellectualis. Entium enim formas per suas proprias venamur actiones, prout habetur ab Aven R. in libro Destructionis destructio, disputatione 6, dubio 6, ubi dicit: Patet quod ipsi scilicet phylosophi sumpserunt signum subiecti ex passionibus, sicut signum formae recipiunt ex actionibus. Et idem patet per definitionem eiusdem hominis a Porphyrio et Aven R. in libro Predicabilium, capite 4, tradita."

[95] These passages are Bonfil's fourth comparison. See "The Doctrine of the Human Soul," 256-257.

Table 2.7

Passage from the *Or ammim*	**Parallel passage from the *Lumen gentium***	**Proposed equivalent passage from the *Summa theologiae***
ולטענות החולק [באמרו שכל צורה נפסד היא נפסדת,] נשיב שיש לחלק כי יש צורת נפסד מעורבת עם חומר ובכמו זאת הצורה יצדק שהיא תפסד בהכרח בהפסד המורכב אמנם יש צורה לנפסד שהיא בלתי מעורבת בחומר, והיא האנושית השכלית וכמו כן נפשות הגלגלים, וכמו אלה לא יצדק שיפסדו בהפסד הנושא או האיש אשר הם צורה לו. *Or*, 47v	*Ad argumenta vero et primo, quoad primum respondetur, distinguendo de forma quaedam enim est forma materiae mixta, et de tali procedit argumentum; talis enim forma necessario perit ad sui compositi corruptionem. Qualis non est intellectiva hominis anima; alia vero est forma non mixta eiusdem subiecti materiae. Et tales sunt intellectiva hominis et caelestium anima, et de talibus negatur ut habeant corrupi ad harum subiecti corruptionem.* *Lumen*, 59v	*Ad primum ergo dicendum... Quod ergo dicitur quod homo et alia animalia habent simile generationis principium, verum est quantum ad corpus; [similiter enim de terra facta sunt omnia animalia.] Non autem quantum ad anima, nam anima brutorum producitur ex virtute aliqua corporea, anima vero humana a Deo... Similiter processus vitae est similis quantum ad corpus... sed non [est similis processus] quantum ad animam, quia homo intelligit, [non autem animalia bruta.]* *Summa theologiae* (Ia. 75, 6)

Thomas refutes his provisional analogism by proving that its conclusion is invalid because the two subjects that were initially supposed to be similar are in fact dissimilar. He argues that although the origin and vital processes of the bodies of animals and human beings are the same, their souls are different since the human soul is a divine product. Accordingly, only human beings engage in the activity of thinking. In this rebuttal, he identifies the efficient cause of the human soul as God, which, according to his reasoning, puts it into an order of being that is free from material corruptibility. Thomas cites Genesis and Ecclesiastes in order to support his contention that the earth produces the souls of animals, whereas the human soul is bestowed directly by God.

By contrast, Sforno directs his attention to the connection between the formal and material causes of corruptible substances. He argues that human beings and celestial spheres belong to a special category of substance whose formal cause remains separate from its material cause; it is a transcendent being. Hence, when the matter of the compound undergoes corruption, the form or soul remains incorruptible. He further responds to the earlier contention that a single substance cannot be informed by two substantial forms by pointing out that when the intellective form actually enters the body, the latter loses its previous form, which he identifies as the animal desire, thereby becoming a new substance—a rational human being. For Sforno, this disproves the major premise of the syllogism of the provisional argument: "every formal cause of a corruptible thing is corruptible" (or according to the Latin text: "no formal cause of a mortal thing is immortal"). This is noteworthy because the idea that a human being's material cause (the body) could initially possess one form (the animal soul) and then take on a second form (the human form), contradicts Thomas' philosophical position on the substantial unity of physical beings. He holds that the substantial form of a human being immediately informs prime matter; he decisively rejects the notion of substance plurality, which Sforno here advocates.[96]

In the ensuing discussion, Sforno cites Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione*, Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De caelo*, the Long Commentary on the *De anima*, the *De substantia orbis*, and Exodus with regard to the unmixed character of both human souls and those of celestial spheres.[97] Thus, in this second example too, Sforno and Thomas ultimately arrive at a similar conclusion—that their

[96] On Thomas' position regarding the relationship between prime matter and substantial form, see Emily Michael, "John Wyclif on Body and Mind," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2013): 343-360, esp. 346. See also Ralph McInerny, and John O'Callaghan, "Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2018 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aquinas/>.

[97] Sforno's comparison of human and celestial souls will be discussed more fully in the third chapter herein: 3.6 "Human Souls and Celestial Spheres."

respective provisional arguments in favour of the corruptibility of the human soul are invalid. However, the logical form and substance of their refutations are contingent on the provisional arguments. Sforno highlights the comparison between celestial spheres and human bodies; this does not play any role in Thomas' reasoning. Moreover, Sforno endorses a philosophical model, which Thomas rejects. The terminology used by the two scholars in these passages is different because they discuss different subjects; their sources are also dissimilar.

These two examples of passages from the *Light of the Nations* and the *Summa theologiae* chosen by Bonfil to demonstrate Sforno's reliance on Thomas seem to indicate that Sforno's philosophical reasoning takes a different path from Thomas', yet they both reach similar conclusions. A close reading does not reveal that Sforno read Thomas, although it is likely that he was aware of his works.[98] Similarly, the *Light of the Nations* contains no citations of any other medieval Latin works such as Thomas' polemical treatise against the theory of the unicity of the human intellect, *De unitate intellectus*,[99] nor does he explicitly utilise the medieval Latin commentaries on the *corpus Aristotelicum* by Christian scholars who responded to Averroes, like Giles of Rome, Albertus Magnus,[100] or John of Jandun.[101] Finally, he does not openly engage with contemporary readers of Averroes who were associated with the Italian

[98] Bonfil also compares three other passages from the two works, which contain points of conceptual similarity. See "The Doctrine of the Human Soul," 255-257. However, in my opinion, they are not conclusive, especially in light of the huge medieval corpus on the human soul's immortality. On this, see, for example, Josephat Obi Oguejiofor, *The Arguments for the Immortality of the Soul in the First Half of the Thirteenth Century* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995).

[99] On this treatise, see Richard C. Dales, "Aquinas's *De unitate intellectus*," in *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 138-149. For the Latin text with English translation, see Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists*, trans. Beatrice H. Zedler (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010); Id., *Aquinas against the Averroists: On There Being Only One Intellect*, trans. Ralph M. McInerny (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993).

[100] For example, see Amos Bertolacci, "Avicenna's and Averroes's Interpretations and Their Influence in Albertus Magnus," in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. Fabrizio Amerini, and Gabriele Galluzzo (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 95-135.

[101] For example, see Roberto Lambertini, "Jandun's Question-Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*," in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 385-411.

universities like Nicoletto Vernia, Pietro Pomponazzi, Agostino Nifo, Alessandro Achillini, or Marcantonio Zimara;[102] Sforno does not cite any of these scholars in his *Light of the Nations*.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Sforno's citations in his twelfth *quaestio* from the *De anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *De generatione et corruptione* show that he read Aristotle primarily through the commentaries of Averroes. He read Latin translations of these works although he may have also consulted Hebrew translations. He also cited Latin translations of Aristotle's *Politics* and Averroes' *De substantia orbis* and *Destructio*. He cited only one Jewish philosophical source in his demonstrations, namely, Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. This source is absent from the Latin version.

Although Sforno used Latin translations of the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus, there is no conclusive evidence that he appropriated his arguments for personal immortality from the works of medieval or contemporary Latin authors. His tendency to read Aristotle solely through Averroes' works is, I would argue, connected with the purpose of his treatise. Averroes provided Sforno with the philosophical tools for conveying his reconciliation of philosophy and religion to readers from two interconnected worlds of scholarship, whose nexus was an unwavering respect for the authority of this Andalusian philosopher. It is this legacy that informs and shapes the *Light of the Nations*.

[102] For a discussion of the criteria for defining the class of "early modern Averroists," see Guido Giglioni, "Introduction," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath*, 9-15.

CHAPTER THREE

READING ARISTOTLE AND AVERROES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the first chapter, the declaration appearing on the title page of the *Lumen gentium* highlights three main topics of religion addressed by the treatise, culminating in what may be considered its climax: a demonstration of the immortality of the human soul.[1] This occurs in the twelfth *quaestio*, which opens: "Twelfth, we shall investigate whether the human intellective soul—because of which man is considered to be a rational [speaking] being—is incorruptible or not."[2] That Sforno should have engaged with the topic is not surprising. Aristotelian noetics occupied a central place both in the university curriculum and in the public sphere in Renaissance Italy.[3] There was a resurgence of the debates that had been waged from late antiquity through the medieval period regarding Aristotle's enigmatic account of the intellect in his third book of the *De anima*. Aspects about the nature of the human intellect and its activities were sufficiently vague to yield diverse readings of his theory.[4] Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the issue took centre stage as scholars attempted

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[1] See the first chapter herein, 1.3 "Philosophy and Scripture;" 1.5 "Structure and Contents."

[2] *Or*, 42v: "שתים עשרה נחקור אם הנפש האנושית השכלית אשר בה היה האדם מדבר בעצם היא בלתי נפסדת אם אין." *Lumen*, 55v: "Duodecimo, dubitatur utrum intellectiva hominis anima, qua substantialiter dicitur rationalis, sit quid immortale, vel non."

[3] See Edward Cranz, "The Renaissance Reading of the *De anima*," in *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance: XVIe Colloque international de Tours*. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1976), 359-376; Sander De Boer, "The (Human) Soul," in *The Routledge Companion to Sixteenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund and Benjamin Hill (New York: Routledge, 2017), 411-435. See also, for example, Edward P. Mahoney, "Nicoletto Vernia on the Soul and Immortality," in *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance: Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 144-163; Id., "Agostino Nifo's Early Views on Immortality," in *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance*, 451-460.

[4] For a thorough exposition of philosophical psychology for the period 200-600 C.E., see Richard Sorabji, *The philosophy of the commentators, 200-600 AD: a sourcebook. Vol. 1, Psychology* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012). On the reception of Aristotelian psychology from 1250 to 1650, see Dominik Perler, *Transformations of the soul in Aristotelian psychology, 1250-1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). On the medieval Averroists' theories of the intellect, see Zdzisław Kuksewicz, *De Siger de Brabant à Jacques de Plaisance: La théorie de l'intellect chez les averroïstes latins des XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Wroclaw: Ossolineum, 1968).

to determine the original intentions of the Philosopher and to answer the question regarding the corruptibility or mortality of the human soul.[5]

Sforno's purpose in responding to this theologically controversial topic was polemical; this determined how he read his philosophical sources. Although he appears to have adopted an Aristotelian-Averroan conceptual framework, he actually misread and misrepresented his cited sources, often extracting statements of Aristotle and Averroes from their original contexts, imposing foreign notions onto their doctrines, redistributing the elements of their theories, and reinterpreting them so that they matched his own theses. In this way, he sought to undermine the conclusions of the very philosophical system on which he relied in order to render its propositions subordinate to his religious conceptions.

As Charles Schmitt has shown, Renaissance thinkers embraced a wide range of divergent interpretations of the Philosopher's works, resulting in what he called "Aristotelianisms" rather than a single Peripatetic tradition.[6] Paul Oskar Kristeller

[5] For a historical overview of the topic of the human soul's immortality, see Dilwyn Knox, "Immortality of the Soul," in *The classical tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 475-481. Regarding the debate about immortality in medieval Jewish philosophy, see Tamar M. Rudavsky, "On Immortality and the Nature of the Soul," in ead., *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Science, Rationalism, and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 208-231. For a survey of the immortality debate in the Renaissance period, see John Monfasani, "Immortality," in *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul F. Grendler, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons and The Renaissance Society of America, 1999), 3:254-256; Richard Blum, "The immortality of the soul," in *The Cambridge companion to Renaissance philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 211-233; Eckhard Kessler, "The intellective soul," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, and Eckhard Kessler (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 485-534. See Paul J. J. M. Bakker, "Natural Philosophy, Metaphysics, or Something in Between?" in *Mind, cognition and representation: the tradition of commentaries on Aristotle's De anima*, ed. Paul J. J. M. Bakker and J. M. M. H. Thijssen (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub., 2007), 151-177, 151, where he calls this period "the heyday of Aristotelian psychology" as a result of the intense focus on the nature of the human soul. Paul Grendler attributes the special attitude of Italian natural philosophers with regard to the use of Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima* to the prominence of medical studies and the relative absence of theology in the curriculum of Italian universities during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 281-293.

[6] See Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), esp. 10-33 for a critical assessment of the rubric Aristotelianism and its inadequacy for describing the diversity of philosophical systems among the followers of Aristotle in the Renaissance

argued that this was true also of Averroes' works, which as discussed in the previous chapter, achieved immense popularity during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[7] Sforno's method of reading the corpus, therefore, should not be taken as facile or disingenuous. He explictly asserted that the *Light of the Nations* was not intended to be a philosophical study of the subjects treated—he made this statement in the introductions to both texts of the treatise.[8] This point is particularly apt for the twelfth inquiry, in which he does not proffer a comprehensive theory of philosophical psychology. Glossing over the topics usually addressed in Renaissance treatises on the subject, such as expositions of the nutritive, motor and appetitive functions of an organism, he assumes a certain basic degree of knowledge on the part of his reader.[9] Moreover, even in his treatment of the intellect and its activities—a subject necessary for demonstrating his thesis of personal immortality—his only purpose in elucidating

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period. See also Ibid., 89-109 for his discussion on the wide range of uses of the *corpus Aristotelicum* in the sixteenth century. See also Luca Bianchi, "Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49-71. See Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. 61, where he also emphasizes that Aristotelian scholars of the Renaissance did not hold to a single system of thought, but rather a variety of disparate and often antagonistic philosophies. See also Eckhard Kessler, "The transformation of Aristotelianism during the Renaissance," in *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the History of Science, Education and Philosophy in Memory of Charles B. Schmitt*, ed. Sarah Hutton, Charles B. Schmitt, and John Henry (London: Duckworth, 1990), 137-147; Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle: Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2014), 5-7.

[7] See Paul O. Kristeller, "Paduan Averroism and Alexandrism in the Light of Recent Studies," in Id. *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 111-118. See also Guido Giglioni, "Introduction," in Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath."

[8] See *Or*, 5r; cf. *Lumen*, 7.

[9] For an overview of the Jewish tradition of philosophical psychology for the period c.900-1500, see James Robinson, "Soul and Intellect," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century. Vol. 1*, ed. Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 524-558; Id. "Philosophical Psychology, Jewish Tradition," in *Encyclopedia of medieval philosophy. Vol. 2*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 982-990. The concept of psychology in the Renaissance period is explored in Katharine Park, and Eckhard Kessler, "The Concept of Psychology," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 455-463. For a discussion on how scholars from this period viewed the nature of the organic soul and its functions, see Katharine Park, "The Organic Soul," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 464-484. Regarding theories in the Renaissance about the human soul's double role of the cause of cognition and the vehicle for immortality, see Emily Michael, "Reniassance Theories of Body, Soul, and Mind," in *Psyche and soma: physicians and metaphysicians on the mind-body problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment*, ed. John P. Wright, and Paul Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 147-172.

his noetic doctrine seems to be the reconciliation or harmonization of Averroes' interpretations of Aristotle with his reading of Scripture. How he interpreted the Philosopher and his Commentator was shaped by that purpose. In this chapter, I shall continue to focus on the twelfth inquiry in order to investigate how Sforno read philosophy in his endeavour to demonstrate what he perceived to be the fundamental tenets of religion. More specifically, I will set out to show how Sforno read Averroes' statements about his mature noetic doctrine, integrating them into his own particular system.[10]

3.2 AVERROES' NOETIC THEORIES

In the previous chapter, I showed that Sforno read his philosophical sources through Latin editions of the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus. I concluded that he himself rendered into Hebrew the philosophical passages that he cited in his *Or ammim* since there is no evidence that he read Aristotle or Averroes in Hebrew translation. I also showed that Sforno prefered to cite Averroes' Long Commentaries, including the Long Commentary on the *De anima*, even though it did not play a significant role in medieval Jewish philosophy. This is particularly important because Averroes did not espouse a single theory of intellects and their activities over the course of his long philosophical career. He revised several times his notion of the agent intellect with regard to its causal role in creation.[11] Likewise, his opinion on the potential or material intellect and how it relates to the lower faculties of the individual human soul developed significantly from his earliest treatment of the subject in his

[10] For a useful modern introduction to the elements involved in Peripatetic noetic models, see William A. Wallace, *The Modeling of Nature: Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Nature in Synthesis* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 131-156.
[11] See Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect: their cosmologies, theories of active intellect and theories of the human intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 220-257.

original edition of the Compendium on the *De anima* to his final mature system of noetics as presented in his Long Commentary and in the glosses later added to the Compendium.[12] Averroes did not merely adjust the conclusions he had reached in the early and intermediary stages of his thinking about the intellect; he had a significant change of mind about the very metaphysical foundations of his understanding of Aristotle. Therefore, the Averroan noetic scheme of the medieval Jewish tradition, relying on the Compendium and Middle Commentary of the *De anima*, was not congruent with that of the Latin tradition, which was based exclusively on readings of Averroes' Long Commentary.[13]

Since for his twelfth *quaestio* Sforno relies on the statements of Aristotle and Averroes using the latter's Long Commentary on the *De anima*, it would follow that he is engaging with Averroes' mature interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the intellect rather than his earlier theories presented in his Compendium and Middle Commentaries. His reliance on this text despite its modest role in the Hebrew philosophical tradition suggests that Sforno was aware of the particular problems that the topic of personal immortality presented to his Latin reader. As mentioned, this

[12] On the chronological development of Averroes' theories of intellect, I follow Richard Taylor's assessment. He sees Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* as "containing his final views on the nature of the Aristotelian receptive and potential intellect." See Richard Taylor, "Improving on Nature's Exemplar: Averroes' Completion of Aristotle's Psychology of Intellect," in *Philosophy, science and exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin commentaries Vol. 2*, ed. Peter H. Adamson, H. Baltussen, and M.W.F. Stone (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2004), 107-130, 107. Alfred Ivry, however, holds the opinion that the Middle Commentary in its entirety was actually composed after the Long Commentary and therefore represents a later development of Averroes' thinking on the subject. See Alfred Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries on the *De Anima*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 5 (1995): 75-92.

[13] Regarding the reception of Averroes' developing noetic doctrine, Davidson writes: "Averroes' writings launched two movements reaching into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, not in the Islamic world, where he was ignored, but in the Jewish and Christian communities. The nature of the human intellect was a prime concern of both movements, and quirks of history delivered different compositions, representing different stages of his thought, to the Hebrew and Latin readers. Two Averroistic traditions resulted, each growing up around a partial reading of Averroes and his position on the human potential or material intellect." See Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 258-259. See also ibid, 276, where Davidson identifies Averroes' writings on noetics received by Hebrew readers: "Medieval Jewish philosophers generally saw nothing in the *Middle Commentary on the De anima* beyond the hybrid or, as one of them put it, 'intermediate' position [between that of Alexander of Aphrodisias and of Themistius], and they took the hybrid position to represent Averroes' considered opinion on the material intellect."

issue was prominent among Christian scholars in sixteenth-century Italy, and its prominence was largely due to the controversy surrounding Averroes' mature noetic doctrine.[14] According to its main thesis, all human beings share a single intellect. Such a position goes against the notion of personal immortality and reward and punishment, the former of which is expressly included by Sforno under the category of "deeply-rooted tenets of religion" on the title page of the *Lumen gentium*,[15] and the latter of which is addressed in the final inquiries of the treatise.

The controversy surrounding this topic at the time of Sforno's production of his work is reflected in the papal Bull *Apostolici regiminis* promulgated in 1513 at the Eighth Session of the Fifth Lateran Council. Among other "extremely pernicious errors," this Bull specifically rejected the proposition endorsed by Averroes in his Long Commentary on the *De anima* that there is a single intellect shared by all human beings.[16] Sforno's awareness of the controversy would explain why he engages with Averroes' mature noetic doctrine even though it was not prominent in the Hebrew philosophical tradition. In order to observe how Sforno responds to Averroes on the question of the individual soul's immortality, let us first briefly examine the thesis advanced in the Long Commentary on the *De anima* in relation to Averroes' earlier theories.

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[14] Dag Nikolaus Hasse writes: "No other Arabic philosophical theory received a similar amount of attention in the Renaissance." See Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism," In *The Cambridge companion to Renaissance philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 113-136, 115. For a survey of the medieval debate about Averroes' doctrine of unicity, see Ovey N. Mohammed, *Averroes' doctrine of immortality: a matter of controversy* (Waterloo, Canada: Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 4-14.

[15] See *Lumen*, title page.

[16] Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils. Volume 1* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 605: "...we condemn and reject all those who insist that the intellectual soul is mortal, or that it is only one among all human beings, and those who suggest doubts on this topic. For the soul not only truly exists of itself and essentially as the form of the human body, as is said in the canon of our predecessor of happy memory, pope Clement V, promulgated in the general council of Vienne, but it is also immortal; and further, for the enormous number of bodies into which it is infused individually, it can and ought to be and is multiplied."

The *De anima* is one of the few books of the Aristotelian corpus for which Averroes composed all three types of his commentaries: Short, Middle, and Long.[17] As mentioned, Averroes' understanding of Aristotle's theory of the intellect developed throughout the course of his professional life and this is reflected in his three types of commentaries. This is particularly true for his understanding of the active and passive aspects of the human intellect described by Aristotle in the third book of his *De anima*:

> And because, just as in nature there is something in every genus which is matter (and this is what is all those things in potency) and something else which is a cause and agent (and this is that on account of which it brings about anything, as the disposition of artistry to matter), these differences must exist in the soul. [...] It is necessary, therefore, that in [the soul] there be the intellect which is intellect insofar as it is made everything, and the intellect which is intellect insofar as it makes it understand everything, and the intellect insofar as it understand everything, as a positive disposition, which is like light. For light in a way also makes colours which are in potency to be colours in act.[18]

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[17] See the second chapter herein, 2.3 "Citing Aristotle and Averroes." On Averroes' three types of commentaries on the *De anima*, see Alfred Ivry, "Averroes' Short Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 8 (1997): 511-549, esp. 511-519. In addition to his three commentaries on the *De anima*, Richard Taylor looks at five other works by Averroes, in which the material intellect is discussed. See Richard Taylor, "Improving on Nature's Exemplar." For the purpose of examining Sforno's reception of Averroes' mature doctrine as presented in his Long Commentary on the *De anima*, the focus of the present summary is restricted to his three commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*.

[18] Averroes, *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, ed. Thérèse-Anne Druart, trans. Richard C. Taylor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 348-349. Cf. Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, Mass: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 436-437: "17. Et quia, quemadmodum in Natura, est aliquid in unoquoque genere quod est materia (et est illud quod est illa omnia in potentia), et aliud quod est causa et agens (et hoc est illud propter quod agit quidlibet, sicut dispositio artificii apud materiam), necesse est ut in anima existant hee differentie. [...] 18. Oportet igitur ut in ea sit intellectus qui est intellectus secundum quod efficitur omne, et intellectus qui est intellectus secundum quod facit ipsum intelligere omne, et intellectus secundum quod intelligit omne, quasi habitus, qui est quasi lux. Lux enim quoquo modo etiam facit colores qui sunt in potentia colores in actu."
Taylor observes that the *lemmata* contained in Michael Scot's Latin rendering of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*—the passage I have cited here—mentions a third intellect, which is absent from the Greek text and from Zerahyah Hen's Hebrew translation. See *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, trans. Richard Taylor, 349, n. 171. For a modern translation from the Greek, see Aristotle, *Aristotle: De anima: books II and III (with passages from book I)*, ed. and trans. David W. Hamlyn, and Christopher John Shields (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 3.5, 430a10. I have chosen to ignore the third element in my assessment of Averroes' mature noetic doctrine in order to avoid the risk of further complicating the issue because in my opinion it is not relevant to Sforno's noetic theory. Nevertheless, I cite the Latin rendering of the Long Commentary on the *De anima* rather than the

In all three of his commentaries, Averroes offers his interpretation of Aristotle's two distinctive aspects of the intellect: the material or potential aspect (*intellectus materialis*) and the productive or active aspect (*intellectus agens* or *intelligentia agens*).[19] In his original Compendium on the *De anima*, which adheres to the noetic system of Alexander of Aphrodisias as interpreted by Ibn Bajja, he holds that there is a single immaterial agent intellect common to all humankind, and there are multiple potential or material intellects inhering in individual human beings as dispositions for abstract thought.[20] He asserts that the individual human being is able to apprehend intelligibles in act through the cooperation of (1) his own personal material intellect, which is a disposition inherent in the forms or images of the individual human imagination, and (2) the actualising power of the universal agent intellect, which is an external non-human entity of a higher order that actualises the intelligible potencies residing in these imaginative forms. In this way, Averroes explains how an individual's perceptual experiences shape his intellectual development, while accounting for a type of intellection that transcends the sensible realm by means of a causal connection to a universal agent intellect entirely separate from the material world of particulars. In this theory of the material intellect, Averroes identifies ultimate human happiness with a conjunction of the individual

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uncorrupted version of Aristotle's *De anima* because, as demonstrated in the previous chapter herein, Sforno was reading Aristotle through Averroes' Long Commentary.

[19] Taylor notes that both of these Latin terms *intellectus agens* ("agent intellect") and *intelligentia agens* ("agent intelligence") are used by Scot to translate the single Arabic term *al-'aqal al-fa'aal*. See *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 170, n. 138. Taylor concludes that the phrase *intellectus qui est in actu* ("intellect which is in act") is also sometimes used to denote the agent intellect since it is an intellect that is in a state of perpetual activity. See ibid, 306, n. 43. This phrase is relevant to Sforno's engagement with the notion of agent intellect, which is discussed in the fourth chapter herein.

[20] For this summary of Averroes' noetic doctrine offered in his Compendium, I rely primarily on Alfred Ivry, 1997. "Averroes' Short Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*," Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 265-273, and Richard Taylor, "Improving on Nature's Exemplar," 110-114.

intellect and the agent intellect, but he posits that the individual intellect—merely a part or function of the imaginative faculty—perishes with the death of the body.

In his Middle Commentary,[21] Averroes retains the theory of a single immaterial agent intellect but begins distancing himself from Ibn Bajja's interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' notion that the potential or material intellect is a mere function of the imagination. Instead, he leans toward Themistius' emphasis on the nonphysical or unmixed character of the material intellect, basing this shift of focus on the words of Aristotle in his *De anima* regarding the pure un-obscured nature of the intellect's reception of knowledge because of its causal independence from the corporeal faculties. Nevertheless, like Alexander of Aphrodisias, Averroes classifies this material or potential intellect as an intellectual disposition related to the individual human being (but not specifically to the imaginative faculty), whose actualizing agent is a separate celestial being that is perpetually and eternally in a state of act—the agent intellect.[22]

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[21] For this summary of Averroes' noetic doctrine offered in the Middle Commentary, I read the Hebrew text using Averroes, *Averroes' Middle Commentary on Aristotle's* De Anima *in the translation of Moses Ibn Tibbon: Critical edition with an introduction, notes and a glossary*, ed. Alfred L. Ivry (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2003). For English translation, I use Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima: A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text with English Translation, Notes, and Introduction*, ed. and trans. Alfred L. Ivry (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 2002). For interpretations of the text, I rely primarily on Alfred Ivry, "Averroes on Intellection and Conjunction," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 86, no. 2 (1966): 76-85; Id., "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries on the *De Anima*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 5 (1995): 75-92; Id., "Averroes' Three Commentaries on *De Anima*," in *Averroes and the Aristotelian tradition: sources, constitution, and reception of the philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126-1198): proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Averroicum, Cologne, 1996*, ed. Gerhard Endress, Jan Aertsen, and Klaus Braun (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199-216; Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 276-282; Richard Taylor, "Improving on Nature's Exemplar," 115-119.

[22] For my purpose of presenting the three noetic doctrines of Averroes in order to situate the elements of Sforno's theory, I have chosen to disregard Herbert Davidson's thesis that the Middle Commentary contains an excursis, which represents a later emendation on the part of its author reflecting his later mature doctrine of the material intellect as presented in his Long Commentary. See *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 276-282. I also remain undecided about Alfred Ivry's argument that the Middle Commentary in its entirety was actually composed after the Long Commentary and therefore represents a later development of Averroes' thinking on the subject. See Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries on the *De Anima*." Hence, I regard Averroes' doctrine in his Middle Commentary as a single coherent opinion.

According to this view, the agent intellect is constantly involved in the functioning of the material intellect. First, although the latter is a human disposition, the external agent intellect is what initially causes the individual human being at birth to have the capacity to think. That is to say, it is what causes the individual being to acquire the potential form of a rational animal. Second, the agent intellect is what later actualizes that same intellectual capacity of the individual so that it can receive intelligibles through an on-going process of abstraction and reception of universal intentions from particular images supplied by the individual's physical experiences and sensations. The individual is thereby able to engage in abstract thought. It is the agent intellect that enables the material intellect to receive passively the intelligible intentions inherent in imaginative forms so that this potentiality to think is actualised as individuated intellection or thought.

In the noetic theory of the Middle Commentary, Averroes offers his reader a picture of the material or potential intellect that is essentially a combination of the schemes of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius: It is a disposition for thought residing in the human soul, yet because of its connection to the agent intellect which actualises it, it is an eternal substance. Therefore, Averroes does not allow for individual intellectual immortality in his Middle Commentary, since a human intellect can only acquire a connection to universal knowledge by conjoining with the agent intellect during the lifetime of the individual, and the character of such a state would be entirely impersonal and devoid of individual identity.[23] The reason Averroes gives for his hesitation in his Middle Commentary for fully accepting Themistius' view that the material intellect is an eternal incorporeal substance is that this would necessitate the acceptance of an impossible fact: the existence of an incorporeal being that

[23] See Averroes, *Middle commentary on Aristotle's De anima: a critical edition of the Arabic text*, ed. Alfred Ivry, introduction, xxiii.

contains within itself some aspect of potentiality. This, argues Averroes, is not possible because the definitive aspect of an incorporeal substance is its being in an eternal state of act, leaving no room for potentiality or disposition whatsoever, whereas the essential function of the material intellect is to receive intelligible forms in a passive or potential manner. For an incorporeal substance to exist in the form of a potential being would represent a metaphysical contradiction.

In his Long Commentary on the *De anima*, however, Averroes accepts this position, which he previously considered untenable. He posits the existence of a single material intellect shared by all human beings in order to explain how a universal intelligible can be apprehended without becoming contracted through the process of particularisation into many numerically discrete individual entities, becoming materialised into a non-universal state. If the material intellect were to be a determinate particular, reasons Averroes in his Long Commentary, it would not be able to receive universal forms, but would receive forms as particular intelligibles due to its own individuated nature. In other words, the degree of abstraction of what is received is contingent on the degree of abstraction of the recipient. Averroes seeks to resolve the metaphysical problem posed in his Middle Commentary by postulating the existence of a "fourth kind of being," a singular entity that is neither matter nor form nor a composite of the two. It is instead a separable being, which possesses a feature of potency that enables it to perform its special function of receiving universal intelligibles without modifying their character.[24]

[24] Taylor writes: "...he calls the material intellect "a fourth kind of being" insofar as it is immaterial separate intellect and yet has a sort of potency. This is essential for his solution of epistemological issues and also for his metaphysical account of separate intellects and God, though it is novel in the tradition." See *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, introduction, cii, n. 209. See also Richard Taylor, "Separate Material Intellect in Averroes' Mature Philosophy," in *Words, Texts and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea*, ed. Gerhard Endress, Rüdiger Arnzen and J. Thielmann (Leuven; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004), 289-309, esp. 306.

In terms of this aspect of his mature doctrine of noetics, Averroes moves from one extreme of interpreting Aristotle's description of the active and passive elements of intellection (represented by Alexander of Aphrodisias' emphasis on the accidental nature of the material intellect's operational essence, viewing it as a non-eternal disposition of the human imaginative faculty), to the opposite extreme (represented by Themistius' thesis that the intellect is absolutely immaterial in both substance and activity). Nevertheless, even in this scheme, Averroes does affirm the material intellect's tenuous connection to the imaginative forms and hence the sensible images extracted from an individual's human experiences in the corporeal realm. However, as a singular entity common to all humankind, this material intellect remains substantially unaffected by the accidents of any particular person's experiences, since it eternally receives the thoughts of all human beings as they occur, functioning as a purely potential substance devoid of any intrinsic form—a kind of cognitive raw material taking on mental impressions from the abstracted imaginative forms of all living human thinkers.[25]

In his mature doctrine of the intellect, Averroes again denies the notion of individual human immortality.[26] Neither the eternal agent intellect nor the equally eternal material intellect is per se intrinsic to the individual human being. Instead,

[25] Davidson offers a particularly vivid description of this accidental dependence of the material intellect's thoughts of the physical world on the imaginations of individual men: "The eternity of thought of the material intellect signifies that since the human species is eternal, since at every moment individual men exist who possess the basic propositions of human thought, and since moreover men presumably also always exist who think philosophic thoughts, the material intellect at every moment contains a full range of actual human thoughts. The eternity of the material intellect's thought of the physical world is, accordingly, not a single continuous fiber, nor does it spring from the material intellect. It is wholly dependent on the ratiocination and consciousness of individual men, the complete body of possible thoughts of the physical world being supplied at any given moment by individuals living at that moment, and the continuity of the material intellect's thought through infinite time being spun from the thoughts of individuals alive at various moments." See *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 292-293.

[26] I base my conclusions here on Richard Taylor's study of Averroes' position on personal immortality in his Long Commentary on the *De anima* in Richard Taylor, "Personal Immortality in Averroes' Mature Philosophical Psychology," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 9 (1997): 87-110.

both are universal substances accessed by all humankind. As incorporeal entities whose joint occupation is immaterial thought, they are entirely un-individuated by matter. Individuated intellect is only a coincidence of the material intellect's reliance on the forms of the imagination, whose substratum is ultimately corporeal and therefore numerically distinct. Upon the death of the body any connection between eternal intellect and particularised personal intellect is nullified; only universal intellects endure.[27]

This conclusion is incompatible with Sforno's religious viewpoint, in which every individual human being enjoys the opportunity to secure some form of personal immortality. He therefore seeks to offer an alternative theory of the intellect and its activity in his twelfth *quaestio*. What is particularly telling about Sforno's method of reading his philosophical sources is how he appropriates Averroes' statements from his Long Commentary on the *De anima* (and his other works) regarding the material and agent intellects, adapting them to his own theory of intellect in order to support his thesis of personal immortality despite its incompatibility with Averroes' own theories and conclusions.

3.3 SFORNO'S NOETIC THEORY

It would seem logical to connect Sforno's discussion of the soul's immortality to that of Pietro Pomponazzi, as did David Ruderman and others.[28] However, it is important to distinguish between Pomponazzi's opinion on the rational

[27] Hans Daiber sets out three distinct arguments by Averroes against the individual immortality of the soul: (1) It leads to an actually infinite number of souls, which is metaphysically unfeasible; (2) It contradicts the Aristotelian doctrine of matter as the principle of individuation; (3) It does not accord with the thesis of the unicity of the material intellect, which is Averroes' solution to the problem of how universal intellection can occur. See Hans Daiber, *Islamic thought in the dialogue of cultures: a historical and bibliographical survey* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 183-184.

[28] See David B. Ruderman, *The world of a Renaissance Jew: the life and thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981), 116-117. See also Moses Avigdor Shulvass, *The Jews in the world of the Renaissance* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1973), 310.

demonstrability of the intellective soul's immortality and Sforno's, which is the opposite.[29] In the final chapter of his *De immortalitate animae*, Pomponazzi concludes:

> Therefore since these things are thus, it seems to me, keeping the saner view, that one ought to say in this matter that the question of the immortality of the soul is a neutral problem, just as also that of the eternity of the world. For it seems to me that no natural reasons can be adduced proving that the soul is immortal, and less proving that the soul is mortal, just as very many scholars declare, while holding that it is immortal... But that the soul is immortal is an article of faith, as is plain by the Apostles' and the Athanasian Creed; therefore it ought to be proved by things proper to faith. The principle by which faith is supported is revelation and the canonical scriptures. Therefore it is proved only truly and properly by these; but other reasons are foreign and are supported on a proof not proving what is intended.[30]

Pomponazzi classifies the issue as a neutral problem (*neutrum problema*), beyond the parameters of philosophical discussion.[31] By contrast, the twelfth inquiry of the *Light of the Nations*, as I shall show, represents Sforno's innovative attempt to deliver on his promise proclaimed on the title page of the *Lumen gentium*—to demonstrate rationally the human soul's immortality. He introduces his reader to a variety of subtle and often obscure principles as he logically debates the nature of the intellect, proffering his own reading of Averroes' noetic theory from his Long

[29] As demonstrated in the first chapter herein (1.2 "Faith and Reason"), Sforno clearly states that a rational understanding of the issues treated in the book is required and he provides the reader with the syllogistic demonstrations in order to arrive at that understanding.

[30] Pietro Pomponazzi, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, ed. and trans. William Henry Hay (Haverford, Pa.: Haverford College, 1938), 58-59. Cf. ibid., xxxiii-xxxiv: "His itaque sic se, habentibus mihi salva saniori sententia, in hac materia dicendum videtur quod quaestio de immortalitate animae est neutrum problema, sicut etiam de mundi aeternitate. Mihi namque videtur quod nullae rationes naturales adduci possunt cogentes animam esse immortalem, minusque probantes animam esse mortalem, sicut quam plures doctores tenentes, eam immortalem declarant... Sed animam esse immortalem est articulus fidei, ut patet per symbolum Apostolorum et Athanasii; ergo probari debet per propria fidei. Medium autem cui inititur fides est revelatio et scriptura canonica. Ergo tantum vere et proprie per haec habet probari; caeterae vero rationes sunt extraneae, inituntur quo medio non probanti quod intenditur."

[31] On this, see John Sellars, "Pomponazzi Contra Averroes on the Intellect," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (2016): 45-66, 2; Leen Spruit, "The Pomponazzi Affair: The Controversy over the Immortality of the Soul," in *The Routledge Companion to Sixteenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund and Benjamin Hill (New York: Routledge, 2017), 225-246, 231.

Commentary on the *De anima* and his other works. Throughout, he offers solutions to the metaphysical problems that arise out of the attempt to explain how the intellect participates in both the material and immaterial realms.

As with the first eleven inquiries, Sforno's treatment of personal immortality is comprised of six parts. He first poses the question of whether the human intellective soul is corruptible, whereupon he advances four syllogistic arguments affirming its corruptibility and three arguments in favour of the opposite position. Then he submits his own general theory of soul and knowledge, employing it to refute each of the four arguments from the second part of the inquiry. Finally, he concludes with an exegetical interpretation of the first chapter of Psalms in which he demonstrates its concordance with his solution. A general outline of the contents of the twelfth *quaestio* is presented in Table 3.1.[32]

Table 3.1

Pages (Hebrew; Latin)	Content and Philosophical Authorities Mentioned
(1) *Or*, 42v; *Lumen*, 55v.	Statement of the issue under discussion: the incorruptibility of the human intellective soul.
(2) *Or*, 43r-45r; *Lumen*, 55v-57v.	Four arguments in favour of the corruptibility or mortality of the human intellective soul. In the second argument, he discusses Averroes' unicity theory. He also mentions Aristotle, Porphyry, Ghazali, Plato, "ancient philosophers," and Abu Bakr.[33]
(3) *Or*, 45r-46v; *Lumen*, 57v-58v.	Three arguments in favour of the incorruptibility or immortality of the human intellective soul. He mentions Aristotle, Averroes, Hippocrates, and Anaxagoras.
(4) *Or*, 46v-47v; *Lumen*, 58v-59v.	Sforno's theory of psychogony comprised of two general phases of actualization and individuation. He mentions Aristotle, Averroes, and Plato.
(5) *Or*, 47v-51r; *Lumen*, 59v-62v.	A rebuttal of each of the initial four arguments in favour of the corruptibility of the soul. Here, he delineates his epistemology. He mentions Aristotle, Averroes, and Plato.

[32] See Appendix for a more detailed synopsis of the arguments presented in this *quaestio*.
[33] See *Or*, 44r, where he writes: "אבוכפר בן אלצאיג"; Compare *Lumen*, 56v: "*Abubacher*". Taylor identifies this authority as Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Bajjah. See *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 313, n. 58.

(6) *Or*, 51r-52r; *Lumen*, 62v-63r.	An exegesis of the first chapter of the book of Psalms yielding four Scriptural proofs for the incorruptibility of the soul. No philosophical authorities are mentioned in this final section of the *quaestio*.

My examination of how Sforno reads his sources takes the fourth section of the twelfth *quaestio*, which contains his general noetic theory, as its point of departure since this is where the various elements introduced in the preceding sections are drawn together and developed into a coherent thesis.[34] As such, this section provides a convenient conceptual frame for identifying and drawing out these elements in order to observe how the author combines and employs them without causing the reader to become disoriented by the array of intricate and sometimes convoluted lines of argument. Throughout, I attempt to shed light on Sforno's methods of solving what he perceives to be significant philosophical-theological difficulties through his use of the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus.

In articulating his noetic doctrine, Sforno affirms that the intellective soul is what substantially defines the human being as a speaking or rational animal, and he classifies it as an eternal or immortal substance, whose plurality is ultimately determined by the number of individuals belonging to the class of human beings.[35] He divides the intellect into two main phases. The first phase he characterises as an undifferentiated potential nature shared by the entire human species, which is

[34] This strategy accords with Robert Pasnau's advice to modern scholars so that they might cope with the frustration involved in reading Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*, which is also in the scholastic form of *quaestio disputata*. See Thomas Aquinas, *The treatise on human nature: Summa theologiae 1a 75-89*, trans. Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2002), introduction, xviii-xx. For an alternative approach, see Otto Bird, "How to Read an Article of the Summa," *New Scholasticism* 27, no. 2 (1953): 129-159.

[35] Or, 46v: "נשוב אם כן להתיר ספק החקירה הנזכ' שהנפש האנושית השכלית אשר בה נאמר שהאדם הוא בעצם חי מדבר הוא עצם נצחי ויפול עליו רבוי כמספר אישי המין האנושי..."

Lumen, 58v: "Ad dubium, ergo, respondetur quod intellectiva hominis anima, qua scilicet homo dicitur substantialiter rationalis, est quid immortale; ad individuorum numerum dinumerabile..."

emanated from separable entities or angels.[36] He compares this nature in its un-emanated state to prime matter, likening its relation to individual souls with that of prime matter to actual individual subjects of the perceivable world. Just as prime matter represents a state of absolute potentiality, so too, he writes, this nature exists purely as an unrealized potency inherent in the separable entities from which it is emanated.[37]

The second main phase, according to Sforno, occurs when this potential nature is emanated onto its proper subject—the human body—at which point it becomes individuated, functioning as the form of an actual composite entity. It is this phase in which the intellective soul becomes a substance in act.[38] He labels the initial influx, which renders a human being capable of intellection, as the "first perfection/actuality" (השלמות הראשון; *primus actus*), connecting it to Aristotle's general account of soul in the *De anima*.[39] He recalls Aristotle's description of the rational faculty as a *tabula rasa*—a writing-tablet on which nothing is yet written.[40] The full realization of the intellective soul does not occur until the individual actually thinks, a stage that he calls the "second perfection/actuality" (השלמות השני; *secundus actus*). Thus, the first stage of individuation is one of relative potentiality with regard to the second stage. Sforno states that the act of thinking requires the transfer of perceivable images from

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[36] *Or*, 46v: "...ומקורו מטבע כחיי משותף לכל המין האנושי שופע מנבדלים עליוני'."
Lumen, 58v: "...et hoc, quia produciter a quadam spirituali natura a superis, sive abstractis intelligentiis emanante, quibus ipsa potentialiter inest, quae scilicet natura est humano generi communis."
[37] *Or*, 46v: "והנה יחס זה הטבע השופע הוא אל הצורות האנושייות האישיות כיחס החומר הראשון אל אישי נושאי המוחשות הנמצאים בפועל."
Lumen, 58v: "Huiusmodi ergo, naturae proportio ad actuales hominum individuorum formas talis est, qualis est proportio materiae primae ad actualia sensibilium individuorum subiecta."
[38] *Or*, 46v: "...וזה הטבע נעשה עצם נמצא בפעל אחר ששפע על נושא אישי מיוחד אליו ונעשה צורת אותו הנושא האישיי אשר שפע עליו זה הטבע."
Lumen, 58v: "...quae tamen fit actualis substantia cum primum a superis emanans, cum individuo sibi proportionato copuletur, cuius fit tunc actualis forma."
[39] Aristotle, *Aristotle: De Anima*, trans. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2016), II.1 (412^b 5): "Hence, if it is necessary to say something which is common to every soul, it would be that the soul is the first actuality of an organic natural body."
[40] Ibid., III.4 (430^a 30): "...that reason is in a certain way in potentiality the objects of reason, though it is nothing in actuality before it reasons—in potentiality just as in a writing tablet on which nothing written in actuality is present, which is just what turns out in the case of reason."

the corporeal faculty of imagination to the intellect, rendering the images intelligible by a process of reception and abstraction.[41] The individuated intellective soul is able to control the material faculties of its subject through its volitional power.[42] According to Sforno's theory, the first general phase of the human intellect's origination is a state of singular potentiality, which undergoes an emanative process from separable entities external to the human being when an individual material subject becomes prepared to receive it; the second general phase involves an individuated disposition for thought followed by voluntary acts of thinking dependent on the perceivable experiences of the individual human being.

In both phases of Sforno's theory, the intellect has a divine character since in its first phase it is a potentiality inhering in angels; in its second phase, although it functions as the substantial form of each individual human being, it does not represent a faculty or power inseparable from the individual in the way that a material form is inseparable from its material substrate. Rather, it remains an incorruptible substance unmixed with and entirely independent of the body. In this regard, Sforno compares the relation of the intellect and its body to the relation of the soul of a celestial sphere and the body of that sphere.[43] It is this unmixed character, he contends, that enables the intellective soul to receive all intelligible forms without obstruction.

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[41] *Or*, 46v: "וזה כאשר יובלו אליו תמונות המוחשות מן הכח המדמה אשר באותו הנושא ובזה ישתדל לקנות השלמות השני כי אז יוכל לפעול פעולתיו בתמונות הנז' המוגבלות אליו להפשיטם ולקבלם..."
Lumen, 58v: "Et hoc, quia cum eiusdem individui imaginationes eidem spirituali naturae presententur, potest illas a materia extrahere, et intellectualiter recipere..."

[42] *Or*, 46v: "ויוכל גם כן לצוות לכלי הכחות החמריות אשר באותו הנושא ויצוה אותם לעשות הפעולות הבחיריות וזה בכח הבחירה הנתון בו ברצון אלהי היא נפלאת בעינינו."
Lumen, 58v: *Lumen*, 58v: "Organicisque eiusdem individui virtutibus praecipere ut agant actiones ad libitum, fiendas per liberum arbitrium; tunc eidem divinitus infusum, et mirabiliter exhibitum."

[43] *Or*, 47r: "ובהיות שזאת הצורה אשר היא הנפש האנושית השכלית היא דבר בלתי מעורב עם הגוף, הנה יחס זאת הצורה אל הנושא האישיי אשר היא צורה לו כיחס נפש הגלגל אל הגלגל אשר היא צורה לו כי היא אמנם בלתי מעורבת עם גוף הגלגל עם היותה לו צורה אישיית."
Lumen, 59r: "Cum autem huiusmodi spiritualis forma, quae est intellectiva anima sit quid corpori non mixtum, sic ergo se habet ad humanum individuum cum quo copulatur, sicut se habet anima motiva cuiuslibet orbium ad illum orbem cuius est propria anima, quae scilicet est quid non mixtum eiusdem orbis corpori; quamvis sit eiusdem individualis anima."

In articulating his noetic doctrine, Sforno supports his conclusions with premises derived exclusively from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus. Let us now take a closer look at his methods for reading that corpus.

3.4 EMANATION FROM THE GODS

The first element that Sforno addresses in his noetic theory is the source of the human intellective soul. Focusing on its universality, he writes: "Its source is a potential nature shared by all humankind, which is emanated from supernal separable beings..."[44] In the Hebrew text, he immediately buttresses this assertion with four authorities: Scripture, Midrash, Aristotle, and Plato—the latter two are taken from Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*. In the *Lumen gentium*, he begins instead with the Greek philosophers; later, he also provides the scriptural passage and its midrashic interpretation, albeit without any explicit attribution to the rabbis.[45]

Sforno connects his statement about the soul's source and its initial universal state to Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image," which he interprets using an exegetical comment from the rabbinical corpus: "[This means that God] consulted the ministering angels."[46] To this, he adds his own clarification: "[God] gave them the power for this emanation."[47] For this insight on the soul's origination, he turns to Aristotle: "And perhaps Aristotle was prompted by this [notion]—as Averroes explicated in his name in *Metaphysics* 7:31—when he said that the intellective power is produced by separable beings."[48] Following this, he turns his reader's attention from

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[44] *Or*, 46v; *Lumen*, 58v (cited above).
[45] Compare *Or*, 46v and *Lumen*, 58v and 59r. However, see *Lumen*, 62r-v, where Sforno does provide the Latin reader with the verse from Genesis and its rabbinic exegesis in the context of his discussion about the voluntary aspect of the actualisation of a human being's intellectual faculties. The rabbinic source is not identified in the *Lumen gentium*.
[46] Genesis Rabbah 8:3; Sanhedrin 38b.
[47] *Or*, 46v: "...כאמרו נעשה אדם בצלמנו ואמרו רז"ל במלאכי השרת נמלך כלומר שנתן להם כח לזאת ההשפעה."
[48] Ibid.: "...ולזה אולי התעורר ארסטו' כפי מה שביאר אבן רשד בשמו בספר מה שאחר מאמר ז' פרק ל"א באמרו שהכח השכלי יתהוה מהנבדלים."

Aristotle to Plato, in particular, his opinion that "the human soul is emanated from the secondary gods."[49] This discussion provides a glimpse into Sforno's hermeneutic method, by which he demonstrates how his understanding of certain religious tenets can be read into Scripture, rabbinic literature, and the statements of the Greek philosophers.[50] Although the subtle differences between the Hebrew and the Latin texts shed light on his perception of the different sensibilities of his two readerships, in both texts, his strategy is to harmonize his cited authorites so that they are in accord with one another on the subject.

Sforno's citations of Averroes' references to the opinions of Aristotle and Plato on the intellect in this instance are misleading. In the case of Aristotle, the original discussion from the *Metaphysics* cited here is about matter as the starting-point of natural and artificial production, which includes the assertion that the form of a thing is contained potentially within its matter.[51] Averroes' comments on this in his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* do indeed include a reference to Aristotle's statement regarding the divine nature of the intellect. However, the passage in question continues with Averroes' unambiguous rejection of the idea that the intellective faculty embodied in the human being could be a separable entity. He

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Lumen, 58v: "...prout videtur Aven R. de mente Phylosophi inferre Methaphysicorum 7 t.c. 31, quod scilicet virtus intellectiva tanquam quid abstractum habet ab abstractis qodammodo producitur."

[49] *Or*, 46v: "וכן ביאר בספר הנז' מאמר י"ב פרק י"ח בשם אפלטון באמרו שהנפש האנושית נאצלת מן האלהים השניים."
Lumen, 58v: "Et idem Platonis auctoritate infert Methaphysicorum 12 t.c. 18, ubi dicit animam intellectivam fieri a diis secundis."

[50] Maimonides also discusses this particular rabbinic exegesis in the *Guide*. Subsequent to that discussion, he mentions a theory of emanation, which he attributes to Plato. See *The Guide of the Perplexed*, II.6, 262-263. Thus, although Sforno's citation of Plato is taken from the Averroan corpus, it is possible that some aspects of his theory are derived from Maimonides.

[51] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII.9.1034a9-1034b19. On this, see Richard Taylor, "Averroes on Psychology and the Principles of Metaphysics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36.4 (1998): 507-523, 519: "In these books [*Metaphysics* books *Zeta* and *Eta*] Aristotle traces the actuality of substance to form. The account of an existing thing which is given by its differences is one of its form and actuality... The cause of actuality in a composite thing is the form... And forms which are not actualities of matter have being in their own right, not dependent upon anything else. These are the separate intelligences which are linked with the celestial bodies as their 'souls'."

demonstrates this point by relating it to the general topic of the discussion—Aristotle's theory of hylomorphism:

> Therefore, Aristotle holds this faculty in high regard, associating it with divine rather than natural origins. However, it is impossible for that faculty to be a separable intellect. Aristotle's proof for this is because forms are not produced in and of themselves, since, if that were the case, production would not be by means of matter... But the agent of production is that which moves matter so that it receives a form; it is what educes it from potential to actual. That which moves matter must be a body possessing an active or passive quality, which acts on the body possessing the active quality.[52]

Sforno does not agree with this line of thinking since he is committed to the thesis that the human intellective soul is in fact separable and hence incorruptible, and the demonstration of that point is the business of his twelfth *quaestio*. His solution is therefore to read Averroes in a somewhat selective manner. He retains the first statement, while ignoring the second. Moroever, he paraphrases the first statement as: "the intellective power is produced by separable beings" (יתהוה מהנבדלים; *ab abstractis quodammodo producitur*). I would argue that this formulation suggests a more conclusive causal link between the human intellect and separable or immaterial beings than the phrase *attribuit illam principiis divinis, non naturalibus*[53] employed by Michael Scot in his translation, which, as has been demonstrated in the previous

[52] Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 8, Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), 7 t.c. 31, 85v, ll. 32-43: "Et ideo, Aristoteles magnificat hanc virtutem, et attribuit illam principiis divinis, non naturalibus. Sed istam virtutem esse intelligentiam separatam, est impossibile. Et demonstratio Aristotelis in hoc est, quod formae non generantur per se, quoniam, si sic esset, tunc generatio esset non a materia... Generans igitur est illud, quod movet materiam, donec recipiat formam; id est illud, quod extrahit ipsam de potentia ad actum. Et illud, quod movet materiam, necessario est corpus, habens qualitatem activam, aut potentiam quae agit per corpus habens qualitatem activam."

[53] Compare *Or*, 46v: "שהכח השכלי יתהוה מהנבדלים;" *Lumen*, 58v: "...virtus intellectiva tanquam quid abstractum habet ab abstractis quodammodo producitur;" *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 8, Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, 7 t.c. 31, 85v, l. 33: "...et attribuit illam [hanc virtutem] principiis divinis, non naturalibus."

chapter, was the text used by Sforno for his citations.[54] In this instance, however, Sforno prefers his own unambiguous paraphrase of the sentence to Scot's rendering and also ignores the continuation of the passage because this allows him to interpret Averroes' characterization of Aristotle's opinion so that it lends support to his own thesis.

Similarly, Sforno's reference to Averroes' citation of Plato here would also appear to strengthen his argument. However, upon closer examination it becomes clear that he is extracting the statement from a more nuanced context than he would have his reader know, and that its role in Averroes' discourse is incompatible with how he develops it in his twelfth *quaestio*. As with his elucidation of Aristotle's statement in the seventh book of his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Averroes once again addresses the topic of the nature of production vis-à-vis form and matter. Here, in the twelfth book of the Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the issue under discussion is Aristotle's discarding of Plato's theory of the Forms. Aristotle states: "Therefore, it is clear that, as a result of this, we do not need in any way [to accept Plato's assertion] that Forms exist. For a human being produces [another] human being, which is an individual; from which [it is derived that] a human being is [produced] from human beings."[55] Thereupon, Averroes presents Themistius as advancing a refutation of Aristotle on this point based on the observation that in nature many animals are not born from their like. It is within this context that Plato's notion of secondary gods is introduced:

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[54] See the second chapter herein, 2.3 "Citing Aristotle and Averroes."

[55] *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 8, Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, L. 12, C. 18, 142v: "[textus:] Manifestum est igitur, quod nullo modo indigemus propter hoc ut formae sint. Homo enim generat hominem, quod est unum; unde homo ex hominibus." Cf. Averroes, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: a translation with introduction of Ibn Rushd's commentary on Aristotle's metaphysics, book Lām*, trans. Charles F. Genequand (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 105.

> Themistius, however, says that this argument is sufficient [to refute Plato's theory of Forms], but he says that [Aristotle] overlooked the animals that are produced from dissimilar things. For we see hornets produced from the bodies of dead horses, bees from the bodies of dead cows, frogs from putrescent water, and flies from soured wine... It must be that its proportions and forms are in nature and that it produces what it produces according to them... This demonstrates that these proportions are inspired by causes nobler than themselves, which is, the soul that is in the earth [i.e., the world soul] that Plato says is produced by the secondary gods and Aristotle by the sun and the ecliptic... These are the words of Themistius [in his refutation of the view of Aristotle]. It would appear that he did not understand how generation takes place and what we mean when we say that the thing generated is produced from its like in definition and substance.[56]

Two points emerge from this fuller report of Averroes' discussion cited by Sforno. First, Plato's notion of secondary gods is only referenced as part of Averroes' account of Themistius' refutation of Aristotle, which Averroes dismisses as a misconception of the workings of nature. It is clear that Averroes does not endorse the theory that the human soul is emanated from secondary gods. It would seem, therefore, that Sforno is using the Averroan corpus as a source in order to access the ideas of other philosophers regardless of how those ideas are situated in the original discourse. Secondly, it would appear that Sforno equates the world soul spoken of here with the subject of his inquiry: the human intellective soul. This is clear from the context of his own discussion as well as from his choice of words in both texts of the treatise: in the *Or ammim* he employs the term הנפש האנושית (the human soul); in the *Lumen gentium*, he renders this as *anima intellectiva* (intellective soul). This human

[56] *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 8, Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, 12 t.c. 18, 142v-143r, passim: "Themistius autem dicit hunc sermonem esse sufficientem, sed dicit ipsum oblitum fuisse animalia, quae fiunt ex non similibus. Vespae enim videntur fieri ex corporibus equorum mortuorum, et apes ex corporibus vaccarum mortuarum, et ranes ex putrefactione aquae, et musciliones ex vino corrupto... Necesse enim est ut proportiones et formae eius sint in natura, secundum quas facit id, quod facit... Et hoc demonstrat quod aliquid rememorat ipsam de causis nobilioribus, ut anima, quae est in terra, de quo Plato dicit quod sit ex Diis secundis, et Aristoteles ex sole et orbe declivi... Haec igitur sunt verba Themistii. Et apparet, quod iste non intelligit quomodo fit generatio, et quid est dicere, quod generatum fit a convenienti in definitione et substantia." Cf. *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: a translation*, 106-107.

intellective soul is what, Sforno purports, is emanated from the secondary gods according to Plato. However, in Averroes' account here, the secondary gods are not the cause of the human soul, but rather of the world soul, which he says that Themistius claims is responsible for the forms and proportions that have previously been put into nature. Michael Scot renders this from the Arabic as *anima quae est in terra*.[57] Averroes does not appear to have made any such equation of this world soul with the human soul. What prompts Sforno to equate the two notions?

The concepts of world soul and secondary gods originally occur in Plato's *Timaeus*,[58] in which the author offers a teleological account of the origin of the natural world.[59] According to that account, a supreme god—the Demiurge[60]—created subordinate or secondary gods, the world soul, the souls of the stars, and the immortal human soul.[61] The secondary gods, in turn, were responsible for constructing man's physical body to house his human soul, as well as to combine the two.[62] From the original text of Plato's *Timaeus* it would appear that the world soul—Michael Scot's

[57] *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 8, Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, L. 12, C. 18, 143r, l. 5.
[58] See Cf. *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: a translation*, 106, n. 87.
[59] See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. H. D. P. Lee (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1977), introduction, 7.
[60] For an elucidation of this term, see Michael J. B. Allen, "Demiurge," in *The classical tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 255-256.
[61] See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, introduction, 8-9.
[62] In Plato's recounting of the Demiurge's address to these subordinate gods, their role *vis-à-vis* the human soul is delineated: "Ye Gods, those gods whose maker I am and those works whose father I am, being created by me, are indissoluble without my consent... Hear therefore what I now make known to you. There are three kinds of mortal creature yet uncreated, and unless they are created the world will be imperfect as it will not have in it every kind of living creature which it must have if it is to be perfect. But if these were created and given life by me, they would be equal to gods. In order therefore that there may be mortal creatures and that the whole may be truly a whole, turn your hands, as is natural to you, to the making of living things, taking as your model my own activity in creating you. And insofar as there ought to be something in them that can be named immortal, something called divine, to guide those of them who are ready to follow you and the right, I will begin by sowing the seed of it and then hand it on to you; it remains for you to weave mortal and immortal together and create living creatures. Bring them to birth, give them food and growth, and when they perish receive them again. So speaking, he turned again to the same bowl in which he had mixed the soul of the universe and poured into it what was left of the former ingredients, mixing them in much the same fashion as before, only not quite so pure, but in a second and third degree. And when he had compounded the whole, he divided it up into as many souls as there are stars, and allotted each [human] soul to a star." See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, 57-58.

anima quae est in terra—would not be equivalent to the immortal human soul, as Sforno contends. It is possible that Sforno's conflation of the human soul and the world soul is because according to Plato's account, some lesser quality of the material of the world soul was mixed in the same manner and in the same "bowl" in order to produce the human soul. It is therefore possible that Sforno is relying here on an interpretation of Plato's account that he does not explicitly identify and that his reading of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* is informed by that interpretation.[63]

Regardless of why Sforno conflates these notions, it would seem that he is advocating a theory of "monopsychism," in which the existence of a single potential intellectual soul emanated from divine beings is posited.[64] Although Sforno cites exclusively from Averroes' works in order to bolster this thesis regarding the intellective soul's origination, the basic notion is foreign to Averroes' mature metaphysical system. His noetic theory as presented in the Long Commentary on the *De anima* does not include any notion of the human intellect's emanation from separable beings. In fact, in this work as well as in the Long Commentary on the

[63] Sforno's identification of Plato's "secondary gods" with angels is one that is also found in glosses on the *Timaeus* by the "Recanati Master" from the middle of the fifteenth century. See James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance 2*, (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004), 104. For an overview of the recovery of Plato's writings in the Renaissance period, see James Hankins, and Ada Palmer, *The recovery of ancient philosophy in the Renaissance: a brief guide* (Firenze: Olschki, 2008), 10-19. See also Anthony Grafton, "The availability of Ancient Works," in *The Cambridge history of Renaissance philosophy*, 767-791, esp. 786-787. Regarding the dissemination of Calcidius' fourth-century partial Latin translation and commentary of the *Timaeus* in the Middle Ages, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance thought and its sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 55-56; Christopher S Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," in *The Cambridge companion to Renaissance philosophy*, 72-96, 73.

[64] As Dag Nikolaus Hasse observes, the term "monopsychism" is problematic when applied to Averroes' unicity thesis because it concerns a cosmic intellect, not the human soul. However, since Sforno's notion of the human intellective soul is an ambiguous conflation of these two notions, the term would seem to be somewhat appropriate. See Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on the Latin West," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2018 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/arabic-islamic-influence/>. For the usage of the term "monopsychism" in scholarly literature, see for example Fernand Van Steenberghen, "The Second Lecture: Monopsychism," in Id., *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 29-74; Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969).

Metaphysics and the *Destructio destructionum*, he discards the concept of emanation altogether, classifying it as an illegitimate category of efficient causation.[65] Hence, while Sforno uses the Averroan corpus in order to access the ideas of the Greek philosophers, he not only extracts those ideas from their original contexts, recasting them so that they conform to his interpretation of Scripture and Midrash, he also glosses over the metaphysical underpinnings inherent in the philosophical system of that corpus. In both the *Or ammim* and the *Lumen gentium* he invokes Aristotle and Plato as cited by Averroes to lend credibility to his own thesis about the origination of the human intellective soul despite the fact that the very authorities on which he relies would have protested against such interpretations.

3.5 GENERATED OR CREATED

Later in the twelfth inquiry, Sforno again invokes Plato's authority in his rebuttal of the third demonstration proposed against the incorruptibility of the soul. In this instance too, he employs his hermeneutical skills to juxtapose the ideas of one Greek philosopher with those of another, using the teacher's opinion to reinterpret that of his disciple. In his initial argument he cites Aristotle's opinion and in his rebuttal he advocates what he depicts as its refinement, supposedly using Plato to illustrate that refinement; in both instances he refers his reader to the same source: Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De caelo*.[66] In his initial demonstration, Sforno argues that since

[65] See *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 220-257; Barry S. Kogan, "Averroes and the Theory of Emanation," *Medieval Studies*, XLIII (1981): 384-404; Id., *Averroes and the metaphysics of causation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 248-255. For a critical discussion of both Davidson's and Kogan's opinions, see David B. Twetten, "Averroes on the Prime Mover Proved in the Physics," *Viator* 26 (1995): 107-134.

[66] In his rebuttal, Sforno misidentifies the source of his citation of Plato. This is true for both the *Or ammim* and the *Lumen gentium*. He refers his reader to *De caelo* 1:124; the citations are actually found in *De caelo* 1:109. This is probably due to the fact that in his argument against the incorruptibility of the soul he refers to Aristotle's view on the subject in *De caelo* 1:124. A second typographical error occurs in the *Or ammim*, where Sforno again refers his reader to Aristotle's view in his rebuttal, citing *De caelo* 1:154 instead of 1:124. There is no doubt that this is an error since the final chapter of the

the individual intellective soul is a newly generated substance, it cannot endure eternally; it is not immortal. He derives this conclusion from Aristotle's assertion in the *De caelo* that the notion of eternity inherently excludes the notions of generation and corruption.[67]

In his rebuttal to this argument, Sforno presents what he considers a key distinction when treating the subject of generation and corruption, by which the force of Aristotle's uncompromising position, he contends, is weakened:

> If an opponent would argue that this substance [the intellect] is a newly originated thing because at one time it did not exist, yet it is eternal, from which the illogical conclusion would follow that an existent can be both newly originated and incorruptible (the opposite of which has been demonstrated by Aristotle in *De caelo* [1:124], as was explained above), our response would be as follows: One must discern between [two] different kinds of origination. [The first kind] is generative origination, belonging to the motion of generation, by which matter is moved from one form to another at some point in time; [the second] is a kind of origination by which an existent is generated from a state of formlessness to a state of form. The latter is called "creation", as Ibn Rushd explicated in *Metaphysics* 12:18. With regard to this kind of origination, a substratum is not needed in order to educe the creation from potentiality to actuality, and that which is originated is essentially incorruptible unless its creator voluntarily returns it to nothingness, as it was before the creation occurred. It would also seem that this was the opinion of Plato when he stated that it is possible for a newly originated thing not to corrupt, in accordance with [Ibn Rushd's] commentary on *De caelo*. The origination of the intellective substance belongs to

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first book of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De caelo* is t.c. 140. This latter error is found only in the *Or ammim*; it is corrected in the *Lumen gentium*. In addition, a section of the third argument proving the soul's incorruptibility in the *Or ammim* (offering a partial rebuttal of the argument, which comprises eight lines and refers to *De caelo* 1:121, and quotes *De caelo* 1:124) is reduced to a mere citation of *De caelo* 1:124 in the *Lumen gentium* (comprised of two lines and lacking the partial rebuttal as well as the reference to *De caelo* 1:121). Compare *Or*, 45r, ll. 3-10 with *Lumen*, 57r, ll. 23-26.

[67] *Or*, 45r: "...כמו שהוא מבואר במופת ארסטו' בספר השמים מאמר א פרק קכ"א וקכ"ד באמרו וז"ל נאמר שהדבר אשר הוא נמצא נצחי אינו הווה ולא נפסד והוסיף ואמר הדבר אשר הוא הווה ונפסד אינו נמצא נצחי כי אם היה נמצא נצחי היה בו כח להיות נמצא לעולם וכח שלא להיות נמצא לעולם וזה הוא נמנע."

Lumen, 57r: "Et hoc ratione et auctoritate Phylosophi in libro De caelo primo t.c. 124, ubi dicit: Si enim esset perpetuum, esset potentia ut semper esset ens et semper non ens, quod impossibile est."

> this second kind since it moves from a state of non-actual existence to one of [actual] existence.[68]

Several features of Sforno's method of reading his sources come to light in this passage. The way in which he brings Plato's authority to bear once more on the subject of the human soul's incorruptibility reveals his unsympathetic assessment of Aristotle's philosophical acumen as he demonstrates his willingness to disregard the logical development of his source text even though he remains faithful to its basic conceptual and literary framework. Here, Sforno cites Plato from Aristotle's own discourse in which the latter categorically denies the philosophical plausibility of the former's doctrine on the eternity of generated substances. Aristotle's statement in Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De caelo* reads:

> There are, however, others who say that it is possible for something un-generated to be corrupted and for something generated to persist uncorrupted. This was said [by Plato] in the *Timaeus*—that the heavens were generated yet will persist for the rest of time without corruption or destruction. In fact, let us say that they are merely describing the heavens as a discourse on

[68] *Or*, 48v-49r: "ואם יטעון חולק ויאמ' שבהיו' שזה העצם הוא דבר מחודש אחר שלא היה ועם זה הוא נצחי יתחייב מזה שימצא דבר מחודש בלתי נפסד והנה הפך זה התבאר בראיית ארסטו' בספר השמים מאמר א' פרק קכ"ד כמו שהתבאר למעלה. נשיב ונאמר שראוי לחלק בין מיני החדוש כי אמנם יש חדוש הווה בתנועת ההווייה אשר בה יתנועע החומר באיזה זמן מצורה לצורה והנה בנושא זה המין מן החדוש יש בהכרח איזה כוחיות והכנה להיות נפסד ובלתי נמצא ובזה המין מן החדוש תצדק ראיית ארסטו' הנזכ' ויש מין אחר מחדוש אשר הוא הווה מלא צורה אל איזו צורה. וזה המין מן החדוש יקרא בריא' כמו שביאר אבן רשד בספר מה שאחר מאמר י"ב פרק י"ח אשר בה לא יבוקש שום נושא שתוציאהו הבריאה מן הכח אל הפעל והמחודש בזה האופן הוא מצד עצמו בלתי נפסד זולתי אם ברצון בוראו ישוב לאין כמו שהיה קודם הבריאה. וכן נרא' שהיה דעת אפלטון באמרו שהוא איפשר שיהיה איזה מחודש שלא יפסד כפי מה שהתב' בביאור ספ' השמים מאמר א' פרק קכ"ד והנה חדוש זה העצם השכלי הוא מזה המין השני שהוא מבלתי מציאות בפעל אל מציאות"

Lumen, 60v: "Cum autem arguatur quod ad hoc ut huiusmodi substantia sit quid productum, et cum hoc sit immortale, sequeretur ut detur quid genitum quod nunquam corrumpatur, cuius oppositum habetur ratione et auctoritate Phylosophi in libro De caelo primo t.c. 124, ut supra. Respondetur, distinguendo de productione alia, enim est productio quae fit per motum generationis et in tempore, et hoc in subiecto actu existente illud, de forma ad formam deducendo; in huiusmodi enim, subiecto est necessario potentia ad non semper esse illud novum ad quod per generationis motum deducitur. Et de hoc tali, quod hoc productionis modo prodicitur, procedit Phylosophi ratio. Alia vero est productio quae fit per modum creationis, scilicet ex non forma ad formam, sicut describitur ab Aven R. Methaphysicorum 12 t.c. 18; et in tali productione, nullum datur subiectum de potentia ad actum deducendum. Quare de illo, quod hoc productionis modo producitur, non procedit Phylosophi ratio. Immo est quid per se incorruptibile, cum ad eius productionem nulla concurrat materia, cuius potentialitate habeat procedere ad corruptionem. Et hoc fortasse sensit Plato, dicens quod datur genitum incorruptibile, cuius opinionem conatur Aven. R. respuere in commento libri De caelo primi, t.c. 124. Cum autem intellectiva hominis anima sub secundo productionis modo producatur, ut supra; merito dicendum est quod sit incorruptibilis, et omnino immortalis, ut supra."

> nature [which is limited in scope]. We, however, will investigate this with an investigation covering everything. Once we have done this, it will become clear to us whether the heavens were generated [and yet persists] without corruption.[69]

It is difficult in the context of this passage, which contains a promise of a thorough explanation of the invalidity of Plato's doctrine, to overlook the obvious fact that Aristotle is both aware of and antagonistic toward Plato's account of creation in the *Timaeus*. Accordingly, Sforno's characterization of his own resolution as having disarmed Aristotle's position by using a conceptual distinction that he himself has supposedly introduced, which he recognizes as the principle behind Plato's doctrine that would render it compatible with that of Aristotle, does seem somewhat curious. It is noteworthy that, although Sforno uses one Greek philosopher to undermine the conclusions of the other, glossing over the disagreement between them in the process, in the *Lumen gentium* an additional statement appears, which is unavailable to the reader of the *Or ammim*. There, Sforno clarifies Averroes'—but not Aristotle's—disdain for Plato's opinion: "Perhaps this is what Plato intended when he said that a generated thing can be incorruptible, whose opinion Averroes endeavored to disprove in his commentary on the *De caelo*, book 1, t.c. 124."[70] It is not clear why Sforno offers this hint of discord between Averroes and Plato to his Latin reader, while concealing it from his Hebrew reader as he strives to harmonize these philosophical systems.

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[69] Averroes, *Averrois Cordubensis commentum magnum super libro De celo et mundo Aristotelis*, ed. Francis James Carmody, Rüdiger Arnzen, and Gerhard Endress (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), L. 1, C. 109, p. 209, ll. 1-8: "Sunt autem alii, qui dicunt possibile est ut aliquid non generetur, tamen corrumpitur, et possibile est ut aliquid generetur, et non corrumpatur, ut dictum est in Timeo quod celum est generatum et est perpetuum ceteris temporibus sine corruptione et consumptione. Nos vero dicimus quod isti celum non disponunt nisi tantum sermone naturali. Et nos perscrutibimur de huiusmodi verificatione perscrutatione continente omnia. Si enim hoc fecerimus, manifestabitur tunc nobis utrum celum sit generatum sine corruptione." Cf. Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, I.10.280a28-280a33. 1034a9-1034b19.

[70] *Lumen*, 60v: "Et hoc fortasse sensit Plato, dicens quod datur genitum incorruptibile, cuius opinionem conatur Aven. R. respuere in commento libri De caelo primi, t.c. 124."

Perhaps his comment to the Latin reader would have been better suited to Averroes' robust denunciation of the very notion of creation in his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, a source that Sforno cites just prior to his citation of the *De caelo*. Indeed, if any instance of hostility on the part of Averroes toward an opinion extracted by Sforno from his commentaries should merit a warning, this occasion would be a particularly suitable one. A fuller citation of Averroes' discussion in his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* demonstrates the extent of the discord:

> However, the supporters of creation say that the agent creates the entire existence anew from nothing, and that it is not necessary that there be matter on which he acts, but rather, he creates the whole thing. This is the opinion of the theologians of our religion and the religion of the Christians. Regarding this, John the Christian [i.e., John Philoponus] believes that there is no possibility except in the agent, as Farabi indicated in his book *on Changing Beings*... The supposition that forms are created has led men to say that [Plato's] Forms exist and that the Giver of Forms exists. It has [also] led the theologians of the three religions existing today to say that something [can be] produced from nothing, and since the theologians of our religion believe that the agent acts by creating a form from nothing, but they have not seen anything like this acting here [on earth], they have said that [there is] a single agent [acting on] all existents without [any] intermediary, and that the action of that agent instantaneously performs an infinite amount of both contrary and accordant actions... The error of these [supporters of creation] is obvious.[71]

When referring to this discussion, however, Sforno offers his reader nothing more than a casual gesture to the source text in which the notion occurs, giving no

[71] *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 8, Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, 12 t.c. 18, 143r-v: "Dicentes autem creationem dicunt quod agens creat totum ens de novo ex nihilo, quod non habet necesse ad hoc ut sit materia, in quam agat, sed creat totum. Et haec est opinio Loquentium in nostra lege, et lege Christianorum. De qua, Ioannes Christianus opinabatur quod possibilitas non est nisi in agente, ut Alpharabius narravit in libro De entibus transmutatis... Imaginatio ergo super creationes formarum induxit homines dicere formas esse, et datorem esse formarum. Et induxit Loquentes trium legum, quae hodie quidem sunt, dicere aliquid fieri ex nihilo, et cum Loquentes nostrae legis opinabantur quod agens agit creando formam ex nihilo, et nullum huiusmodi agens viderunt hic, dixerunt unum agens omnia entia sine medio, et quod actio istius agentis transit in uno instanti in actiones contrarias et convenientes et infinitas... Et error istorum est manifestus." Cf. Cf. *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: a translation*, 108-112.

indication whatever (in either the *Lumen gentium* or the *Or ammim*) of the role it plays in its original context. He merely states: "The latter is called "creation", as Averroes explicated in *Metaphysics* 12:18."[72] This is perhaps one of the most telling instances of Sforno's attitude toward the Averroan corpus. He points his reader to Averroes' philosophical discussions, representing them as helpful to his own discourse; examination of the source's context reveals, however, that Averroes' statements are at odds with the position Sforno is advocating.

Sforno asserts here that the origination of the human intellect belongs to the second kind of generation: an act of creation *ex nihilo*, which does not require any aspect of potentiality from which the form is drawn into a state of actual existence. This allows him to posit the soul's eternal survival since it does not fall under the order of generability-corruptibility. Nevertheless, in articulating his noetic doctrine, he clearly indicates that in its initial phase of being, the universal intellectual nature shared by the entire human species exists in a state of potentiality within the separable intellects from which it is emanated, and that only upon its emanation does it acquire actualized individuated existence.[73] Hence, although Sforno invests some effort in classifying the origination of the intellect as creation *ex nihilo*, he also retains the notion of passage from potential to actual, a feature that would only be applicable to his first kind of origination, namely, the development of a generable-corruptible thing. It would seem, therefore, that he simultaneoulsy classifies the origination of the

[72] *Or*, 49r: "...וזה המין מן החדוש יקרא בריא' כמו שביאר אבן רשד בספר מה שאחר מאמר י"ב פרק י"ח."
Lumen, 60v: "Alia vero est productio quae sit per modum creationis, scilicet ex non forma ad formam, sicut describitur ab Aven R., Methaphysicorum 12 t.c. 18."

[73] Regarding this, he applies Aristotle's statement that "it is not a thing existing in act before it thinks," making it abundantly clear to his reader that he is not applying the principle of creation *ex nihilo* to some phase of the intellect's origination prior to its emanation from these separable entities. This means that Sforno must be referring to the same moment of the soul's coming-to-be when he affirms that the soul is: (1) created *ex nihilo*; and (2) is transformed from a potential state to an actual state.

human intellective soul as a process of creation *ex nihilo* and as the passage of a potentiality into an actuality.

3.6 MANY OR ONE

I would suggest that Sforno adopts this strategy in spite of its contradictory nature because in his noetic doctrine, the notion of potentiality (with regard to the first general phase of the intellect) plays a crucial role in resolving a difficulty encountered in his second provisional demonstration for the soul's corruptibility. There, Sforno argues that if the intellective soul were an immortal entity, a dilemma would ensue: it would either be a single incorruptible soul common to the entire human species or it would be a set of numerically distinct incorruptible souls.[74] He then proceeds to demonstrate the untenability of both options, provisionally affirming the soul's corruptibility. In order to understand why Sforno applies both kinds of origination to the intellective soul it is necessary to look at how he resolves this dilemma.

His solution to the question of multiplicity-singularity vis-à-vis incorruptibility is identical to his strategy with regard to creation-generation: he escapes the problems of each alternative taken separately by selectively combining them in order to use features of both positions. He does this by appropriating Averroes' mature doctrine of a single immaterial potential intellect and integrating it with the claim that the intellect is also a set of numerically distinct souls that endure as individual entities. This allows him to postulate the existence of an immaterial being that remains unbounded by the constraints of the material world (where entities occur only as individuals), which also enjoys some type of personal immortality. In order to merge the two contradictory notions of universality and individuation, he

[74] See *Or*, 43r-44v; *Lumen*, 54v-57r.

employs the distinction of potentiality and actuality. He asserts that the intellect is universal to all humankind while still in a state of pure potentiality, but it acquires individuation upon its emanative actualization in the material world.[75] He is therefore compelled to retain the notion of development from potentiality to actuality in order to account for the intellect's passage from the first phase in which it is a universal nature to the second phase of individuated existence, while simultaneously asserting that the soul's origination occurs in the manner of creation *ex nihilo*, thereby allowing for its eternal existence in spite of it having been originated.

In order to support his claim regarding the intellect's initial phase of potentiality, Sforno borrows various notions from Averroes' discussions; a revealing example is his comparison of the potential intellective soul to prime matter: "The relation that this emanated nature holds to individual human forms is equivalent to the relation that prime matter holds to actual individual perceivable subjects."[76] Earlier in his proof demonstrating the incorruptibility of the intellect, he cites Averroes' discussion about the differences between the material intellect and prime matter:

> In addition to the foregoing, Ibn Rushd explicated this with proof in *De anima* 3:5 saying: "The reason why this intellect apprehends and understands while prime matter neither apprehends nor understands, is because prime matter receives individual forms, while this power receives universal forms." He continued, saying: "Therefore, if that nature which is called 'intellect' receives forms, it must do so in a manner other than that by which those matters receive forms." He continued, saying: "Therefore, it is not necessary that it be of the kind of those matters, one of which is prime matter, since if this were so,

[75] On Averroes' theory about individuation, see Matteo Di Giovanni, "Individuation by Matter in Averroes' Metaphysics," in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale 18* (2007), 187-210. For a more general study of the problem of individuation in the later Middle Ages (including the Islamic background and the Jewish tradition), see Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Individuation in scholasticism: the later Middle Ages and the counter-reformation (1150-1650)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), esp. 39-96.

[76] *Or*, 46v: "והנה יחס זה הטבע השופע הוא אל הצורות האנושיות האישיות ביחס החומר הראשון אל אישי נושאי המוחשות הנמצאים בפועל."

Lumen, 58v: "Huiusmodi ergo, naturae proportio ad actuales hominum individuorum formas talis est, qualis est proportio materiae primae ad actualia sensibilium individuorum subiecta."

> then the manner of receiving forms in these would be of the same kind; for the diversity of the received nature causes the diversity of the nature of the recipient. This is what brought Aristotle to say that the existence of this nature is distinct from the nature of prime matter, the nature of form, and the nature of all things composite."[77]

In this earlier discussion, Averroes is attempting to solve a significant metaphysical problem connected to his assertion that the material intellect is a purely immaterial being whose character is nevertheless one of potentiality rendering it capable of receiving any universal form. The problem is that according to his metaphysical scheme, an immaterial entity should be, by definition, something existing entirely *in actu*. It is this state of pure act that renders it an incorporeal being; only corruptible entities are subject to the constant flux involved in the passage from potentiality to actuality. As discussed earlier in this chapter,[78] Averroes' solution is to invent a "fourth kind of being," an entity that is neither prime matter, nor form, nor a composite of the two; instead, it is an existent that is separable from matter yet displays its characteristic feature of potentiality, allowing it to function as a passive receiver of universal intelligibles without altering them.

This problem does not apply to Sforno's theory, however, since he asserts that the incorporeal potential intellect in its initial phase of being contains no aspect of

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[77] *Or*, 45v: "ובלעדי זאת יתבא' זה בראיית אבן רשד בספ' הנז' מאמ' הנז' פר' ה' באמרו והסבה אשר בגללה זה השכל משיג ומבין והחומר הראשון לא ישיג ולא יבין היא כי אמנם החומר הראשון מקבל צורות אישיות וזה הכח מקבל צורו' כלליות והוסיף ואמר ולכן יתחייב שזה הטבע הנקר' שכל יקבל הצורות באופן אחר מהאופן אשר בו מקבלים הצורות אלו החמרים והוסיף ואמר ולכן לא יתחייב שיהיה ממין אלו החמרים אשר אחד מהם החומר הראשון כי אם היה כן הנה אופן קבלת הצורות בהם היה ממין אחד בעצמו כי אמנם התחלפות טבע המקובל הוא סבה להתחלפות טבע המקבל וזה הביא ארסטו' לומר מציאו' זה הטבע אשר הוא נבדל מטבע החומ' הראשון ומטב' הצורה ומטבע כל המורכב' עכ"ל."
Lumen, 57v-58r: "Praeterea, patet idem ratione et auctoritate Aven R., ibidem [i.e., *De anima* 3], t.c. 5, ubi dicit: Et causa propter quam ista natura est distinguens, prima autem materia neque distinguens neque connoscens est, quia prima materia recipit formas diversas, scilicet individuales; ista autem recipit formas universales. Subdit ibidem dicens: Et ideo necesse est ut ista natura, quae dicitur intellectiva, recipiat formas modo alio ab eo secundum quem istae materiae recipiunt formas. Subdit ibidem dicens: Ideo non est ut sit de genere materiarum istarum, in quibus prima est inclusa, quoniam si ita essent, tunc receptio in eis esset eiusdem generis; diversitas enim naturae recepti facit diversitatem naturae recipientis. Hoc igitur movit Aristotelem ad ponendum hanc naturam, quae est alia a natura materiae, et a natura formae, et a natura totius aggregatae, etc." Cf. *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 3:5, 304-305.

[78] See above, 3.2 "Averroes' Noetic Theories."

actualization whatsoever. Accordingly, the process of intellection is not yet relevant. Whereas Averoes is engaging with an epistemological problem, Sforno is concerned with the details of the origination of the intellective soul.[79] His assertion that this single potential intellect inheres in separable beings or angels in a state of pure potentiality grants it a kind of ambiguous status, both in terms of the fact of its existence and in terms of its number. This ambiguity is not unintentional on Sforno's part, and he employs it in his rebuttal to the second demonstration of the soul's corruptibility:

> For indeed, in the sense that this nature does not contain individuated distinctions by which it could be multiplied, it would be correct to say that it is a single being. However, in the sense that it does not exist in a state of actuality such that it could in fact be a single being, it would be correct to say that it is common to many individuals, and that it takes on numerical quantification when many actualized forms are produced in it, as in the case with prime matter.[80]

In contrast to Averroes' solution to the metaphysical problem outlined above, in which he distinguishes between the material intellect and prime matter, forms, and compounds, Sforno's strategy is to highlight the similarity between this potential phase of intellect and prime matter in order to solve a problem entirely inapplicable to Averroes' mature noetic theory: the problem of individuated incorruptibility. He uses the concept of the pure potentiality of prime matter to give his notion of a universal potential intellectual nature the special contradictory status of being neither singular

[79] Averroes is discussing the activity of intellection rather than the origination of the intellect; therefore, his comparison of the material intellect to prime matter should actually be applied to the second phase of Sforno's doctrine (comprised of first and second perfections) rather than its first phase (the phase in which it originates from angels).

[80] *Or*, 48r: "כי אמנם זה הטבע מצד מה שאין בו הבדלים אישיים אשר בם יתרבה יצדק אמרנו עליו שהוא אחד. ומצד מה שאין בו מציאות בפעל באופן שיהיה בו אחד באמת יצדק אמרנו עליו שהוא משותף ויתרבה כאשר יתהוו בו צורות רבות נמצאות בפעל כאשר יקרה לחומר הראשון."

Lumen, 59v: "Et hoc quia, ante quam cum individuis copuletur, pro quanto caret tunc individualibus differentiis, quibus actu plurificetur, habet quodammodo dici quid unum. Et pro quanto caret tunc actu, quo proprie dicatur esse quid unum, dicitur esse quid commune per diversos actos plurificabile, sicut de materia prima contingere videtur."

nor many, yet singular and common to many. He supports his solution with a citation from the Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*:

> One must explain how a thing numerically one can be present in a multiplicity of things, which is unthinkable in the case of what is actually. But in the case of what is potentially, one can understand by its being numerically one and common to a multiplicity that it does not have divisions according to which those portions of it included in every individual can be separated from one another. Thus, since it lacks the individual divisions by which numerical multiplicity exists, it is said to be one; and since it lacks the form by which the thing is numerically one, it is said to be common to all numerically multiple things; but it was not called so because it had a common form, as happens with the genus. Insofar as it is deprived of the divisions of individual forms, it is numerically one, not insofar as it has an individual form by which it is numerically one; and also insofar as it lacks the form, which is actually the individual form, it is common to many things.[81]

Thus, although Averroes himself explicitly distinguishes between the nature of prime matter and that of the material or potential intellect in his Long Commentary on the *De anima*, Sforno—recognizing the opportunity to employ ambiguities inherent in the notion of potentiality to his advantage—turns to Averroes' discussion of potentiality and individuation in his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*. He applies that discussion to his own thesis, postulating a universal intellective nature that, like prime matter, enjoys a status of pure potentiality. In this way, he avoids the

[81] *Or*, 48r: "...כמו שבאר אבן רשד בספר מה שאחר מאמר י"ב פרק י"ד באמרו ראוי להודיע איך יתכן שאחד במספר ימצא ברבים כי זה אמנם לא יעלה על לב בדבר הנמצא בפעל אבל בדבר הנמצא בכח בלבד יצדק שהוא אחד ומשותף מפני שאין לו הבדלים אישיים שבהם יובדלו האישים זה מזה כי מצד מה שההבדלים האישיים בלתי נמצאים בו ובכן הוא חסר הצורות אשר בהם ימצא הרבוי במספר יצדק אמרנו עליו שהוא אחד. ומצד מה שהוא חסר הצורה אשר בה יאמר על הדבר שהוא אחד במספר יצדק עליו שהוא משותף לדברים רבים במספר לא שתהיה לו צורה משותפת כמו שהוא הענין בסוג. אם כן יצדק עליו שהוא אחד מצד מה שאין בו הבדלי הצורות האישיות לא מפני שתהיה לו צורה אישיית. ומצד מה שאין לו צורה אישיית בפעל הוא משותף לדברים רבים עכ"ל..."

Lumen, 59v-60r: "...prout habetur ab Aven R., Methaphysicorum 12 t.c. 14, ubi dicit: Demonstrandum est quomodo unum numero potest inveniri in pluribus. Hoc enim non intelligitur in eo quod est actu; eo autem quod est potentia, dicendum est quod est numero pluribus commune, quia non habet differentias quibus differunt singuli individuorum ab invicem. Et quia differentiae individuales absunt, et caret formis quibus inveniatur pluralitas in numero, dicitur quod est quid unum. Et quia caret forma qua ens, dicitur esse quid unum numero; dicitur esse communis rebus pluribus. Non quia habet formam communem sicut in genere dicendum, igitur quod quia caret differentiis formarum individualium est unum numero, non ut habeat formam individualem; et secundum quod caret forma individuali in actu est communis pluribus rebus, etc." Cf. *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: a translation*, 97.

dilemma he encountered in his second demonstration in favour of the soul's corruptibility because he refuses to assign any quantity to his subject. However, this does not solve the main problem of the *quaestio* since it still leaves Sforno with the task of providing every individual human being with a personal immortal soul.

3.7 HUMAN SOULS AND CELESTIAL SPHERES

To this end, Sforno appropriates Averroes' theory of a "fourth kind of being". However, instead of using it, as Averroes did, to solve the metaphysical problem inherent in positing an entity that is separable, yet possesses the feature of receptivity or potentiality, Sforno takes the notion in a different direction. He employs it to explain how individual human intellective souls—upon emanation from the angels in which they originally inhere as a singular but common rational nature—are able to function as substantial forms for a multitude of individual human beings, while yet remaining in a state unrestricted by the circumstances of physical matter.

Throughout his discussion on personal immortality, Sforno asserts that the intellective soul is the substantial feature that defines the human being. His very first sentence of the twelfth *quaestio* cited at the beginning of this chapter indicates this position.[82] He reiterates this when he introduces his own noetic doctrine: "Let us, therefore, return to resolve any doubt [that has arisen from] the above inquiry, [and assert] that the human intellective soul—by which it is said that the human being is substantially a speaking animal—is an eternal substance, and it takes on multiplicity in proportion to the number of individuals of the human species."[83] The assumption that the intellective soul is the substantial form of the human being constitutes the

[82] *Or*, 42v; *Lumen*, 55v.

[83] *Or*, 46v: "נשיב אם כן להתיר ספק החקירה הנזכ' שהנפש האנושית השכלית אשר בה נאמר שהאדם הוא בעצם חי מדבר הוא עצם נצחי ויפול עליו ריבוי כמספר אישי המין האנושי."
Lumen, 58v: "Ad dubium ergo respondetur, quod intellectiva hominis anima, qua scilicet homo dicitur substantialiter rationalis, est quid immortale; ad individuorum numerum dinumerabile."

basis for Sforno's first provisional demonstration in favor of the soul's corruptibility, for which he offers a citation from Averroes' *Destructio destructionum* as well as a reference to the Middle Commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*.[84]

In espousing the view that the intellect functions as the formal cause of the individual human being—clearly, a corruptible or mortal entity—Sforno is compelled to explain how it can perform this function and yet remain unmixed with the corruptible body, retaining the status of an incorruptible substance in its own right. To this end, he cites Averroes' proposal of a "fourth kind of being," extracting it from its original role in Averroes' discourse and applying it to a theory that equates the relation between the human intellect and its body to the relation between a celestial soul and its corresponding celestial sphere. Just as the soul of the celestial sphere (the sphere's individual form that acts as its mover) remains unmixed with the body of that sphere, so too the soul of the human being (its individual form) remains unmixed with the human body.[85] Sforno equates this "fourth kind of being," which Averroes invented in order to understand the material intellect's nature of potency even while existing as an immaterial being whose nature should rightfully be one of pure act, with his own notion of the intellective soul upon its individuation. He thus claims that Averroes' "fourth kind of being" actually refers to a kind of being of which the celestial intellectual soul is one example and the individuated human intellective soul

[84] See *Or*, 46v; cf. *Lumen*, 58v. Cited fully in the previous chapter herein: 2.5 "Latin Philosophical Sources."

[85] See Dennis Des Chene, *Life's form: late Aristotelian conceptions of the soul*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 76-79. There, Des Chene describes the distinction made by medieval philosophers, particularly Averroes, between *forma informas*, which unites substantially with matter to produce a concrete individual, and *forma assistens*, which is related extrinsically to the body it is joined to, and operates it like a pilot steers a ship. Sforno here claims that the human intellective soul is the substantial form of the body (*forma informans*) and yet remains extrinsic to that body (*forma assistens*). For a discussion of Averroes' opinion on the intellect as the intrinsic formal cause of the human soul in relation to Thomas' opinion, see Richard Taylor, "Intellect as Intrinsic Formal Cause in the Soul according to Aquinas and Averroes," in *The afterlife of the platonic soul reflections of platonic psychology in the monotheistic religions*, ed. Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth and John Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 187-220.

is another, in that they are neither matter nor form nor a compound of the two, but are separable forms that remain unmixed with matter while nevertheless informing their material substrates. Of course, this does not accord with Averroes' original intention with regard to his notion of a "fourth kind of being." However, in order to support his reinterpretation, Sforno cites Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* and his *De substantia orbis*:

> [The foregoing analogy is] as Ibn Rushd explicated in his [Long Commentary on the] *De anima* 3:5, stating: "If there are some living things whose first actuality is a substance separate from its subjects, as is thought concerning the celestial bodies..." and he likewise explicated in the *De substantia orbis*, chapter 4: "It necessarily follows that this force, which is neither light nor heavy, exists as a simple body, and that it possesses neither a subject nor a contrary, and that [this celestial force] is a soul that is unmixed with matter, yet it is an eternal soul of a body. Since it is the soul, it is not separate from its body, and yet it is separate from it."[86]

In his *Or ammim*, Sforno subsequently marshals scriptural support from the books of Ezekiel, Exodus, Isaiah, Psalms, and Genesis, in order to prove to his Hebrew reader that the human being is the final cause of creation and that the intellective soul is the final cause of the human being.[87] In the *Lumen gentium*, however, only the verse from Exodus appears, a fact that might be explained by its

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[86] *Or*, 47r: "...כמו שבאר אבן רשד בספר הנפש מאמר ג' פרק ה'. באמרו אם נמצאו בעלי חיים אשר שלמותם היא עצם נבדל כאשר יחשב על עצם הגלגל. וכן באר בספר עצם הגלגל פרק ד' באמרו היה בהכרח שזה הכח שהוא בלתי קל ובלתי כבד יהיה כגשם פשוט ושאין לו נושא ולא הפכי ושיהיה נפש בלתי מעורב עם חומר אבל הוא נפש של גשם נצחי באופן שזאת הנפש אינה מופשטת מן הגשם שלה ועם זה היא נבדלת ממנו."
Lumen, 59r: "...prout habetur ab Aven R., in commento De anima, 3 t.c. 5, ubi dicit: Si sunt quaedam animata, quorum perfectio sit substantia separata, sicut existimamus de corpore caelesti, etc.; et idem habetur ab eodem Aven R., in tractatu De substantia orbis, capite 4, ubi dicit: Necesse est ut haec virtus, quae neque gravis neque levis, sit in corpore simplici, et ipsam non habere subiectum neque contrarium. Et ut sit anima necessario non admixta materiae, sed anima corporis aeterni; ita quod ista anima sit non admixta corpori suo, et cum hoc, non separata ab ipso." Cf. Averroes, *Averroes' De substantia orbis*: *Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with English Translation and Commentary*, ed. Arthur Hyman (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Jerusalem: The Medieval Academy of America and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986), 112-113.

[87] *Or*, 47r-v.

direct relevance to the main thrust of Sforno's argument.[88] This verse describes the divine vision at the foot of Mount Sinai seen by Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel: "Under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity." (Exodus 24:10) Sforno connects "pavement of sapphire" to the celestial soul and the human intellect since they both share the quality of transparency; "like the very sky for purity" is also applied to them because they are both separable substances unmixed with corporeal matter.[89]

The analogy Sforno here constructs would seem to be a solution fortified by an innovative interpretation of Scripture together with a genuine reading of two works of Averroes. However, closer scrutiny of the context of his citations reveals that Sforno's solution involves, once again, a creative reading of his philosophical sources. A fuller citation of the fifth chapter of the third book of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* yields:

> If there are some living things whose first actuality is a substance separate from its subjects, as is thought concerning the celestial bodies, it is impossible that more than one individual of these species exist. For, if among these, namely, from the same species, we find more than one individual, for instance, with regard to a body moved by the same mover, then the being of these [others] would be useless and superfluous, since the motion of these [bodies] would be owing to an intention that is the same in number. For example, more than a single ship for one sailor at any given time would be useless; similarly more than a single tool of the same kind of tools for one artisan would be useless.[90]

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[88] Cf. *Lumen*, 59r.

[89] Sforno's interpretation may be based on Maimonides' discussion of this verse, in which he distinguishes between sublunary matter and celestial matter. See Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 2:26, 330-332.

[90] *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 3:5, 318-319. *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford, 3 t.c. 5, p. 403, ll. 477-484: "Quoniam, si ex eis, scilicet ex eadem specie, inveniretur plusquam unum individuum, verbi gratia de corpore moto ab eodem motore, tunc esse eorum esset ociosum et superfluum, cum motus eorum esset propter eandem intentionem in numero, verbi gratia, quod esse plus una navi in numero uni naute in eadem hora est ociosum, et similiter esse plus uno instrumento in numero uni artifici eiusdem speciei intrumentorum est ociosum."

According to Averroes "...it is impossible that more than one individual of these species exist." Averroes subsequently concludes that like the soul of a celestial body, the material intellect too is a species comprised of only one individual: "On the basis of this account we have held the opinion that the material intellect is one for all human beings..."[91] It would seem that Sforno cites only the first half of Averroes' statement because its second half is less than useful to him in his comparison of a multitude of numerically distinct souls of a single species to celestial souls, since Averroes explicitly asserts that it is impossible for either to exist as multiple individuals of a single species.[92]

Similarly, with regard to Sforno's citation from the fourth chapter of *De substantia orbis*, the passage itself seems to contradict his interpretation.[93] In it, Averroes plainly specifies that the criterion for the unique kind of connection that occurs between a celestial soul and its sphere is its material permanency—a factor that is wanting in the case of the human being, whose body is comprised of the four corruptible elements of the sublunary realm.[94] Nevertheless, Sforno applies this relation of celestial bodies and their souls to human bodies and their individuated intellective souls in order to save the latter from corruptibility, citing the passage in

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[91] *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 3:5, 322. *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, 3 t.c. 5, p. 406-407, ll. 575-577: "Quoniam, quia opinati sumus ex hoc sermone quod intellectus materialis est unicus omnibus hominibus..."

[92] For further discussion on Averroes' notion of genus and species with regard to celestial bodies, see Matteo Di Giovanni, "Averroes on the Species of Celestial Bodies," in *Wissen über Grenzen: Arabisches Wissen und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. A. Speer, and L. Wegener (Berlin: New York, 2006), 438-464. For a discussion on Averroes' cosmology in his commentaries on the *De caelo*, see Gerhard Endress, "Averroes' *De Caelo*: Ibn Rushd's Cosmology in his Commentaries on Aristotle's *On the Heavens*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy 5* (1995), 9-49.

[93] *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 9, *Sermo de substantia orbis* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), C. 4, 6r, ll. 29-34: "Necesse fuit ut haec virtus, quae neque levis, neque gravis, sit in corpore simplici, non habens subiectum, nec contrarium, et ut sit anima necessario, non admixta materiae, sed anima corporis aeterni, ita ut ista anima non sit abstracta a corpore, et cum hoc separata ab ipso."

[94] Sforno himself admits to the corruptible nature of the human body and uses it in his first provisional demonstration in favour of the corruptibility of the intellective soul, which he classifies as the Formal cause of that body. Although he demonstrates the premise that the intellective soul is in fact the Formal cause of the human being, he considers the premise that the human being is corruptible as self-evident and therefore does not elaborate on the point. See *Or*, 42v; *Lumen*, 55v.

order to support his theory, even though the selfsame passage explicitly excludes corruptible impermanent bodies from its affirmation.

3.8 CONCLUSION

How did Obadiah Sforno read the Averroan corpus? This chapter has attempted to shed light on the methods employed by Sforno throughout his twelfth *quaestio* in his reading of the statements and doctrines that he found in the works of Averroes, including his Long Commentary on the *De anima*, the most oft-cited text in the inquiry. The underlying purpose of the *Light of the Nations*—to prove the fundamental tenets of religion—provides an essential key for understanding how Sforno read his philosophical sources and explains why he read them in that way.

Sforno's equation of Plato's subsidiary gods with the separable beings or angels of his own doctrine exemplifies his tendency to extract statements from their original contexts in the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus, to conflate notions, and to read sources in a somewhat selective and biased manner, ignoring the metaphysical underpinnings of Averroes' philosophical system. His inclination to harmonize the opinions of the philosophers is illustrated by his discussion about generation and creation, in which he ignores both Aristotle's and Averroes' explicit rejections of Plato's doctrine of creation, using that very doctrine to make the opinions of all three philosophers agree with his reading of Scripture and his own theory of psychogony. In doing so, he espouses the contradictory notions of creation *ex nihilo* and the passage from potential to actuality. In these instances and others the reader is rarely alerted to the original contexts of the citations. Sforno's adoption of contradictory positions is also exemplified in his comparison of prime matter to his notion of a potential un-emanated intellect. His demonstrations exhibit a disregard for the

conceptual distinctions made by Averroes and a willingness to read his sources in such a way that his discourse becomes ambiguous. An examination of the fuller contexts of Sforno's sources allows one to observe his strategy of appropriating certain solutions of Averroes, such as his "fourth kind of being," reinterpreting them in a way that is incompatible with the original intention of their author in order to solve problems inherent in his own doctrine.

CHAPTER FOUR

AVERROES AND BEYOND

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the second chapter, Sforno cites three philosophical works outside of the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus in the Hebrew text of the *Light of the Nations*: Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, the philosophical section of the *Mishneh Torah*, and Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Lexicon of Philosophical Terms*.[1] Indeed, Sforno's project can be viewed as a polemical response not only to Aristotle and Averroes in general, but also to the medieval Jewish proponents of Aristotelian philosophy in particular, most notably, Maimonides and his pupil. Accordingly, although these three Jewish works are cited only a handful of times in the *Or ammim* and not at all in the *Lumen gentium*, some of the statements and opinions presented in them shed light on certain elements of Sforno's theories.

Furthermore, how Sforno read the Aristotelian corpus often reflects how Maimonides and Ibn Tibbon read it as well. This is especially evident in cases where the mature Averroes disagrees with the interpretations of his predecessors Alfarabi and Avicenna—the Arabic authorities relied upon by Maimonides and Ibn Tibbon for their understanding of Aristotle.[2] As discussed in the previous chapter, Sforno reinterprets the Averroan texts that he cites; these include statements about the universal material intellect in the Long Commentary on the *De anima*. Sometimes he imposes earlier Arabic philosophical doctrines on Averroes' later texts. At other

[1] Herein, 2.4 "Hebrew Philosophical Sources." See also 1.2 "Faith and Reason."
[2] For a recent discussion about Maimonides' reliance on Arabic Aristotelian philosophers, see Sarah Pessin, "The Influence of Islamic Thought on Maimonides," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2016 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/maimonides-islamic/>.

times, he uses features of Averroes' mature noetic model to replace other features of that same model. He does this, for instance, with the notion of the cogitative faculty, which for Averroes operates under the domain of an individual's imagination. However, he does not always appropriate elements of Averroes' theories. For example, he omits any mention of the agent intellect, which for almost all medieval Arabic and Jewish students of Aristotle (including Averroes and Maimonides) is the separable universal entity that brings about the transition of the human intellect from a state of potentiality to actuality. He also discards Averroan and arguably Maimonidean ethics in order to adopt a model of divine emulation, in which moral qualities and actions are on a par with rational activity. Ultimately, he combines these ideas in the fifteenth *quaestio* in order to argue for the cosmic superiority of humankind in general, and of the Jewish nation in particular.

In the present chapter, I focus on Sforno's epistemology, ethical theory, and opinion on the cosmic status of humankind in the light of the medieval Judeo-Arabic Aristotelian tradition, particularly as articulated by Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon. In the final three *quaestiones*, Sforno shifts his attention from relatively abstract metaphysical notions concerning God, creation, and the immortality of the human soul to the more concrete operational elements involved in achieving the final goal of human life, showing that he conceives of religion as not only an intellectual endeavour but also as a practical system that dictates ethical behaviour and the fulfilment of scriptural commandments. Throughout, he highlights the volitional aspect of a human being's transition from a state of spiritual imperfection to one of actualised emulation of God. His emphasis on divine emulation provides the final inquiries of the treatise with an underlying theme, which logically connects them, and can also be taken as the organizing principle of the work as a whole, rendering its

overall design cogent to the reader. This design is explicitly revealed in the fifteenth and final *quaestio*.

4.2 THE MATERIAL INTELLECT

As discussed in the previous chapter, in his twelfth *quaestio*, Sforno advocates a two-phase model of psychogony in which a single intellectual nature inhering as a potentiality in immaterial beings is emanated onto human bodies in the form of individual intellective souls.[3] He indicates that these souls are only tenuously connected to their material substrates, retaining a certain separateness or transcendence from the physical realm. Nevertheless, in their second phase of realisation, individuated intellective souls interact with the material organs of perception through the imaginative faculty in order to obtain raw material from which they may construct intelligible thoughts, thereby transitioning from an initial state of relative potentiality to one of actual intellection. In articulating this model, Sforno avoids the terminology commonly employed in medieval Western philosophy—both in the Hebrew and the Latin traditions—to denote either the passive aspect of Aristotle's noetic theory, namely the potential or material intellect, or the active aspect, namely the agent intellect.[4]

His avoidance of the former term is particularly conspicuous here given that earlier in the same *quaestio* he refers to the material intellect (השכל ההיוליאני; *intellectus materialis*) no less than seven times in the *Or ammim* and ten times in the *Lumen gentium* in the provisional rebuttal of Averroes' theory of a single non-physical material intellect shared by all human beings.[5] Despite his initially negative attitude

[3] See the third chapter herein, 3.3 "Sforno's Noetic Theory."
[4] See the third chapter herein, 3.2 "Averroes' Noetic Theories."
[5] See *Or*, 44r-v; cf. *Lumen*, 56r-57v. This rebuttal occurs in the second proof for the corruptibility of the human intellective soul. See herein, Appendix I.

toward the notion of a single intellect common to all humankind, he nonetheless explains the feature of potentiality in the first phase of his own noetic model by endorsing a peculiar version of Averroes' mature theory of the material intellect.[6] Moreover, he resorts to a type of "monopsychism" in his rebuttal to the second demonstration of the soul's corruptibility in order to resolve the metaphysical difficulties involved in positing a separable substance that multiplies according to the number of individual human beings. Without explicitly labelling this first phase as such, Sforno consistently applies Averroes' statements concerning the material intellect in his Long Commentary on the *De anima* to his own noetic model regardless of the incongruities between the two theories. This is clear from the discursive context as well as from his choice of proof texts.[7]

Sforno's reluctance to use the term material intellect when articulating the first phase of his psychogonical model in the twelfth *quaestio* despite his implicit identification of that phase with Averroes' mature notion of a single material intellect may be accounted for by examining the ninth *quaestio*, which also addresses the subject of knowledge, albeit that of the Creator. There, Sforno explicitly applies this term to his model, but in reference to the second rather than the first phase of the intellect's realization. Distinguishing between divine and human knowledge, he states that the latter occurs "merely in the material or potential intellect, which is incomplete vis-à-vis the second perfection; therefore, it can only apprehend beings by means of experience acquired from sensible apprehension, abstracted from one individual instance after another."[8] Thus, he describes the initial stage of the second main phase

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[6] On Averroes' own comparison of the material intellect to prime matter, see Deborah Black, "Models of the Mind: Metaphysical Presuppositions of the Averroist and Thomistic Accounts of Intellection," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004): 320-352, esp. 334-337.

[7] See the third chapter herein, 3.5 "Generated or Created," and 3.6 "Many or One."

[8] *Or*, 35v: "נשיב ונאמר שזה אמנם יצדק על ההשגה האנושית בהיו' מציאות' בשכל היולאני או כוחיי בלב' כי בהיותו בלתי שלם כפי השלמו' השני אין לו דרך להשיג הנמצאו' זולתי בנסיון קנוי מן המושגים אשר יושגו בחוש פעם אחר פעם..."

of his noetic theory—the influx that has already been emanated from the separable intellects onto individual human bodies—as the "material or potential intellect" (שכל היולאני או כוחיי; *intellectus potentialis*). Although at this stage, the intellect is no longer a single potentiality inhering in transcendent beings (having become individuated as multiple intellects), the term potential intellect is apt because the intellect still remains unrealised in relation to its second perfection wherein it becomes fully actualised through the process of thinking.

In fact, Sforno's usage of these terms reflects how Averroes himself employs them in his Compendium and Middle Commentary on the *De anima*, where he presents noetic models in which every individual human being possesses his own material intellect.[9] As discussed, these were the two texts relied upon by medieval Hebrew readers of Averroes' explication of the *De anima*; the Long Commentary did not play a significant role in medieval Jewish philosophy.[10] The models of Averroes' predecessors, Alfarabi and Avicenna, similarly place the potential or material intellect on the level of individual thought.[11] Accordingly, in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew rendering of the *Guide*, the term "material intellect" (השכל ההיולאני) is used to describe an individual's rational faculty prior to actual intellection.[12] It is likely therefore that Sforno derived his understanding of the term from Maimonides' *Guide* or from

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Lumen, 49v: "Respondetur quod hoc verificatur de illa scientia tantum, quae habet originem ab entibus; et talis est humana scientia, quae cum habeat fieri per potentialem intellectum, qui scilicet est, quoad secundum actum, imperfectum; nullo pacto percipit entia nisi per discursum a pluribus sensatis perceptum..."

[9] See the third chapter herein, 3.2 "Averroes' Noetic Theories."

[10] See the second chapter herein, 2.3 "Citing Aristotle and Averroes."

[11] On the opinions of Alfarabi and Avicenna about the material intellect and its passage into actuality, see Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on intellect*, 49, and 83-87.

[12] See, for example, Maimonides, *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 1.68 and 1.72; cf. id., *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 165 and 190, respectively. Regarding Maimonides' use of the terms "material," "hylic," and "potential intellect," see Joseph Stern, "Maimonides' Epistemology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 105-133, esp. 108-109. Herbert Davidson remarks: "Maimonides does not formally list the stages through which the human intellect progresses, but he does distinguish between "potential" or "material intellect," which is the human rational faculty before it begins to think, "actual intellect," which is human intellect when thinking any intelligible thought, and acquired intellect." See *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, 200-201.

Averroes' earlier works and imposed it onto some of his citations from the Long Commentary. In attempting to preserve the aspect of multiplicity from Averroes' earlier models of the material intellect while simultaneously incorporating the aspect of singularity from his later model, Sforno is left with the task of glossing over the resulting inconsistencies and discrepancies. Discarding the term altogether in the presentation of his own syncretic theory provides him with some leeway in that tortuous endeavour.

Later in the twelfth *quaestio*, Sforno elaborates on the initial stage of the second main phase of his noetic model—what he calls in the ninth *quaestio* the material or potential intellect:

> However, the intellective soul acquires existence *in actu* when it is emanated onto an individual of the species proper to it, thereby becoming a formal cause *in actu* to that individual, which is prepared to act; for it is able to perform its distinctive actions through the faculties of that individual, as explained above. At this point, first intelligibles are naturally contained in it, as experience testifies and as Ibn Rushd explicates in his commentary on the *De anima*, book 1, t.c. 36.[13]

Here, Sforno embraces an element common to Averroes' earlier and later epistemological models—that certain "first intelligibles" (המושכלות הראשונות; *propositiones primae*) are fixed into every human intellect when it comes into being.[14] For Sforno, this would happen upon its emanation from its separable source. In the ninth *quaestio*, he describes these principles as intuitive or self-explanatory, whose

[13] *Or*, 48v: "...אמנם הוא קונה מציאות בפעל בהיותו שופע על איש מאישי המין מיוחד לו בהיותו צורה בפעל לאיש הנז' מוכנת לפעול כי אמנם תוכל לפעול בכחות האיש הנז' את הפעולו' המיוחדות לה. כמו שהתבאר למעלה ויהיו בה אז בטבע המושכלות הראשונות כאשר יעיד החוש ובאר זה אבן רשד בספר הנפש מאמר ג' פרק לו'"
Lumen, 60r: "Fit tamen quid actu, per hoc quod influitur in subiecto sibi proportionato cuius fit individualis et activa forma, cum scilicet per eiusdem subiecti virtutes possit agere actiones sibi proprias, ut supra. Et tunc in eandem spiritualem virtutem divinitus infunduntur primae propositiones quae sibi naturaliter inesse videntur, prout sensu patet, et habetur ab Aven R. in commento libri De anima tertii, t.c. 36."

[14] On Averroes' use of the "primary intelligibles" in his epistemology, see Deborah L. Black, "Constructing Averroes' Epistemology," in *Interpreting Averroes: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson, and Matteo Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2019), 96-115, esp. 96-103.

apprehension does not require the intellect's passage from potentiality to actuality.[15] This explanation occurs in the context of a discussion regarding the kind of apprehension enjoyed by completely actualised separable intellects, which he compares to a human being's direct and immediate apprehension of the first intelligibles. In the fourteenth *quaestio*,[16] he provides the conventional example: "The whole is greater than the part, from which it follows that the whole contains the quantity of the part and more."[17] From these two statements it is clear that Sforno identifies certain axiomatic propositions as a kind of innate human knowledge that requires neither effort nor personal experience. Implicit in this model is the fact that the fundamental basis of human thought is emanated onto the individual by its separable external source, which he has explicitly identified as angelic. Hence, according to his psychogony, the first stage of the second phase—actualised with regard to the first general phase but still merely potential in terms of the second general phase—is one in which the human intellect derives its thought from its emanating cause, since its initial concepts are produced by that entity.

Such an attribution of the initial state of an individual's thought processes to an immaterial intellect is in line with the medieval Judeo-Arabic Aristotelian tradition, which includes Maimonides' *Guide*.[18] But Sforno directs his reader to Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* for an elucidation, which he later cites

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[15] *Or*, 35v-36r: "...וכמו יחס השכל האנושי אל משכלות הראשונות המבוארות בעצמם אצלו באופן שלא יצטרך בידיעתם שיצא מן הכח אל הפעל."
Lumen, 49v: "...et sicut se habet humanus intellectus ad propositiones primas et per se notas; quare non indiget exitu de potentia ad actum."

[16] This statement occurs in the context of his rebuttal to the first provisional demonstration in favor of the assertion that the human intellective soul requires an external force in order to bring about its second perfection.

[17] *Or*, 54v: "...מכח אותו המושכל ראשון שיאמר בו שהכל גדול מן החלק אשר ממנו יתחיי' שבכל יהיה כמות החלק ויותר ממנו."
Lumen, 64v: "...per illam maximam qua dicitur quod totum est maius sua parte; et per consequens, ipsum totum cui pars inest habet necessario posse quicquid potest sua pars et aliquid ultra."

[18] On Maimonides' opinion regarding the first intelligibles, see Joseph Stern, "Maimonides' Epistemology," 108-109.

more fully: "...some of the concepts possessed by us naturally are the first intelligibles with respect to which we do not know when, whence, nor how they came to be in us."[19] Sforno does not cite the continuation of the passage, a point that will prove to be significant. Averroes continues: "It was explained that it is necessary that the intelligibles possessed by us naturally be from something which is in itself an intellect freed from matter (this is the agent intellect)."[20] Hence, Averroes identifies the source of the first intelligibles as the agent intellect—the ultimate (or for the mature Averroes, the penultimate) link in the chain of supernal disembodied intelligences that comprise the cosmological scheme of medieval Islamic and Jewish Aristotelians. Since Sforno advocates the notion of first intelligibles, which he describes as being contained within what is emanated from a separable source external to the individual human being, one would expect him to follow Averroes' suit in identifying that source as the agent intellect. However, this expectation is not realised—at least not explicitly.

4.3 THE AGENT INTELLECT

In contrast to his inconsistent stance with regard to the term material intellect, Sforno's use of the term denoting its active counterpart, the agent intellect, would appear to be more stable—he does not mention it in his treatise at all.[21] In light of the central role played by the agent intellect in the conceptual frameworks of the majority of medieval Jewish and Arabic Aristotelians (including Averroes), such an omission

[19] *Or*, 49v: "...קצתם יהיו בו בטבע והם המושכלות הראשונות אשר אין אנו יודעים מתי ומאין ואיך נמצאו לנו." *Lumen*, 61r-v: "intellecta autem duobis modis fiunt: aut naturales, et sunt primae propositiones, quas nescimus quando extiterint et unde et quomodo; aut sunt voluntarie..."

[20] Averroes, *Long commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 3:36, 396; Id., *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, 3 t.c. 36, p. 496, ll. 493-496: "Et fuit declaratum quod necesse est ut intellecta habita a nobis naturaliter sint ab aliquo quod est in se intellectus liberatus a materia (et est intellectus agens)."

[21] On this, see Robert Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul and Its Holiness," 217-218. Zev Gottlieb points out that Sforno avoids this term in his exegetical works as well. See Obadiah Sforno, *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, ed. Zev Gottlieb (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1980), editor's introduction, 37.

represents a significant departure from the philosophical tradition otherwise relied upon by Sforno.[22] Moreover, ignoring this integral component of Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's noetic theory is somewhat surprising, given Sforno's method of using the bulk of that system together with its technical vocabulary as the basis for conveying his own conclusions despite the incongruities between the two systems.

In fact, although the term agent intellect is never used in the treatise, the idea of this separable being does make a brief appearance in the *Or ammim* in one of the descriptions of the human soul's emanation from its immaterial source.[23] Initially, Sforno identifies that source as a plurality of beings, which, as discussed, are identified as the secondary gods of Plato's *Timaeus* as well as the angels of Scripture and the heavenly retinue of rabbinic Midrash. However, in a later formulation, a minor revision is made: "It would seem that the verse teaches that God, blessed be He, decreed that this intellective faculty be created and emanated onto the human being from the separable attendants [i.e., angels] *or from one of them*. He then gave to the separable being the power to emanate, as explained above."[24] In this description, Sforno's insertion of the phrase "or from one of them" seems to have the purpose of alerting his reader to the fact that the immaterial source of the human intellect could be a single angel or separable intelligence rather than multiple beings. This phrase attesting to the possibility of a single transcendent intellect, whose function is to bring

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[22] On the centrality of the notion in the medieval Judeo-Arabic philosophical tradition, Herbert Davidson writes: "Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, like virtually all Islamic and Jewish philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition, accepted the transcendent interpretation [of Aristotle's remarks concerning the active aspect of the intellect] without question..." See *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 13. For Maimonides' position on the agent intellect, see Barry S. Kogan, ""What Can We Know and When Can We Know it?" Maimonides on the Active Intelligence and Human Cognition," in *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, ed. Eric L. Ormsby (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 121-137.

[23] Gottlieb observes this, noting that Sforno may also have alluded to the agent intellect in his commentary on Genesis 9:6. See *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, editor's introduction, 37.

[24] *Or*, 51r: "...נראה שהורה שגזר אז האל יתברך שתהיה בריאת זה הכוח השכלי ושפעו באדם מאת משרתיו הנבדלים או מאחד מהם ונתן אז בנבדל כח להשפיעו כמו שהתבאר למעלה."

the potential human intellect into a state of actuality, may allude to the author's ambivalence regarding the agent intellect. Such a hint is missing from the corresponding passage in the *Lumen gentium*, where Sforno maintains the plurality of the separable or angelic sources of the human intellective soul.[25]

According to the medieval Judeo-Arabic cosmological scheme, the agent intellect is generally credited with two main functions: causing sublunary existence and causing human thought. The first of these functions includes the bestowal of the formal cause proper to humankind, namely, the human intellective soul.[26] Although Sforno's comments here are restricted to the formal cause of humankind alone rather than of all sublunary beings, this element of his theory certainly bears a resemblance to that traditional scheme. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in Averroes' later works such as the Long Commentary on the *De anima*, the Long commentary on the *Metaphysics* and the *Destructio destructionum*, he definitively discards the concept of emanation as a specious category of causal explanation.[27] Therefore, it is possible that Sforno has again derived part of his model—in this instance, the emanative feature of the agent intellect—from the Compendium or Middle Commentary on the *De anima*, where Averroes advocates Avicenna's notion of the agent intellect as the "giver of forms" (*dator formarum*) to all natural existents occupying the sublunary realm.[28]

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[25] *Lumen*, 62r: "Docet quidem huiusmodi intellectivam naturam ab eisdem angelis Dei iussu emanare, ut supra; et hoc quia tunc Deus dedit eis potentiam influendi."
[26] See *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 13-34.
[27] See the third chapter herein, 3.4 "Emanation from the gods."
[28] Although Sforno occasionally mentions Avicenna in certain citations from the *Destructio*, he does not refer to him with regard to his opinions on the production of the human intellect or its operations of thought. On the reception of Avicenna's philosophical writings in medieval Jewish philosophy, see Mauro Zonta, "Avicenna in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Avicenna and His Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven - Louvain-La-Neuve September 8 - September 11, 1999*, ed. Jules Janssens, and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 2002), 267-279; Steven Harvey, "Avicenna's Influence on Jewish Thought: Some Reflections," in *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 327-340; Gad Freudenthal, and Mauro Zonta, "Avicenna Among Medieval Jews: The Reception of Avicenna's Philosophical, Scientific and Medical Writings in Jewish Cultures, East and West," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 22 (2012): 217-287; Steven Harvey, "Some Notes on "Avicenna among Medieval Jews,"" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25, no. 02 (2015): 249-277; Gad Freudenthal, and Mauro

Another possible candidate is Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. Leaving aside the question of which cosmogonical scheme Maimonides ultimately adopts,[29] it is clear that he espouses a theory of divine emanation or overflow, which results in a final cosmic intelligence called the agent intellect:

> For the overflow coming from Him, may He be exalted, for the bringing into being of separate intellects overflows likewise from these intellects, so that one of them brings another one into being and this continues up to the agent intellect. With the latter, the bringing into being of separate intellects comes to an end. Moreover a certain other act of bringing into being overflows from every separate intellect until the spheres come to an end with the sphere of the moon. After it there is the body subject to generation and corruption, I mean the first matter and what is composed of it. Furthermore, forces from every sphere enter the elements until their overflow is completed with the completion of generation and corruption. And we have already explained that none of these subjects contradict the words of our prophets or Torah sages. [30]

Here, Maimonides asserts that emanated intellects, which he later identifies as angels, play an integral role in God's creating and sustaining existence. Furthermore, he attributes to the last of these intellects—the agent intellect—a function that parallels Avicenna's *dator formarum* with respect to the beings of the sublunary

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Zonta, "Notes on "Some Notes on 'Avicenna among Medieval Jews'" by Professor Steven Harvey," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 26, no. 02 (2016): 309-311.

[29] On this, see Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides, Aristotle, and Avicenna," in *De Zénon d'Élée à Poincaré: recueil d'études en hommages à Roshdi Rashed*, ed. Ahmad Hasnawi, and Régis Morelon (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), 719-734; Id. *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 197-207. On the relationship of Maimonides to Avicenna's philosophical thought in general, see Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, "Maimonides' Reticence toward Ibn Sina," in *Avicenna and His Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven - Louvain-La-Neuve September 8 - September 11, 1999*, ed. Jules Janssens, and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 2002), 281-296; Mauro Zonta, "Maimonides' Knowledge of Avicenna: Some Tentative Conclusions About a Debated Question," in *The Trias of Maimonides: Jewish, Arabic and Ancient Culture of Knowledge = Die Trias des Maimonides: jüdische, arabische und antike Wissenkultur*, ed. Georges Tamer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 211-222.

[30] *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 2.11: "וכן הענין במציאות שהשפע המגיע ממנו יתעלה להמציא שכלים נפרדים, ישפע מן השכלים גם כן להמציא קצתם את קצתם עד השכל הפועל, ואצלו תפסק המצאת הנפרדים, וכל נפרד תשפע ממנו ג"כ המצאה אחת עד שיגיעו הגלגלים אל גלגל הירח, ואחריו זה הגוף ההוא הנפסד, ר"ל החמר הראשון ומה שהורכב ממנו, וכל גלגל יגיעו מאתו כחות אל היסודות עד שישלם שפעם אל תכלית ההויה וההפסד, ואלו הענינים כלם כבר בארנו שאינם סותרים דבר ממה שזכרוהו נביאינו וחכמי תורתנו."

Cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 275.

realm. Thus, Sforno may have derived certain elements of his emanative model from Maimonides' account, since in the *Or ammim* he employs the same terminology for emanation as Samuel Ibn Tibbon's translation of the *Guide*. In both works, various derivatives of the root שפע ("to flow") are used to describe the emanation of intellects.[31] In the *Lumen gentium*, the same notion is conveyed using the two verbs *emanare*[32] and *influere*.[33]

Sforno's limiting of the role of this separable intellect or intellects solely to the emanation of the formal cause of humankind rather than of all terrestrial beings is one of the views also expressed by Samuel Ibn Tibbon in his *Lexicon of Philosophical Terms*. In his entry on "agent intellect" (שכל הפועל), he writes:

> Aristotle and the philosophers say that the agent intellect is necessary for bringing them to a state of philosophic study. This means that such study is impossible without a separable intellect. It is a giver of forms to lower existents, except for the separable intellects, which are the causes of the existence of the celestial spheres. Some philosophers believe that the agent intellect is a giver of forms to all sublunary beings, including plants, animals, and human beings. But Aristotle believes that it is only needed for giving the form of the human being since that form is an intellect. It is also said that it causes the human intellect *in potentia*, which is the human being's formal cause, to transition from potentiality into actuality. They call this intellect "agent intellect" (שכל פועל) because it actualises newly generated beings on a daily basis by giving them their forms, which are their generated being. It seems to me that this is what the master [i.e., Maimonides] of blessed memory says about it in his work [the *Mishneh Torah*], when he says that its name is "individuals" (אישים). Apparently, they call it this because it gives the form to all particular living things according to the first opinion, or the forms of individual human beings according to the second opinion. I do not know where the master, of blessed memory, found that name. It seems to me that he found it in the words of the sages, of blessed memory, in their books of Midrash or other works.[34]

[31] See *Or*, 46v, 48r, and 48v.
[32] See *Lumen*, 58v, 60v and 62r.
[33] See *Lumen*, 60r.
[34] Samuel Ibn Tibbon, *Perush ha-milot ha-zarot asher bemaamar ha-rav z"tzl*, 71: "שכל הפועל, אריסט"ו והפילוסופים אומרים שהביאם הכרה העיון לומר שא"א מבלתי שכל נפרד, הוא נותן הצורות בנמצאות השפלות, מבלעדי

The second opinion regarding the agent intellect's limited role with respect to the emanation of the forms of human beings, which Ibn Tibbon attributes to Aristotle, seems to agree with Sforno's view. More importantly, Ibn Tibbon connects the role of *dator formarum* to Maimonides' unusual terminology for the entity, "individuals" (אישים); this comment may clarify Sforno's earlier uncertainty about its number. Ibn Tibbon refers his reader to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*: "God gives an appropriate form to each and every material body by means of the tenth angel, which is the form called individuals (אישים)."[35] Earlier in the same book, he expounds the term somewhat differently: "The tenth level is the form called individuals (אישים). They are the angels who speak to the prophets and appear to them in prophetic vision. Therefore, they are called individuals (אישים), because their level is close to the level of the knowledge of individual human beings."[36] Although Maimonides characterises the tenth separable intellect—the agent intellect—as a single entity, he also predicates to it an aspect of multiplicity, referring to it as a class of forms, which he discusses in the plural. Sforno's ambivalence about the singularity of the source of the human intellect may reflect Maimonides' ambiguous statements on the subject since both authors share this conception of an angel or class of angels functioning as the giver of human forms.

Thus, it would appear that with regard to the first general phase of his psychogonical theory, Sforno is committed to a version of the traditional Judeo-

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השכלים הנפרדים שהם סבות מציאות הגלגלים, קצתם מאמין שהוא נותן צורות כל הנמצאות השפלות מצמח וב"ח ואדם, ואריסט"ו יאמין כי אין צריך אליו רק בתת צורת האדם מפני שהוא שכל, או אמור בהוציא שכל האדם בכח שהוא צורתו מן הכח אל הפעל, השכל הזה קראוהו שכל פועל, בעבור שהוא פועל הנמצאות המתחדשות יום יום בתת צורותם שהוא הויתם, ונראה לי כי הוא שאומר הרב ז"ל עליו בחבורו ששמו אישים, ונראה כי קראוהו כן בעבור שהוא נותן צורת כל הפרטים בעלי נפש לפי אחת הדעות, או צורות אישי בני אדם לפי הדעת השנית, ואיני יודע אנה מצא הרב ז"ל השם ההוא, ונראה לי שמצאו בדברי החכמים ז"ל בספרי המדרשות או זולתם:"

[35] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Sefer hamada, hilkhot yesodei hatorah*, 4:6: "ושנוי זה יהיה בסביבת הגלגל, ומסביבתו יתחברו ארבעתם ויהיה מהם שאר גלמי בני אדם ונפש חיה וצמח ואבן ומתכת. והאל נותן לכל גלם וגלם צורה הראויה לו על ידי מלאך העשירי שהיא הצורה הנקראת אישים."

[36] Ibid., 2:7: "ומעלה עשירית היא מעלת הצורה שנקראת אישים, והם המלאכים המדברים עם הנביאים ונראים להם במראה הנבואה. לפיכך נקראו אישים, שמעלתם קרובה ממעלת דעת בני אדם."

Arabic model adopted by earlier scholars such as Avicenna, the younger Averroes, and Maimonides. He avoids the term agent intellect, but alludes to the notion. He also adheres to the traditional model in his explanation of the initial stage of human thinking (the first perfection), which for him represents the first stage of the second general phase of the realisation of the human intellective soul. Basing his ideas loosely on Averroes' statements in his Long Commentary on the *De anima*, Sforno refers to this stage as the possible or material intellect although it does not match the Commentator's intention in that work.

4.4 A BREAK FROM TRADITION

At this juncture, Sforno seems to advocate a major departure from all of Averroes' noetic models. With regard to the second stage of the second phase of the intellective soul's realisation (the second perfection), Sforno discards an element common to all variants of the traditional Judeo-Arabic noetic scheme. As mentioned, according to that scheme, the second main function of the agent intellect is to cause actual human thought by effecting a transition of the human intellect from a potential state to one of actuality. The rationale behind this is that what is actual can only be brought into actuality by a distinct agent, which is itself already actual. Sforno, however, does not attribute the realization of the human intellect—actual thinking—to an external separable source. Instead, he turns his attention to an individual's personal efforts, apparently denying any non-human involvement in the activity.

In the twelfth *quaestio*, he describes the process of actual human thought as comprised of two fundamental activities, namely, abstraction and reception:

> Then the intellect is able to contemplate by means of the physical faculties found in the individual subject. This occurs when perceivable images are brought to it from the imaginative faculty

> in that subject, by which it strives to acquire the second perfection. For then it is able to perform its actions on the aforementioned images, abstracting them and receiving them. It is also able to instruct the instruments of the material faculties in that subject, commanding them to perform voluntary actions. This is accomplished through the faculty of volition, bestowed on it by the will of God, which is wondrous in our eyes."[37]

He reiterates his description of this element of his noetic theory—the second perfection, actual human thought, or knowing *in actu*—several times in the twelfth *quaestio*, consistently highlighting the fact that its transition from potentiality to actuality is brought about by the divinely bestowed faculty of human volition or free choice. Throughout his discussions, he characterizes such free choice as a wonder or mystery, without elaborating on its precise workings:

> When this intellective form properly combines these first intelligibles, it performs the activity of intellection, which is its distinctive activity. Likewise, volition then occurs to it by divine decree, by means of which the intellect can contemplate whenever it desires and instruct the faculties that possess bodily instruments.[38]

Sforno subsequently bases his account of the human intellect's attainment of its second stage of perfection on a discussion from Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima*, in which a process of intellectual apprehension comprised of

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[37] *Or*, 46v: "כי אז יוכל להתבונן באמצעות הכחות הגשמיות הנמצאות באותו הנושא האישיי וזה כאשר יובלו אליו תמונות המוחשות מן הכח המדמה אשר באותו הנושא ובזה ישתדל לקנות השלמות השני כי אז יוכל לפעול פעולתיו בתמונות הנז' המוגבלות אליו להפשיטם ולקבלם ויוכל גם כן לצוות לכלי הכחות החמרייות אשר באותו הנושא ויצוה אותם לעשות הפעולות הבחירייות וזה בכח הבחירה הנתון בו ברצון אלהי היא נפלאת בעינינו."

Lumen, 58v: "Cuius fit tunc actualis forma, cum scilicet eiusdem individui virtutibus mediantibus possit suas proprias agere actiones. Et hoc, quia cum eiusdem individui imaginationes eidem spirituali naturae presententur, potest illas a materia extrahere et intellectualiter recipere, illisque receptis primas propositiones quae sibi naturaliter insunt applicare, et ad ulteriora procedens, recte iudicare, organicisque eiusdem individui virtutibus praecipere, ut agant actiones ad libitum fiendas per liberum arbitrium, tunc eidem divinitus infusum et mirabiliter exhibitum."

[38] *Or*, 48v: "וכאשר זאת הצורה השכלית תצרף אותם המושכלות הראשונות כראוי תעשה פעלת ההשכלה אשר היא הפעולה המיוחדת אליה וכמו כן יהיה בה אז בגזירת אלהית הבחירה אשר בה תוכל להתבונן כשתרצה ולצוות לכחות בעלות הכלים הגשמיים."

Lumen, 60r: "Quibus bene applicatis, fit intellectio, quae est eiusdem spiritualis naturae propria actio; et eidem tunc divinitus datur liberum arbitrium, quo potest ad libitum actu intelligere, et organicis virtutibus ad libitum praecipere."

abstraction and reception is described. In Averroes' account, this twofold process is also characterised as a voluntary activity, governed by an individual's free choice. The two accounts, however, do not coincide. In Sforno's epistemological model, the activities of abstraction and reception represent the culmination of intellectual achievement; for Averroes, however, they are only preparation for essential or actual knowing. In fact, the activities of abstraction and reception in the passage cited by Sforno relate to a faculty of Averroes' model called the *virtus cogitativa* ("cogitative faculty"), which along with other corporeal faculties such as common sense and memory are subsumed under the faculty of imagination.[39] For Averroes, this cogitative faculty takes the individual intelligible notions derived from a human being's sensible experience and adapts, arranges and presents them to the separable material and agent intellects for a true and proper form of pure intellection.[40] Although he affirms the faculty's involvement in the process of intellection in terms of its preparatory role, he nonetheless classifies it as a generable-corruptible subject, which lacks the capacity to apprehend universal concepts.[41] Sforno, however, concludes his account of intellection with this cogitative faculty, essentially leaving off where Averroes begins.

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[39] See Richard C. Taylor, "Cogitatio, Cogitativus and Cogitare: Remarks on the Cogitative Power in Averroes," in *L'élaboration du vocabulaire philosophique au Moyen Age: Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve et Leuven, 12-14 Septembre 1998*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse, and Carlos Steel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 111-146, 120.

[40] Richard Taylor summarises the role of this faculty: "For Averroes in the *Long Commentary on the De anima* the cogitative power is the locus of the intellectual power in the individual human being. Not only is it the power which assembles the results of sensory experience into a coherent whole, it is a power which performs the final operations on the images and intentions of the internal sense powers in preparation for the presentation of a denuded intention before the material intellect and the agent intellect. In the process of coming to have knowledge in the individual, the cogitative power provides the particular intentions in their purity which the light of the agent intellect and the receptive power of the material intellect will transfer from one order of being into another, from the being of a particular intention which is intelligible in potency to the being of the universal intelligible which is intelligible in act." See Taylor, "Improving on Nature's Exemplar: Averroes' Completion of Aristotle's Psychology of Intellect," 126.

[41] See "Remarks on the Cogitative Power in Averroes," esp. 122-123.

The apparent discrepancy between Sforno's subject of discourse (the fully actualised intellect) and that of Averroes (merely the cogitative faculty), raises the question of whether Sforno, like the authority upon which he relies, also endorses the notion of a level of intellectual perfection beyond that achieved by the processes of abstraction and reception. As demonstrated, although Sforno does not explicitly mention the term agent intellect in his discussion of the emanation of the human form together with its first intelligibles, he hints at the possibility that the source of the human intellect may be this single separable intellect. Thus, although he continues to omit any mention of the agent intellect in describing the full realization of the human intellect (the second perfection), is it possible that for Sforno this separable being plays some further role in the intellectual actualization of the human being?

Sforno explicitly disabuses his reader of that notion. First, he denies that these abstractive and receptive actions belong to the corporeal faculty of imagination; second, he consistently identifies the second perfection as the ultimate realisation of humankind; and third, he dedicates an entire *quaestio* (the fourteenth) to proving that this realisation only requires powers internal to the human being. In his rebuttal of the fourth proof in favour of the individual intellective soul's mortality—a position in which the intellect is provisionally identified with the corporeal faculty of imagination because of its susceptibility to error—Sforno carefully distinguishes between the activities of the imaginative faculty and those of the intellect:

> Sometimes error occurs as a result of false premises brought to the intellect from the imaginative faculty, from which a false conclusion is derived. In such a case, those premises brought to it do not result from the activity of the intellect, but rather from the activity of the imaginative faculty. This occurs because this intellective faculty is merely potential in relation to the second perfection, and is, therefore, less than a separable intellect, which is intellect *in actu*, as it is stated: "You have made it little less than divine." (Psalm 8:6) For although it is an intellect *in actu*

> with respect to the first intelligibles that are naturally contained in it, as explained above, it is still only potential with respect to the other intelligibles, which it only apprehends after particular perceptions are brought to it, and it abstracts and receives them, combining them with the first intelligibles. Therefore, when false images are brought to this intellective faculty, its intellectual judgment will be false. However, this falsity does not occur as a result of the activity of an incorrect intellect, i.e., that it makes a perverse judgement, but rather, it is because of the false testimony brought to it...[42]

In this passage, Sforno not only distinguishes between the intellect and the imaginative faculty, he also identifies the human intellect in its second perfection as on a par with separable intellects. This means that he categorically rejects Averroes' proposition that the activities of abstraction and reception should be considered as merely a function of the corporeal faculty of imagination. Taking these activities as the highest form of human intellectual fulfilment, Sforno assigns his fourteenth *quaestio* to a discussion of whether human intellection requires natural or divine causes external to the human being. Although any explicit reference to the agent intellect is absent from this later discussion as well, it is the obvious target. His conclusion is that no external causes are necessary for the second perfection of the human intellective soul. Thus, he finalises his replacement of the medieval Judeo-

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[42] *Or*, 49r: "ולפעמים יקרה הטעות מהנחות כוזבות מובלות אליו מן המדמה אשר מהם יתחייב תולדה כוזבת והנה אותם ההנחות המובלות אינם מפעולת השכל אבל מפעולת הכח המדמה וזה יקרה מפני היות זה הכח השכלי כוחי בלבד אל השלמות השני ובזה הוא חסר מן השכל הנבדל אשר הוא שכל בפעל באמרו ותחסרהו מעט מאלהים כי עם היות שהוא שכל בפעל בענין המושכלות הראשונות אשר הם בו בטבע כמו שביארנו למעלה הוא אמנם כוחי בלבד בענין שאר המושכלות אשר לא ישיגם כי אם אחר שיובלו אליו פרטי המוחשות ויפשיטם ויקבלם וירכיב עמהם את המושכלות הראשונות. ולכן כאשר יובלו אל זה הכח השכלי דמיונות כוזבות יהיה משפט השכלי כוזב אבל זה הכזב לא יקרה מהיות פעולת השכל בלתי ישרה רצוני לומר שישפוט משפט מעוקל אבל יקרה מעדות עדי שקר שיובל אליו כמו שיקרה לשופט ישר שהעידו לפניו עדי שקר כי הוא עם היותו ישר ישפוט משפט כוזב בלי ספק."
Lumen, 61r: "Quandoque vero decipitur per falsas propositiones sibi ab imaginativa praesentatas, a quibus rationabiliter falsa oritur conclusio, quae tamen vere ad huiusmodi propositiones sequitur. Et hoc eidem intellectivae contingit pro quanto est quodammodo potentialis scilicet quoad actum secundum; quare dicitur diminutus scilicet a puro intellectu, qui semper actu intelligit. Et hoc quia licet ipsa intellectiva anima sit actu intellectus quoad primas propositiones, quae sibi naturaliter insunt, ut supra. Est tamen quid potentiale tantum quoad reliqua intelligibilia, quae nonnisi immaginata extrahendo, recipiendo, et primas propositiones debite applicando, percipere potest. Cum ergo sibi falsae propositiones praesentantur, merito sequitur falsum intellectivae iudicium. Et hoc non fit per non rectam intellectivae actionem qua scilicet male diudicet, sed ex falsis testimoniis sibi praesentatis; sicut accidit iustissimo iudici per falsos testes male informato, qui licet sit in se iustus, tunc tamen male procul dubio diiudicat."

Arabic notion of a cosmic agent intellect with the human volitional faculty internal to every human being.[43]

Sforno's rejection of an external actualizing agent of human intellectual activity is not without precedent.[44] In contrast to the medieval Judeo-Arabic theory of a separate agent intellect derived from Alexander of Aphrodisias' interpretation of Aristotle, many medieval Christian scholars, including Thomas Aquinas, adopted a noetic model in which the agent intellect is seen as an internal power of the human mind rather than a separate substance.[45] This was also the view endorsed by some scholars of the Renaissance period, such as Paul of Venice, who in his *Summa philosophiae naturalis* regarded the agent intellect as an active faculty within the human intellective soul.[46] It is possible that Sforno derived this element of his noetic theory from the medieval Latin tradition or from his contemporaries without citing

[43] This might also imply that, for Sforno, a prophetic state would not involve the participation of an external cosmic source such as the agent intellect. However, he does not explicitly articulate a position on that subject in the *Light of the Nations*. With regard to Maimonides' inclusion of the agent intellect in his theory of prophecy, see Howard Kreisel, "Moses Maimonides," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank, and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), 245-280, 263. As noted above, in his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides indicates that the tenth level of separable intellects, which he calls *Ishim* and which Samuel Ibn Tibbon identifies as the agent intellect, are entities which communicate with prophets.

[44] For a survey of the divine and human interpretations of the agent intellect among ancient, medieval and modern commentators on Aristotle's *De anima*, see Aristotle, *Aristotle: De Anima*, trans. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2016), 314-317.

[45] See B. Carlos Bazán, "Conceptions on the Agent Intellect and the Limits of Metaphysics," in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts: Studien und Texte*, ed. Jan Aertsen, and Andreas Speer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 178-210. See also John Haldane, "Aquinas and the Active Intellect," *Philosophy* 67, no. 260 (1992): 199-210; Christopher Shields, and Robert Pasnau, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 234-238.

[46] See Eckhard Kessler, "The Intellective Soul," 490. As Kessler observes, however, in his later commentary on the *De anima*, Paul identifies the agent intellect as God. Zdzislaw Kuksewicz delineates four positions surveyed by Paul of Venice on the agent intellect: (1) the material intellect is the form of the human being whereas the agent intellect is the separable intellect of the tenth celestial sphere (per Avicenna and Al-ghazali); (2) the material and agent intellects are both accidents of the human soul (per Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome); (3) the material intellect, agent intellect and will reflect the divine trinity within the human being (per John Wyclif); (4) the agent intellect is identified as God. See Zdzislaw Kuksewicz, "Paul de Venise et sa théorie de l'âme," in *Aristotelismo veneto e scienza moderna: atti del 25 ° anno accademico del Centro per la storia della tradizione aristotelica nel Veneto*, ed. Luigi Olivieri (Padova: Antenore, 1983), vol. 1, 297-324, esp. 313-317. See also Alessandro Conti, "Paul of Venice," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of* Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2017 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/paul-venice/>.

them. However, he does not explicitly mention the agent intellect even to deny it a role in human intellection. Instead, he focuses on the faculty of volition with regard to its active role in human thinking and its divine source.

4.5 "AFTER THE LIKENESS OF GOD"

In order to set the stage for the fourteenth *quaestio*, Sforno elaborates on the voluntary elements involved in achieving immortality in his treatment of the subject of intellectual error in the twelfth *quaestio*. He draws the reader's attention to the factors that might hinder the actualisation of the intellect; these factors are related to human will or free choice. Sforno relies on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Averroes' Middle Commentary on it in order to define the concept of will: "As the Philosopher explicated in his *Ethics* (book 5, chapter 12): "I say that the will is when the agent has a choice, and knows that." Ibn Rushd elucidated these words, saying: "This is when the individual knows that the matter is dependent on him.""[47]

Sforno delineates various ways in which the collaboration of these two faculties—the will and the intellect—may falter, thereby negating the attainment of the second perfection. Continuing to draw on Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he introduces his reader to the power responsible for that faltering, namely, the "appetitive faculty" (הכח המתאוה; *virtus appetitiva sive concupiscentia*).[48] Characterising its tendencies as improper for the most part, he pits it against the intellect, blaming it not only for the intellect's failure but also for its turning to evil: "In this case, the activity of the intellect, whose production is not

[47] *Or*, 49v-50r: "...כמו שבאר הפילוסו' בספר המדות מאמר ה' פרק י"ב. באמרו אומר אני שהרצון הוא כשהפועל הוא עומד בבחירתו ויודע זה. ודבריו אלה באר אבן רשד באמרו וזה כאשר ידע שהדבר תלוי בו."
Lumen, 61v: "...et habetur a Phylosopho, Ethicorum quinti, t.c. 12, ubi dicit: Dico autem voluntatem quando quis in sua potestate existens, sciens, etc. Ubi Aven R. exponens, ait: Et videt quod facere illud in eo est, etc."
[48] See *Or*, 50r; *Lumen*, 61v.

incorrect—indeed it is produced by correct intellectual understanding—is evil and base because of the base purpose that the appetitive faculty achieves by means of it."[49] He validates this with Scripture for his Hebrew reader: "They are wise at doing evil,"[50] and Aristotle's *Physics* for both his Hebrew and Latin reader: "Sometimes a wise man sins when he employs his wisdom for evil."[51]

Sforno's strategy of replacing the agent intellect with human volition starts to take shape through this depiction of evil as resulting from a struggle between the intellect and the appetitive faculty. He calls attention to the divine aspect of the human will, not only in terms of its source but also in terms of its operation:

> Since the intellect knows that the desire of the appetitive faculty is debased and damaging, and that it could battle against that appetitive faculty and prevent it, yet in many cases it fails to battle against it, it is clear that this free choice is given to the human being miraculously by the will of God. Consequently, the human being is said to be a voluntary agent. This is the intention of the statement: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26) For there are no absolutely voluntary agents other than God, blessed be He, and humankind.[52]

For Sforno, then, not only is volition a direct bestowal from God, it is also a reflection of God in the human being. In his subsequent elaboration of this exegesis,

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[49] *Or*, 50r: "והנה אז פעולת השכל אשר היא אותה ההמצאה אינה בלתי ישרה. אבל היא בהבנה שכלית וישרה אלא שהיא רעה ומגונה בסבת התכלית המגונה אשר ישיג באמצעותה הכח המתאוה."
Lumen, 61v: "Et tunc, illa intellectiva actio, quae scilicet est huiusmodi investigatio, non est falsa conclusio, neque est per se non recta; immo est intellectualis et recta consideratio. Sed est mala ratione sui finis, quem iniquus appetitus per huiusmodi investigationem consequi posse intenditur."
[50] Jeremiah 4:22. *Or*, 50r: "כאמרו חכמים המה להרע."
[51] *Or*, 50r: "וזה באר ארסטו' בספר השמע מאמר ח' פרק ח' באמרו לפעמים יחטא החכם כאשר ישתמש בחכמתו להרע' עכ"ל."
Lumen, 61v: "Quare Phylosophus, Physicorum 8 t.c. 8, ait: Sciens peccat quandoque, quando utitur sua scientia perverse, etc."
[52] *Or*, 50r: "ובהיות שהשכל יודע שתאות הכח המתאוה הוא מגונה ומזיק ושיוכל הוא להתקומם על המתאוה הנז' ולמנעה. ועם זה יחדל פעמים רבות מלהתקומם עליו הוא מבואר שזאת הבחירה היא נתונה לו ברצון אלהי על צד הפלא. ובזה נאמר עליו שהוא פועל רצוניי וזה הורה באמרו ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וזה כי אמנם אין במציאו' שום פועל רצוניי בהחלט זולתי האל יתברך והמין האנושי."
Lumen, 61v-62r: "Cum quo ipsa intellectiva noscat appetitivae sive concupiscentiae virtutis desideria esse obnoxia sive mala, et se posse illi resistere, cui tamen saepius non resistit, patet quidem mirabile sibi inesse arbitrium divinitus traditum, quo proprie dicitur voluntarie agens. Quare sacrum Genesis documentum capite 1, hoc docens, ait Deum fecisse hominem quasi ad eius similitudinem. Nullum entium agit voluntarie praeter quam Deus et humanum genus."

he identifies the first phrase of the verse, "in our image," as a reference to the separable and immortal human intellect, from whose actions one can apprehend a certain knowledge of God and other separable substances. The second phrase, "after our likeness," he takes as an allusion to the volition inherent in the actions of human beings, which distinguishes them from other entities whose behaviour is determined by nature alone. In order to preserve consistency in his interpretation of the verse, he predicates this second feature to separable substances as well, but then immediately precludes them from the statement:

> In a certain respect human beings are dissimilar to the angels in their actions although they are similar to them with respect to being agents possessing knowledge and discernment. For, although the actions of angels are informed by knowledge and discernment, they lack free choice. This is because they are perpetually intellect *in actu* without the opposition of the appetitive faculty...[53]

Ultimately identifying free choice as the referent of the second phrase in the verse despite its inapplicability to separable beings other than God, Sforno develops his interpretation further by observing that the phrase "*after* our likeness" denotes only a partial or incomplete comparison. He takes it as indicating that human beings are imperfectly like that of God since He chooses only good whereas human beings employ that choice for evil as well; they are unlike the angels because the latter lack free choice altogether.[54] Hence, the very trait that sets human beings on a rank higher

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[53] *Or*, 50v: "ובצד מה הוא נבדל מהמלאכים בפעולותיו עם היותו דומה להם בענין היותו פועל בידיעה והכרה. כי אמנם פעולת המלאכי' עם היותם בידיעה והכרה הם בלתי בחירה מאתם. וזה כי בהיותם שכל בפעל לעולם בלתי התנגדות כח מתאוה..."

Cf. *Lumen*, 62v: "Merito tamen ponitur ly 'quasi,' inferens quod non est omnimoda similitudo; ab angelis scilicet differt in suis actionibus quoad arbitrium."

[54] According to my reading, Sforno's interpretation of the first phrase of the verse is straightforward: It expresses a comparison between the realised human intellect and both God and the angels in terms of separability and immortality. However, his interpretation of the second phrase of this verse is more convoluted since he takes it in several directions simultaneously: (1) Human beings are like both God and the angels in terms of acting with knowledge and discernment; (2) human beings are like God in terms of voluntary action; angels are precluded from this comparison because they lack free choice; (3)

than that of angels is what also hinders them from achieving divinity. Having concluded that the intellective soul's realization is the result of free choice, Sforno turns his attention in the thirteenth *quaestio* to the operational component of that realization, namely, virtuous traits and actions.

4.6 PERFECTION THROUGH MORAL VIRTUE

According to Sforno's epistemological model, the activities of abstraction and reception bring about the human intellect's transition from a state of potentiality to actuality. Such intellection is governed by the will—a faculty possessed only by human beings and God. Upon attaining actualization, the human intellect becomes commensurate with separable intellects or angels since it has transformed into a transcendent and hence immortal being. The main obstacle to this intellectual fulfilment is the appetitive faculty, whose tendency is not only to induce intellectual laziness but also to seize control of the intellect for its own evil ends. Ostensibly, then, the human being must strive to achieve intellectual perfection by overcoming the appetitive faculty through the development of virtuous character traits. According to this understanding, the development of moral virtue would be subordinate to intellectual activity since it is merely instrumental to achieving the principal goal, namely, intellectual realisation.

As we have seen, Sforno relies on citations from Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* and his Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in presenting the principal elements of his epistemological theory. In these works, Averroes advocates a model in which abstraction and reception are merely

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human beings are like God imperfectly, since God uses His free choice to choose only good whereas human beings employ that choice for evil as well. Thus, Sforno considers the will as an integral part of human intellectual fulfilment, but he also sees it as a potential obstacle to that fulfilment.

preliminary activities performed by the cogitative faculty, in order to prepare particular images (derived from sensible experience) for subsequent universal intellection by the separable material and agent intellects. For Averroes, the development of moral virtue is connected with bodily nature rather than universal intellection; it plays no substantial role in actual intellectual fulfilment. Although Sforno's model is different from that of Averroes, he nevertheless cites Averroes' statements about the cogitative faculty in order to bolster his own account of the activities of abstraction and reception, volition, and the appetitive faculty.[55] This dialectical strategy works well for Sforno because in Averroes' model, the cogitative faculty is possessed by each individual human being and is governed by that individual's faculty of will. Since this element of Averroes' theory—the cogitative faculty—serves Sforno so well in articulating his epistemological model, one might expect him to continue using it in his treatment of moral virtue. This, however, is not the case.

Instead, Sforno embarks on a different course in his thirteenth *quaestio*, which investigates the role played by virtuous traits and deeds in the realization of the intellective soul. The discussion, already hinted at in his earlier identification of the human will and intellect as divine qualities, is about the emulation of God. Rather than considering the cultivation of moral virtue as a preliminary step for the attainment of voluntary intellection, he regards it as on a par with it. He does not discuss moral traits and actions in terms of their aid or hindrance to the passage of the intellect from potentiality into actuality; he focuses on the intellectual activity involved in emulating God's moral virtue.

[55] Sforno's model contradicts Averroes' model in three main ways: first, he characterises these intellectual activities as ultimate rather than merely preliminary; second, he identifies the material intellect as the unrealised human intellect prior to these activities rather than as a separable intellect that functions after these activities; third, he replaces the separable agent intellect with the divinely bestowed human will.

In order to define the parameters of his argument, he describes a model of ethical virtue that he ultimately rejects. Relying on Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, he submits the provisional claim that the realisation of the intellect is caused solely by the activities of intellectual abstraction and reception, and that these activities have no connection to moral virtue, which pertains only to the material realm. Hence, he reasons, the perfection of the intellective soul precludes the development of moral virtue:

> This actualisation is achieved solely through the stripping of perceivable experiences from matter and their reception. However, the improvement of moral virtues is only concerned with generable-corruptible activities; apparently, it is neither an agent of intellection nor is it a means to it. Therefore, it would follow that moral virtue is not at all relevant to the perfection of the intellective soul; instead, it is only pertinent to the perfection of the governing of state.[56]

According to this conception, moral virtue plays no part in the activity of intellection, even a subsidiary one; it is assigned solely an external political role. Such emphasis on the political aspect of moral virtue reflects the medieval Judeo-Arabic interpretation of Aristotle's moral philosophy, in which individual governance is viewed in terms of communal wellbeing.[57] Accordingly, Maimonides, in several of

[56] *Or*, 52r: "וזה הפעל לא תשיגהו זולתי בהפשיטה המוחשות מן החומר ובקבלה אותם. והנה מעלת המדות בהיות כל ענינה בפעולו' הוות ונפסדות נראה שאינה פעל השכלה ולא דרך אליה אם כן יתחייב שלא תכנס כלל בשלמות הנפש השכלית. אבל יהיה ענינה נאות לשלמות הנהגת המדינה בלבד."
Lumen, 63r: "Qui scilicet actus nonnisi imaginata extrahendo et illa extracta recipiendo fieri videtur, et talia sunt universalia tantum. Morale autem cum sit intentio ad quaedam particularia scilicet pia opera fienda, patet quidem quod non est intellectio, et per consequens non requiritur ad eiusdem intellectivae animae perfectionem; sed potius requiritur ad civilae regimen tantum."

[57] On the communal basis of the ethical teachings of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes, see Charles E. Butterworth, "Ethics in Medieval Islamic Philosophy," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 224-239. On the ethical systems of medieval Jewish philosophers against the backdrop of Greek philosophy, rabbinic texts and contemporary sources, see Tamar Rudavsky, "Ethics in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 101–24.

his works, portrays ethical virtue and action as instruments of communal order relevant only to social contexts.[58] In the *Guide*, he succinctly explains this aspect:

> As for the welfare of the body, it comes about by the improvement of their ways of living with another. This is achieved through two things... The second thing consists in the acquisition by every human individual of moral qualities that are useful for life in society so that the affairs of the city may be ordered... [Perfection of the body] cannot be achieved in any way by one isolated individual. For an individual can only attain all this through a political association, it being already known that man is political by nature. His ultimate perfection is to become rational *in actu*, I mean to have an intellect *in actu*... It is clear that to this ultimate perfection there do not belong either actions or moral qualities and that it consists only of opinions toward which speculation has led and that investigation has rendered compulsory.[59]

Sforno's characterization of Averroes' theory of moral virtue as limited solely to the political realm is somewhat misleading. As discussed, in Averroes' mature noetic model, an individual's virtuous traits regulate the appetitive faculty so that the cogitative faculty can operate properly.[60] This is also true for Maimonides' conception of moral virtue and action, in which both self governance and communal governance are considered as propaedeutic factors that enable a human being to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming rational *in actu*. He describes this in the *Guide*: "...for it has already been demonstrated that the moral virtues are a preparation for the rational virtues, it being impossible to achieve true, rational acts—I mean perfect rationality—

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[58] For Maimonides' opinion on the communal function of moral virtue, see Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides' "Four Perfections"," in id., *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1981), 65-76, esp. 69-71.

[59] *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 3.27: "ואמנם תקון הגוף יהיה כתקון עניני מחיתם קצתם עם קצתם, וזה הענין ישלם בשני דברים... והשני ללמד כל איש מבני אדם מדות מועילות בהכרח עד שיסודר ענין המדינה... וזה לא ישלם לאיש אחד לבדו כלל, א"א להגיע כל אדם אל זה השיעור אלא בקבוץ המדיני כמו שנודע שהאדם מדיני בטבע, ושלמותו האחרון הוא שיהיה משכיל בפעל, והוא שידע כל מה שיכולת האדם לדעתו מכל הנמצאות כפי שלמותו האחרון, ומבואר הוא שזה השלמות האחרון אין בו מעשים ולא מדות, ואמנם הוא דעות לבד, וכבר הביא אליהם העיון וחייבה אותם החקירה."
Cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 511.

[60] The fact that Sforno uses Averroes' theory of the cogitative faculty in order to generate his own epistemological model, in which he explicitly addresses the role of moral traits in causing intellectual error, shows that he is aware of that role in Averroes' theory as well.

unless it be by a man thoroughly trained with respect to his morals and endowed with the qualities of tranquillity and quiet."[61] However, Sforno glosses over the personal role of moral virtue in the Aristotelian-Averroan model in order to draw his reader's attention to its communal role, of which his own model contains no trace. This allows him to reject it unambiguously in order to advocate his own theory of ethics, which focuses on divine emulation.

In his second demonstration in favour of moral virtue as a necessary element of human perfection, Sforno identifies the rational deliberation involved in emulating God as an intellectual activity in its own right. He argues that the very act of contemplating the principles subsumed under the notion of divine emulation causes the transition of the intellect from a state of potentiality to actuality: "The aforementioned trait [i.e., altruistic emulation] is but intellectual contemplation, which involves the apprehension of the universal principle, which is that a person emulates the Creator, blessed be He, to some degree, through the endeavour to perform good deeds, and that this emulation accords with God's will."[62] In the Hebrew text, he adds: "This is called 'performance for its own sake' among the rabbis."[63] Sforno thus defines the epistemological status of ethical knowledge: it occupies the same level of abstract universality as metaphysical truth. Hence, it cannot occur without the realization of the intellective soul. This is arguably in contrast to Maimonides' opinion that ethical knowledge is the result of concrete or practical cognitive activity connected with the

[61] *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 1.34: "...וזה שכבר התבאר במופת, כי מעלות המדות הם הצעות למעלות הדבריות, ואי אפשר היות דבריות אמתיות, ר"ל המושכלות שלמות, אלא לאיש מלומד המדות בעל נחת וישוב."
Cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 76-77.

[62] *Or*, 53r: "כי הנה התכונה הנזכ' אינה דבר אחר זולתי התבוננות בשכל משיג זה הכולל שהאדם מתדמה לבורא ית' באופן מה בהשתדלות המעשים הטובים ושזה ההדמות הוא נאות לרצון לו לפני ה' וזהו הנקרא עושה לשמה אצל רז"ל."
Lumen, 63v: "Quia huiusmodi moralis habitus nihil aliud est quam scientifica consideratio, qua scilicet noscit se piis operibus reddere quid Deo similius et idem gratius."

[63] See *Or*, 53r. This citation is taken from *Berakhot* 17a.

appetitive faculty, and is therefore on a baser level than the kind of abstract thinking that results in metaphysical knowledge.[64]

For Sforno then, virtuous traits and deeds are necessary criteria of human perfection, and they are contingent on deliberative rational thought. In this respect, his viewpoint differs from that of, for example, the fourteenth-century Jewish scholar, Hasdai Crescas. Hava Tirosh-Rothschild compared Sforno's and Crescas' opinions on the human soul and its perfection, concluding that both scholars regarded *praxis* as superior to *theoria*, and that according to Sforno, "...the ultimate perfection of the soul in this life is expressed through action in the moral-social sphere."[65] Indeed, both Sforno and Crescas hold that morality and performance play substantial roles in human perfection; however, they seem to define that role differently. While Crescas rejects the traditional assertion of medieval Judeo-Arabic philosophy that intellectual activity represents the final perfection of the human being, Sforno seems to accept it. Instead of classifying thought as subordinate to action—as Crescas does in his *Light of the Lord*[66]—Sforno argues in his thirteenth *quaestio* that action implies thinking and should therefore be ranked accordingly. He does not dethrone the intellect, which

[64] On this, see Tamar Rudavsky, "Morality, politics, and the law," in ead., *Maimonides* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 161-183, esp. 163. See also, Howard Kreisel, "The Practical Intellect," in Id., *Maimonides' Political Thought: Studies in Ethics, Law, and the Human Ideal* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 63-92. However, see Alexander Altmann, "Maimondes' "Four Perfections"," 73-74, where he remarks on Maimonides' discussion of *imitatio Dei*, which would seem to contradict his own discussion on the "four perfections." Altmann resolves the contradiction by distinguishing between moral virtues and imitation of divine attributes. He argues that the latter is, for Maimonides, the result of theoretical reasoning. Altmann's proposed distinction would accord with Sforno's conception of moral virtue; however, Sforno does not seem to articulate explicitly such a distinction. By contrast, Herbert Davidson takes the position that despite this discussion on *imitatio Dei* in the conclusion of the *Guide*, Maimonides' opinion is that "human perfection thus lies in intellectual or rational virtue, not moral virtue, and intellectual virtue consists in acquiring metaphysical knowledge." See Herbert A. Davidson, *Maimonides the Rationalist* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011), 200-201.

[65] See Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish philosophy on the eve of modernity," 518. See the second chapter herein, 2.4 "Hebrew Philosophical Sources."

[66] I base my evaluation of Crescas' theory of the human soul and its immortality on my reading of Ḥasdai Crescas, *Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)*, trans. Roslyn Weiss (Oxford Univ. Press, 2018), esp. book II, part VI, 205-241; book III, part II, 278-282. See also James T. Robinson, "Soul and Intellect," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. Steven Nadler, and Tamar Rudavsky (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 524-558, 552-555.

he sees as the divine aspect of the human being; he merely redefines its purview to include a human being's emulation of God through virtuous traits and deeds. Sforno does seem to agree with Crescas that the culmination of the human being should not be defined in terms of his conceptualization of such things as the agent intellect. He replaces the agent intellect with God, arguing that the human being's final perfection consists in having God's altruism as a direct object of thought. This, he argues, is achieved through the intellectual activity involved in the endeavour to acquire virtuous traits and perform virtuous deeds. Thus, for Sforno the *summum bonum* of humankind remains the actualization of the human intellect, the highest level of which involves voluntarily contemplating the emulation of God.

Robert Bonfil took Sforno's emphasis on the intellectual aspect of ethical action and divine emulation as possible evidence for his reliance on the *Book of Definitions* (ספר ההגדרות) by the tenth-century Neoplatonist Isaac Israeli, noting that the work was available to him through Gerard of Cremona's twelfth-century Latin translation.[67] Israeli classifies practical virtues as intellectual precepts in his description of the soul's three-stage ascent back to the Divine.[68] Perhaps Sforno's theory of the human intellective soul's development bears some resemblance to Israeli's adoption of Plotinus' conceptual framework, wherein the soul undergoes an initial self-purification, subsequent intellectual illumination, and final divine union.[69] However, he does not portray the realization of the human intellective soul in terms of such a three-stage process. In fact, as discussed, he consistently advocates a two-stage

[67] See Robert Bonfil, "The Doctrine of the Human Soul and Its Holiness in the Thought of R. Obadiah Sforno," 219-221.
[68] See Isaac Israeli, *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century*, trans. Alexander Altmann, and S. M. Stern (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), s. 2, l. 75, p. 26. See also Leonard Levin, R. David Walker, and Shalom Sadik, "Isaac Israeli," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/israeli/>.
[69] See *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century*, 186-191.

scheme based on Aristotle's description of intellectual activity in the third book of the *De anima*, where the first stage of intellectual development represents an individuated intellectual potentiality, and the second stage is one of full intellectual realization.[70] Since, for Sforno, virtuous traits and deeds are relevant to human perfection insofar as they involve the contemplation of emulating God, which he associates with the second perfection, it would seem that he considers ethics as relating to the final stage of perfection rather than an initial stage of self-purification. However, it is possible that Sforno derived his notion of the human soul's ascent from Israeli's *Book of Definitions* and then adapted it to his own reading of Aristotle and Averroes.

4.7 THE COSMIC STATUS OF HUMANKIND

The significance of Sforno's opinions on human thought, ethical virtue and free choice culminates in the fifteenth and final *quaestio* of the treatise, in which he discusses whether celestial bodies exist for the sake of terrestrial ones. He uses the conclusions already reached in the twelfth to the fourteenth *quaestiones* in order to argue that the human being is the loftiest of all created beings, including the celestial spheres and their stars. He presents an anthropocentric cosmology in which only humankind can achieve the creator's ultimate purpose. Like his earlier discussions on epistemology and ethics, Sforno's demonstrations regarding this issue can be taken as a response to Maimonides' opinion as expressed in his *Guide of the Perplexed*, where he states that although plants and animals exist for the sake of the human being, the celestial bodies and the separable intellects do not. According to Maimonides, superlunary beings exist for their own end, as determined by God's unfathomable wisdom; this end is independent of human beings. Sforno's challenges this position,

[70] See the third chapter herein, 3.3 "Sforno's Noetic Theory."

arguing that just as the lower terrestrial entities exist for the sake of humankind, so do the celestial bodies. In order to demonstrate this, he relies on the fact that the fully realised human intellect has achieved transcendence beyond the physical world, as a result of his deliberate and altruistic contemplation about the emulation of God.

Sforno offers two provisional arguments against the idea that superlunary entities exist for the sake of terrestrial beings. The first focuses on the unacceptability of the proposition that the purpose or end of superior beings could be subordinate to those of a lesser dignity. The second highlights the transience of the generable-corruptible realm, concluding that it cannot represent the creator's ultimate purpose. In order to demonstrate the latter, he offers the analogy of a potter, who produces a vessel only to shatter it and use its clay to shape a second vessel, which he subsequently breaks so that he can produce a third vessel, and so on. Such a potter, Sforno contends, would be rightly considered a fool. Similarly, the purpose of celestial beings cannot be subordinate to the impermanent beings of the terrestrial realm, which, like the potter's vessels, are constantly in a state of flux. These two demonstrations set the groundwork for Sforno's subsequent assertion that humankind represents the pinnacle of God's creation. However, before he directly addresses that issue, he presents two arguments in favour of the thesis that the end of all created beings—including celestial bodies—is subordinate to the purpose of humankind.

In his second argument, he cites Averroes' Long Commentaries on the *Physics*, *De caelo*, and *Metaphysics* in an effort to demonstrate that terrestrial beings require the motion of the celestial bodies in order to achieve the natural heat necessary for the reception of their specific forms. He concludes that the purpose of celestial motion—and hence, of the moving bodies themselves—is contingent on the generable-corruptible existents of the terrestrial realm. This demonstration is

particularly interesting when considered in relation to Maimonides' consideration of the subject in the *Guide*, which, as mentioned, contradicts Sforno's position.

In the *Guide*, Maimonides begins his discussion about the final cause or purpose of natural things with a reference to a passage in Aristotle's *Politics*, in which the Philosopher states that plants were created for the sake of the animals.[71] Sforno cites this same passage in his fifteenth *quaestio*, together with its continuation that certain domestic and wild animals, in turn, provide human beings with work and clothing, respectively.[72] For both Maimonides and Sforno, this passage supports the notion that the human being represents the culmination of sublunary existence, and accordingly, sublunary beings exist for the sake of humankind.[73] With regard to superlunary beings, however, Maimonides categorically denies that their end is contingent on human beings, arguing that scriptural passages which ostensibly support that idea should be interpreted as merely indicating the natural properties or effects of those beings:

> However, this does not apply to the stars; I mean to say that they do not exist for our sake and so that good should come to us from them. For, as we have made clear, its dictum, *to give light and to rule*, merely gives information about the utility of what comes from them and overflows toward that which is below, according to what I have made clear to you concerning the nature of the constant overflow of the good from one thing toward another. As far as what is reached by the good that is always coming is concerned, it may seem that what receives the benefit is the final end of the thing that caused its good and its liberality to overflow toward it. Thus an individual from among the people of a city might think that the final end of the ruler consists in safeguarding

[71] See *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 3.13; cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 449, 454.
[72] See *Or*, 57r; *Lumen*, 66v; cf. Aristotle and Averroes, *Omnia quae extant opera*, vol. 3, *Politics* (Venice: Giunta, 1552-1550), 118r; cf. *Politics* I.8.1256b16. Sforno does not indicate where in the *Politics* this citation occurs. I used this citation in the second chapter herein (2.3 "Citing Aristotle and Averroes") to show that Sforno cites the *Politics* from Leonardo Bruni's Latin translation.
[73] Maimonides states: "And it is manifest that the most perfect thing, whose existence out of this matter is possible, is man; he is the last and most perfect of these compounds. Accordingly even if it is said that all sublunary beings exist for his sake, that would be true from this point of view; I mean because the movement of changeable things exist for the sake of coming-to-be in order that what is as perfect as it is possible to be should come about." See *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 3.13, 450.

> his house at night against robbers. And this is true from a certain point of view. For since his house is safeguarded and this benefit comes to him because of the ruler, the matter looks as if the final end of the ruler were the safeguarding of the house of that individual. We must interpret in this sense every text whose external sense we find indicates that something sublime has been made for the sake of something inferior to it.[74]

Sforno's position on the relation between the end of superlunary and sublunary beings is based on a more ambiguous understanding of the concept of final cause than the one articulated in this passage of the *Guide*. Whereas Maimonides distinguishes between a secondary or nonessential consequence of a thing and its primary end or purpose, Sforno conflates the two notions, arguing that if an effect is necessary for the *status quo*, then that effect must also be the ultimate purpose of the action bringing it about as well as of the causal agent itself. Thus, using Maimonides' analogy, if the house is safeguarded because of the ruler, then for Sforno, the end of the ruler would be to safeguard the house.

Sforno's insistence on the fact that the human being represents the ultimate realization of both terrestrial and celestial existence allows him to rebut his earlier provisional arguments, originally based on the premise that the end of superior beings should not be subordinate to that of inferior ones, whose identities are constantly changing. Sidestepping the argument, he asserts that although generable-corruptible beings such as plants and animals are indeed inferior to the more permanent celestial existents, the human being whose final end they serve enjoys a status superior even to that of the stars. For this, Sforno employs the conclusions reached in his earlier

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[74] *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, 3.13: "...ואין הכוכבים כן ר"ל שאינם בעבורנו למה שיגיענו מטובם, כי אמרו להאיר ולמשול הוא כמו שבארנו, ספור בתועלת המגעת מהן השופעת על התחתונים, כמו שבארתי לך מטבע שפע הטוב תמיד מדבר על דבר, והטוב ההוא המגיע לעולם הוא בחק מי שהגיע אליו. כאלו זה המושפע עליו הוא תכלית הדבר ההוא המשפיע עליו טובו וחסדו, כמה שיחשוב אחד מבני המדינה שתכלית המלך לשמור ביתו בלילה מן הגנבים, וזה אמת מצד אחד, שאחר שנשמר ביתו והגיעה אליו זאת התועלת מפני המלך שכהו הענין דומה להיות תכלית המלך לשמור בית האיש הזה, ולפי זה הענין צריך שנפרש כל פסוק שנמצא פשוטו מורה על היות דבר נכבד נעשה בעבור הפחות ממנו..."
Cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 454.

quaestiones. From the twelfth *quaestio*, he recalls the separability or transcendence of the human intellective soul both in terms of its angelic origin and its attainment of thought *in actu*; from the thirteenth *quaestio*, humankind's ability to emulate the Creator through altruistic virtue; and from the fourteenth *quaestio*, the divine volitional element common only to human beings and God. Hence, Sforno puts forward a cosmological scheme, in which celestial motion is initially directed downward toward the earth and its lowly inhabitants, which are constantly coming into being and passing away. Subsequently, however, that motion turns back toward the heavens by serving the needs of humankind, whose voluntary contemplation of emulating God's altruism bestows on them a certain degree of divinity. Sforno marshals several scriptural passages in support of this perspective, rejecting the kind of exegetical caution advocated by Maimonides in his discussion of the subject cited above.

The conclusion that created beings serve mankind as a result of his imitation of God certainly did not originate with Sforno. The divine status of the human being was a well-worn topos by the Renaissance period, and played a significant role in the works of authors such as Coluccio Salutati, Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.[75] This conclusion, however, is not the climax of the fifteenth and final *quaestio* of Sforno's treatise. In both the Hebrew and Latin texts, he continues with a proclamation of the superiority of the Jewish people over all other nations in terms of their resemblance of God and hence their dignity among created beings:

> Of humankind, Israel is the part most like God, blessed be He, and closest to Him, since Israel knows its Master and maintains His covenant and is set on worshipping Him with one assent, more than the other members of humankind. It is therefore

[75] On this, see Jill Kraye, "Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 303-386, esp. 306-316.

> appropriate for God to glorify Himself through Israel, who is the choicest of His works.[76]

This proclamation is perhaps Sforno's most explicit statement in the *Light of the Nations* regarding the unique status of the Jewish people and its traditions. Surprisingly, it is presented to the Latin reader almost without modification. In fact, from the context of the discussion in which the proclamation occurs, it is implied that the proper role of the gentile nations is to serve the Jews, just as plants serve the animals and the animals serve humankind. Sforno, however, stops short from explicitly articulating such a position in Latin or in Hebrew.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The final four *quaestiones* of the *Light of the Nations* discuss the third of the three central components of religion formulated on the title page of the Latin text of the treatise, namely, the immortality of human souls.[77] The element that brings together these four sections of the work is the notion of the human emulation of God, which, for Sforno is comprised of the intellectual activities of abstraction and reception, free choice, and virtuous traits and deeds. Upon perfecting these qualities, an individual human being can achieve a state of similitude with the Creator, thereby becoming divine or immortal. Such a human being represents the culmination of not only terrestrial but also superlunary beings, and the entirety of created existence serves this ultimate end. Hence, according to Sforno, the *summum bonum* of humankind coincides with that of creation as a whole.

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[76] *Or*, 57v: "ובמין האדם הנה ישראל חלק ממנו יותר דומה לאל יתברך וקרוב אליו בהיותו מכיר את רבונו ומחזיק בבריתו. ומתכוין לעבדו שכם אחד יותר מכל שאר המין האנושי... ראוי א"כ שיתפא' בישראל אשר הוא מבחר מעשיו..."
Lumen, 67r: "Et hoc, quia cum Israel dicatur esse hominum genus quod prae ceteris Deum noscit, eiusque sequitur mores. Quare est prae ceteris Deo similius et per consequens nobilius, ut supra. Merito dicit Deus se in Israel gloriari, prout opificem in euisdem operum nobilissimo gloriari decet."

[77] See the first chapter herein, 1.5 "Structure and Contents."

In articulating this worldview, Sforno relies on the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus; he does not mention the works of Maimonides, such as the *Guide of the Perplexed* or the *Mishneh Torah*. However, as I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter, putting Sforno into dialogue with Maimonides as well as with his pupil, Samuel Ibn Tibbon, clarifies important features of his theories. It also sheds further light on his eclectic reading of his philosophical sources and on the polemical purposes underlying his methods. In my opinion, Sforno implicitly addresses Maimonides' positions on subjects such as the agent intellect, moral virtue, and the status of humankind throughout his explicit responses to Aristotle and Averroes. As I have previously indicated, however, Sforno's complex attitude toward the conceptual frameworks of these philosophers must constantly be borne in mind when considering his opinions on the various topics that he addresses or disregards.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECONCILING PHILOSOPHY AND SCRIPTURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Light of the Nations* is not a commentary on the Bible—yet exegesis of biblical passages plays a prominent role in the treatise, and is considered by its author as a form of intellectual proof on a par with syllogistic reasoning. Sforno sees Scripture as offering definitive knowledge about the physical and spiritual worlds whilst recognizing that the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus is an authoritative source for his readers. He therefore puts the two traditions into dialogue; one of the ways he does this is through scriptural exegesis. In the introduction, Sforno casts his project in polemical terms, describing it as a systematic refutation of heretical statements made by Aristotle and his disciples. However, his interpretation of biblical passages demonstrates a willingness to resolve the contradictions between Aristotelian philosophy and Scripture so that the reader can draw from both systems of thought. In order to achieve this resolution, he imposes the concepts and terminology of Greek philosophy onto the biblical text.

Philosophical exegesis of Scripture was already a well-established genre among Jewish writers when Sforno produced his treatise in the sixteenth century.[1]

[1] For an introduction to medieval Jewish philosophical exegesis, see Sarah Klein-Braslavy, "The Philosophical Exegesis," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000), Vol. 1, Part 2, 302-320. See also James Robinson, "Philosophy and Science in Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Bible," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 454-475; Maurice R. Hayoun, *L'Exégèse philosophique dans le judaïsme médiéval* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992). For a comparison of different medieval Jewish exegetical approaches to the same text, see Seymour Feldman, "The Binding of Isaac: A Test-Case of Divine Foreknowledge," in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1984), 105-133; Jeremy Cohen, "Philosophical Exegesis in Historical Perspective: The Case of the Binding of Isaac," in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence*, 135-142.

Already in the tenth century, Saadia Gaon wrote an Arabic translation of and commentary on the Bible, in which he advocated philosophical interpretations based on the Islamic Kalam tradition.[2] Other medieval Jewish scholars such as Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Abraham Ibn Ezra relied on Neoplatonic sources for their explications of biblical passages.[3] In the twelfth century, Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* significantly altered the course of Jewish scriptural exegesis, since it provided a comprehensive and sophisticated method for interpreting the Bible through the philosophical systems of the medieval Arabic commentators on Aristotle.[4] Samuel Ibn Tibbon continued Maimonides' philosophical-exegetical program,[5] and later scholars such as Gersonides and Judah Romano developed their own methods of interpreting Scripture philosophically. Sforno's awareness of the philosophical exegeses of Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon is evident from his criticism of their dismissive evaluation of scriptural discourse in the introduction to the *Or ammim*. However, his own work seems to be congruent with their projects, and he employs similar exegetical techniques throughout the treatise.[6]

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[2] On Saadia Gaon's exegesis, see Hayoun, *L'Exégèse philosophique dans le judaïsme médiéval*, 35-69; Robinson, "Philosophy and Science in Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Bible," 456-458.

[3] On the Neoplatonic interpretations of Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Abraham Ibn Ezra, see *L'Exégèse philosophique dans le judaïsme médiéval*, 70-118, 139-168; "Philosophy and Science in Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Bible," 458-460.

[4] On Maimonides' biblical exegesis, see Sara Klein-Braslavy, "Bible Commentary," in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 245-272. See also Shalom Rosenberg, "On Biblical Exegesis in the Guide of the Perplexed" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981): 85-175.

[5] On Samuel Ibn Tibbon as a proponent of Maimonides' project of philosophical exegesis, see Carlos Fraenkel, *From Maimonides to Samuel Ibn Tibbon: The Transformation of the Dalalat al-Ha'irin into the Moreh ha-Nevukhim* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2007). For a comprehensive discussion of Samuel Ibn Tibbon's exegetical techniques, see James Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes: The Book of the Soul of Man* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

[6] For a recent study of the exegetical works of Jewish scholars in Renaissance Italy, see Andrew Berns, *The Bible and Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy: Jewish and Christian Physicians in Search of Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). See also Kalman P. Bland, "Issues in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Exegesis," in *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. David C. Steinmetz (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 50-67. On Christian biblical exegesis in the sixteenth century, see Richard Griffiths, ed., *The Bible in the Renaissance: Essays on Biblical Commentary and Translation in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Bruce Gordon, and Matthew McLean ed., *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars, and Their Readers in the*

In the present chapter, I will examine Sforno's methods of interpretation, by which he discerns in the biblical text certain notions, which Sforno originally derived from Peripatetic philosophy. This phenomenon even occurs in the initial philosophical section of each chapter,[7] although it is the conclusion that provides a sustained exposition of Scripture in order to show how it relates to the thesis of the *quaestio*. There he demonstrates, using the Bible, the same conclusions that he has already reached through his reading of Aristotle and Averroes. In this way, he delivers on his promise to show how the doctrines of religion can be proven not only by appealing to the authority of the Philosopher and his Commentator, but also through the study of Hebrew Scripture. He follows in the footsteps of his medieval forebears by putting biblical exegesis to the service of reconciling the two traditions.

5.2 SCRIPTURE AS SYLLOGISTIC PREMISE

Sforno's reading of Genesis 1:10 at the conclusion of his first *quaestio* illustrates his skill in uniting Scripture and Greek philosophy.[8] The subject of the *quaestio* concerns the eternity of the principle of generation and corruption, a central principle in Aristotle's theory of substantial change.[9] The Philosopher's own comprehensive treatment of the subject occurs in his *De generatione et corruptione*. Sforno cites it for each of his three provisional proofs in favour of the eternity of this

Sixteenth Century (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Richard A. Muller, and John L. Thompson ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996).

[7] For example, exegeses of several scriptural passages are presented in order to demonstrate the unaffected nature of the material intellect in the philosophical discussion of the twelfth *quaestio*. See the third chapter herein, 3.4 "Emanation from the Gods."

[8] See *Or*, 11r-v; *Lumen*, 17.

[9] For a comprehensive study of substantial change in the philosophical systems of Aristotle and Averroes, see Cristina Cerami, *Génération et substance: Aristote et Averroès entre physique et métaphysique* (Boston, Massachussets: De Gruyter, 2015).

kind of change.[10] Subsequently, he invests great effort into demonstrating that although it might seem that generable-corruptible change has never been absent from existence, and hence, must have existed eternally—an assertion that Aristotle himself maintains—nevertheless, a certain reading of the corpus clearly leads to the opposite conclusion. After arguing his point through syllogisms constructed from the statements of Aristotle and Averroes, Sforno, adhering to the structure proposed in his introduction, proceeds to demonstrate the same conclusion by appealing to Scripture. It emerges that rather than seeking to discard Peripatetic philosophy, Sforno integrates it into his analysis of the scriptural verse, thus creating a harmonious rather than an antagonistic discourse.

The verse "and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10) is the focus of Sforno's attention. He declares that these words refer to any newly originated existent, and indicate that all such existents were purposefully generated: "Anything newly produced by Him is for a purpose, which is the intended good, which is obvious and apparent in every one of them."[11] In order to substantiate the claim, he then performs an exegetical manoeuvre that allows him to bring Aristotle's conceptual framework to bear on the verse, by ascribing philosophical meaning to it.

The first term that Sforno redefines is the verb ראה ("to see"). He explains that in this instance, the text does not refer to sensory sight but rather to intellectual sight.[12] It is likely that he derives this non-literal interpretation of the verb from the *Guide of the Perplexed*, in which Maimonides distinguishes between human and

[10] For a modern translation of the text with extensive notes, see Aristotle, *Aristotle's De Generatione et Corruptione*, trans. C. J. F. Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

[11] *Or*, 11r: "...אמר וירא אלהים כי טוב להבין ולהורות שכל דבר התחדש מאתו לתכלי' שהוא טוב מכוון אשר הוא מפורס' ונרא' בכל אחד מהם."

Lumen, 17: "...dicit, Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum, inferens quod Deus illa produxit, intendens illud bonum sive illum finem, qui in horum singulo, sensu apparet."

[12] Gottlieb lists several instances in Sforno's exegetical works where he interprets vision in an intellectual sense. See *Be-ur ha-Sforno 'al ha-Torah*, editor's introduction, 59-60.

divine vision, the latter of which he interprets figuratively as intellectual apprehension.[13] For Sforno, however, the philosophical import of the phrase requires a further stage of interpretation. He subsequently extracts a second term from its biblical context, the substantive טוב ("good"), identifying it as Aristotle's final cause. For this, he refers his reader to the *Metaphysics*.[14]

Having revealed the philosophical significance of these two terms, Sforno is now able to read the scriptural statement philosophically:

> When [Scripture] says: "And God saw," it cannot possibly be understood as pertaining to perceivable sight, but rather, to intellectual sight, indicating that although God, blessed be He, knew the opposite of what had been newly generated, and He was capable [of generating that opposite], nevertheless, He chose to bring into existence what He [in fact] brought into existence because He knew and recognised that this was the good. And this can be understood from the perspective of its final cause.[15]

In fact, upon aligning this phrase in Genesis with Aristotle's theory of causation, Sforno reaches a third stage in his process of scriptural demonstration. He is able to identify a temporal sequence in the biblical narrative, in which the principle of generation is necessarily subsequent to the good or the final cause connected with

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[13] See *Moreh ha-nevukhim* 1:4; cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 27-28. The Jewish Aramaic translator of the Pentateuch from Late Antiquity, Onkelos, endorsed this kind of non-anthropomorphic interpretation of Scripture, particularly with regard to expressions of hearing and seeing. For anthropomorphic expressions as translation technique in the Jewish Aramaic translations of the Bible, see Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic translations of Hebrew scriptures," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 217-253, esp. 226. For a discussion of Maimonides' treatment of Onkelos' rendering of the verb "to see" in the Pentateuch, see Roslyn Weiss, "See no evil: Maimonides on Onqelos's translation of the biblical expression "and the Lord saw"," in *Maimonidean Studies Volume 4*, ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2000), 135-162.

[14] See *Or*, 11v; *Lumen*, 17. Sforno probably derived this equation from Maimonides as well. See *Moreh ha-nevukhim* 3:13.

[15] *Or*, 11v: "ובאמרו וירא אלהים אשר לא יתכן שיובן על ראייה חושיית אבל על ראייה שכלית הורה שעם היות שהאל יתברך ידע הפך מציאות המחודש ויכול עליו. הנה בחר להמציא מה שהמציא כי ידע והכיר שזה הוא הטוב וזה יבחן מצד תכליתו."

Lumen, 17: "Prout idem textus ibidem de facto fuisse testatur per hoc autem, quod dicit, Et vidit Deus, quod procul dubio de intellectuali visione tantum, non de sensuali, intelligi contingit. Videtur inferre quod licet horum oppositum indifferenter scivisset et potuisset, talia tamen sapienter voluisse videns, sive noscens, illa sic facta esse bona quorum bonitas nonnisi per horum finem consideratur."

the newly generated existent. He thus comes to the conclusion that generation could not have existed eternally:

> Thus, the intention [or] final cause [or] good mentioned [in this biblical passage] was necessarily prior in time—with respect to the newly generated existent—to the aforementioned principle of generation. From this it is clear that the principle of generation [and corruption] is not eternal, but rather, the efficient cause, the intention [or] the final cause, and the subject or substratum [i.e., the material cause] underlying the principle of generation, were [all] necessarily prior to it.[16]

What is particularly striking is that Sforno does not use Scripture here as an independent and absolute source in order to demonstrate the thesis of the *quaestio*. Instead, he employs a statement made by Aristotle in order to interpret a statement made by Moses. He aligns the two systems of thought by identifying a conceptual feature common to both systems: purpose, good, or final cause. In characteristic mode, Sforno then develops his reading of Aristotle by citing from Averroes' *Destructio destructionum*: "However, according to the philosophers, there is no quantity or quality in any existent that is not based on divine wisdom. [Its occurrence, therefore, must be the result of] one of two possibilities: it must either be necessary for the nature of that existent, or it exists in it because it is a superior [mode of existence]."[17] Dissatisfied with a philosophical exegesis of the biblical passage based

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[16] *Or*, 11r-v: "והנה כוונת תכלית הטוב הנז' היה בהכרח קודם בזמן אצל המחדש לתנועת ההויה הנז. ומזה התבאר שתנועת ההווייה היא בלתי קדמונית אבל קדמו לה בזמן בהכרח הפועל וכוונת התכלית אצלו ונושא תנועת ההוייה."
Lumen, 17: "Ad quorum bonum, sive finem apparentem, habuit necessario eiusdem intentio in mente producens secundum tempus praecedere, ut supra. Quare sequitur necessario illa non fuisse ab aeterno; immo ad illa tempore praecessisse agens, et finis intentio in eiusdem agentis mente, et horum subiectum."

[17] *Or*, 11v: "ולכן אמר אבן רשד בספר הפלת ההפלה מאמר ט' פרק ג' כי אמנם אצל הפילוסופי' אין שום כמות ולא שום איכות בשום נמצא זולתי בחכמה אלהית. ומזה לא ימלט מאחת משתים אם שיהיה אותו הדבר הכרחי לטבע מציאות אותו הנמצא. ואם שהיה על צד היותר טוב."
Lumen, 17: "Quare Aven R. in libro Destructionis destructio, disputatione 9, dubio 3, ait: Apud enim philosophos nulla est quantitas neque qualitas in aliquo entium, quae non sit per eiusdem sapientiam. Quare non evadit quin sit unum duorum: videlicet, aut quia hoc est necessarium de natura actus illius entis, aut quia est secundum bene esse." Cf. Averroes, *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut (The incoherence of the incoherence)*, 248-249.

solely on Aristotle's statements, Sforno relies on Averroes for an elaboration of the Philosopher's ideas in order to reconcile philosophy with Scripture.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, Sforno consistently characterises biblical pronouncements as a form of logical argument. In both the *Or ammim* and the *Lumen gentium* he refers to them as "demonstrative proofs" or "intellectual demonstrations."[18] Likewise, in the first *quaestio* he introduces his scriptural exegesis with the statement: "All of this has been explained with divine wisdom and intellectual proofs at the beginning of the book of Genesis..."[19] How he interprets Scripture philosophically in this *quaestio* provides further insight into this perspective. By establishing a congruity between the biblical assertion "And God saw that it was good" and Aristotle's notion of final causality, Sforno accomplishes two things: First, he introduces the Aristotelian causal theory together with its accompanying metaphysical system into the creation narrative; secondly, he inserts a biblical statement into the syllogistic argument that he has already set up in the philosophical section of the *quaestio*. Although he does not elaborate on his syllogistic reasoning here in the same level of detail that he uses in the preliminary philosophical section, he nevertheless treats the biblical assertion as a logical premise of equal philosophical soundness to any statement made by Aristotle or Averroes.

Sforno's argument from Scripture cited above is almost identical to his second philosophical demonstration against the eternity of the principle or motion of generation, which he presents earlier in the *quaestio*:

> Secondly, it is demonstrable [from another line of reasoning] that the motion of generation is not eternal. For, every action that is done for a final cause, it is necessary that the existence of the

[18] See the first chapter herein, 1.6 "Method and Modes of Discourse."
[19] *Or*, 11r: "...וכל זה התבאר בחכמה אלהית במופתים שכליים בתחלת ספר בראשית"
Lumen, 17: "Haec autem omnia, divinitus docet et demonstrative ostendit, sacrum Genesis documentum, capite primo..."

> efficient cause and [both] the preparation of the agent and the patient are temporally prior [to that action], as well as the existence of the intention of the final cause with the intending efficient cause [agent]. In fact, the motion of generation is an action done for a final cause. Thus, it is necessary that all these temporally precede the motion of generation, and therefore, it necessarily follows that the motion of generation is not eternal.[20]

In the ensuing discussion, Sforno elaborates on each point in some detail, citing extensively from Aristotle's *Physics* and Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*. It is noteworthy that this philosophical demonstration contains the same basic premises and conclusion as Sforno's scriptural demonstration. The logical thrust of both arguments can be reduced to two syllogisms:

> No eternal existent has something temporally prior to it.
>
> Every purposefully generated existent has something prior to it, namely, its final cause.
>
> ∴ No purposefully generated existent is eternal.

> No purposefully generated existent is eternal.
>
> Every newly generated existent is purposefully generated.
>
> ∴ No newly generated existent is eternal.

The essential difference between the two demonstrations, the first of which Sforno classifies as philosophical and the second as scriptural, is the source of the

[20] *Or*, 9r: "שנית יתבאר שאין תנועת ההויה קדמונית כי אמנם לכל פעולה הנעשית לתכלית יתחייב בהכרח שיקדמו בזמן מציאות הפועל וההכנה הפועלת והמתפעלת ומציאות כוונת התכלית אצל הפועל המכוון. והנה תנועה ההוי היא פעלה נעשית לתכלית א"כ יתחייב שלתנועת ההויה קדמו כל אלה בזמן א"כ יתחייב שתנועת ההויה היא בלתי קדמונית."
Lumen, 13-14: "Secundo arguitur sic: ad quamlibet actionem ad finem factam, habuit necessario tam agens quam potentia activa et passiva secundum tempus praecedere, similiter et finis in eiusdem agentis mente generatio est huiusmodi. Ergo ad generationem habuerunt omnia illa secundum tempus praecedere; et per consequens, ipsa generatio non habuit esse ab aeterno, ut supra."

minor premise in the second syllogism: "Every newly generated existent is purposefully generated." In his philosophical demonstration, he relies on the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus in order to prove the premise; in his scriptural demonstration, he relies on a philosophical interpretation of Genesis 1:10. Nevertheless, even in his scriptural demonstration, Sforno cites both Aristotle and Averroes in order to render the scriptural statement relevant to the philosophical discussion. Hence, Sforno's characterization of Scripture as logical proof in this instance means that the assertions of Scripture may be interpreted philosophically so that they can be taken as premises in syllogistic argument. They are not, however, structured syllogistically within their original context; they must be extracted, interpreted, and inserted into a non-scriptural syllogistic framework.

5.3 ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Sforno's non-literal interpretation of the biblical verb ראה ("to see") as designating intellectual apprehension rather than sensory vision is only one example of this kind of exegesis in the *Light of the Nations*. Another example is his interpretation of Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image," found in his twelfth *quaestio* concerning the immortality of the human soul, which was encountered in the third chapter of this study.[21] As in the first example, it is very likely that here too Sforno implicitly relies on the *Guide*, where Maimonides equates the biblical term צלם ("image" or "form") with Aristotle's formal cause not only for the verse in question but also for Hebrew Scripture in general.[22] Sforno uses this philosophical

[21] See the third chapter herein, 3.4 "Emanation from the Gods."
[22] See *Moreh ha-nevukhim* 1:1, where Maimonides explains his rationale for his exegesis of the term צלם ("form") and applies it to several other biblical passages.

exegesis as a steppingstone for further theological demonstration, proving the immortality of the human intellect by highlighting its divine nature.

He does, however, directly address the issue of the corporeality of God in his work, dedicating the seventh *quaestio* to the task, albeit initially through a more literal reading of Scripture. Subsequent to two syllogistic arguments that employ premises derived from the Aristotelian-Averroan corpus, he offers a parallel argument from the Hebrew Bible. In this case, the biblical proof is not characterised as merely a syllogistic premise, whose validity depends on its insertion into a previously constructed philosophical demonstration, but rather, constitutes an independent unit. The proof takes the form of a biblical commandment: "For your own sake, therefore, be most careful—since you saw no shape when the Lord your God spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire—not to act wickedly and make for yourselves a sculptured image in any likeness whatever..."[23] According to his literal reading of these verses, Sforno perceives a direct rebuttal of the incorrect belief in the existence of a corporeal God: "It warns us not to err in thinking that God, blessed be He, is a physical being, whom we should depict by means of an image."[24]

However, he then moves beyond a literal reading of the text to identify those who would advocate such a position. For this, he elucidates the subsequent verse: "And when you look up at the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them."[25] Here, like Maimonides, he identifies this error as "the opinions of the *Sabeans*" (דעת אנשי הצאבא; *opiniones zebiorum*)—in the introduction of his treatise

[23] Deuteronomy 4:15-16.
[24] *Or*, 29v: "...להזהיר שלא נטעה ונחשוב שהאל יתברך הוא גשמי ונעשה תמונה מורה עליו."
Lumen, 44v: "Quibus monet nequis deceptus, putans Deum esse quid corporeum, faciat aliquam imaginem ad illum representandum."
See *Moreh ha-nevukhim* 1:3 for Maimonides' discussion of the Hebrew term תמונה ("figure" or "shape") as used in these verses.
[25] Deuteronomy 4:19

Sforno castigates these people for the corruption and ultimate disappearance of the ancient traditions concerning the existence of God.[26] Such identification serves as a link between his biblical demonstration and his earlier philosophical proofs in which he relies on a passage from Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (12:41). In the passage, Averroes discusses Aristotle's argument against the *Sabeans* regarding the infinitude of a body capable of causing eternal motion.

Upon connecting the biblical demonstration to his philosophical proofs, Sforno then expounds the continuation of Deuteronomy 4:19: "These the Lord your God allotted to other peoples everywhere under heaven." Here he classifies the verse as a logical demonstration, again using the Hebrew term מופת ("proof") in the *Or ammim*.[27] He argues:

> It is as if the verse states that the visible order of the celestial hosts, which administer to many nations in various manners according to their needs, should not be considered as accidental, but rather, by the design of a deliberate agent. Hence, it would follow that He brought all of them into existence after total nothingness. This would necessarily be through the power of a non-physical Creator who is prior to them in both level and cause, as we explained above....[28]

Sforno asserts that this scriptural demonstration for the incorporeality of the Creator actually relies on evidence external to Scripture, namely, the observation of the

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[26] See *Or*, 29v; *Lumen*, 44v. See the first chapter herein, 1.4 "*Prisca sapientia*."

[27] Sforno uses the phrase נתן מופת in the Hebrew; he renders this in the *Lumen gentium* with the verb *ostendere*. See *Or*, 29v; *Lumen*, 44v.

[28] *Or*, 29v-29r: "כלומר כי הסדר הנראה בצבא השמים המשרתים לעמים רבי' באופנים מתחלפי' כפי המצטרך להם ולא יעלה על לב שהיה זה בכלם במקרה אבל בסדר פועל מכוין. ומזה יתבאר שהוא המציא את כלם אחר העדר מוחלט. וזה בהכרח בכח בורא בלתי גשמי הוא בהכרח קודם להם במעלה ובסב' כאשר בארנו למעל'..."
Lumen, 44v-45r: "Quasi dicat quod per tot gentium ministerium, quod scilicet fit tanto caelestium ordine, de quo patet quod non contigit casu, scilicet praeter alicuius intentum. Sequitur quidem illud fieri cuiusdam id intendentis iussu et ordine, de quo ordinante inopinabile est ut casu invenisset tot ordinanda, ad suum huiusmodi finem consequendum disposita. Quare sequiter ut illa produxisset; cum autem huiusmodi productio non contingit fuisse nisi per creationem. Sequitur quidem ut idem productor sit quid incorporeum, et caelo nobilius tanquam creator sive entificans..."

orderliness or design of the celestial realm.[29] However, since the statement alluding to such orderliness appears in Scripture, he classifies it is as a scriptural proof.

5.4 TRANSLATING CREATION

In the prologue to the *Lumen gentium*, Sforno highlights the value of the treatise by promising to base his scriptural proofs on the original Hebrew text of the Bible rather than on Latin translations, which he characterises as unreliable.[30] Such a statement regarding the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible was well suited to his Latin reader since it reflects a growing awareness among scholars in the sixteenth century that the Latin Vulgate was not the original text.[31] Nevertheless, Sforno's biblical citations in the *Lumen gentium* are almost identical to the rendering of the Latin Vulgate. This is demonstrated in Table 5.1, which compares examples of Sforno's Latin citations of the biblical text with their equivalent passages from the Vulgate. The variances are indicated in bold font.

[29] Herbert Davidson considers this kind of proof of creation, which focuses on the functionality or aesthetic quality of the cosmos, as a form of teleological argument. See Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 213-236, esp. 216.

[30] *Lumen*, 7: "Septimo, ut sacrarum loca ostendamus, ubi huiusmodi conclusae sententiae demonstrative docentur, phylosophorumque opiniones nonnullae cum suis rationibus harumque redargutiones divinitus inseruntur. Saepe etiam secundum Latinam translationem quae scilicet in plurimis procul dubio deficit; quare omnia in originali Hebreorum testu rectius apertiusque fulgere patet."
Cf. *Or*, 10: "שביעית נגיד בכל חקירה מקומות כתבי קדש מורים במופת הדעת האמתי בחקירה ההיא וקצתם מגידים דעות החולקים וטענותם וסתירתם."

[31] On this, see Bruce Gordan and Euan Cameron, "Latin Bibles in the early modern period," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: Vol. 3: The Early Modern World C. 1450-C. 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 187-216. See also Andrew Berns, *The Bible and Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy*, 51-54. Since the statement would not have been relevant to his Hebrew reader, Sforno did not include it in the *Or ammim*.

Table 5.1

***Lumen gentium*: Scriptural citations**	**Vulgate Bible**
(1) *In principio, creavit Deus, etc.* *Lumen*, 26	*In principio, creavit Deus [caelum et terram].* Genesis 1:1
(2) *Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum.* *Lumen*, 17	*Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum.* Genesis 1:10
(3) *fecit angelos suos spiritus* *Lumen*, 22	*qui **facis** angelos **tuos** spiritus* Psalm 103:4
(4) *faciens pacem et creans malum, ego, Dominus, etc.* *Lumen*, 27	*faciens pacem et creans malum, ego, Dominus [faciens omnia haec].* Isaiah 45:7
(5) *Ego ipse primus, et ego novissimus. Manus quoque mea fundavit terram, et dextera mea mensa est caelos; ego vocabo eos et stabunt simul, etc.* *Lumen*, 34	*Ego ipse, **ego** primus, et ego novissimus. Manus quoque mea fundavit terram, et dextera mea mensa est caelos; ego vocabo eos et stabunt simul.* Isaiah 18:12-13

These examples demonstrate that Sforno relied heavily on the Latin Vulgate, in many cases citing it almost verbatim. These examples are representative of the majority of his citations of the Bible in the *Lumen gentium*, despite his statement regarding its unreliability. However, his scriptural citations do not always match, and sometimes he points out and explains his divergent rendering of the verse. The decision to improve the text of the Vulgate, rather than to discard it completely, was in line with the attitude of many scholars in the sixteenth century, which resulted from the canonization of its status as a sacred text in the Roman Catholic Church.[32] Table

[32] See "Latin Bibles in the early modern period," 187-194.

5.2 provides three examples in which Sforno's Latin translation of a biblical passage meaningfully differs from the Vulgate version.

Table 5.2

***Lumen gentium*: Scriptural citations**	**Vulgate Bible**
(1) *Terra autem erat* ***confusum*** *et* ***perplexum*** *Lumen*, 21	*Terra autem erat* ***inanis*** *et* ***vacua*** Genesis 1:2
(2a) *et spiritus Dei* ***circumvehebat*** *super* ***facies*** *aquae.* *Lumen*, 26 (2b) *et spiritus Dei* ***ferebat sive circumvehebat*** *super aquam.* *Lumen*, 38	*et spiritus Dei* ***ferebatur*** *super aquas.* Genesis 1:2
(3) *et posuit ea* ***Deus*** *in* ***orbe caelorum*** *ut* ***illuminarent*** *super terram et praeessent diei et nocti, etc.* *Lumen*, 32	*et posuit eas in* ***firmamento caeli*** *ut* ***lucerent*** *super terram et praeessent diei* ***ac*** *nocti et [dividerent lucem ac tenebras].* Genesis 1:17-18

The first example is taken from the second *quaestio*, which addresses the topic of the eternity of the four elements—the basic constituents of the terrestrial realm according to Aristotle. In line with medieval Jewish philosophical exegesis of this verse, Sforno asserts that the Hebrew terms תהו ובהו, which he renders into Latin as *confusum et perplexum*, denote the metaphysical concepts of prime matter and original form.[33] He gives short shrift to these fundamental notions of Aristotelian

[33] For a discussion of medieval Jewish scholars' identification of the scriptural terms תהו ובהו with hylomorphism (עצם ותואר, שורש וצורה, גולם וצורה, היולי וצורה), see Menachem Mendel Kasher, *Mefa'aneah Tsfunoth* (Jerusalem: Tzafnath Pa'aneah Institute, 1975), 51-52.

hylomorphism in the preceding demonstrations of the *quaestio*,[34] a significant portion of which is missing from the Latin text of the treatise. Nevertheless, by assigning such meaning to these two Hebrew terms he establishes a metaphysical framework, which he perceives as underlying the biblical account of creation. According to this reading, he considers the verse to be testimony to the non-eternity of the four elements since it indicates their production from a prior state, in which the earth was an inchoate composite of matter and form. In that state, the four elements did not yet possess any actualised being; they existed only as raw potential.

With regard to this passage, Sforno explicitly indicates to his Latin reader that he has deviated from the Vulgate version: "the earth, however, was mixed-up and confused' (*confusum et perplexum*) —this means to say that the earth was created in a state of confusion or chaos, whose elements were contained in it [merely] potentially. Some interpreters, however, have translated this verse as 'void and empty' (*inanis et vacua*)."[35] Sforno explains that he has specifically chosen the terms *confusum et perplexum* in order to convey a sense of the unintelligible chaos communicated by the Hebrew terms תהו ובהו, even though the standard translation employed the terms *inanis et vacua*. He refers here to the Vulgate version.[36] Thus, he delivers on his promise to read the Bible in the original Hebrew and communicate its nuances to his non-Hebrew reader. However, when he promises a more correct and lucid rendering of Scripture, he also imposes certain conceptual commitments on his reader, in this case, interpreting the biblical text in terms of Aristotle's theory of hylomorphism. His purpose is not merely to correct the rendering of the Vulgate so that it is more faithful to the Hebrew *Vorlage*, but to highlight the earth's primordial state of chaos in order

[34] On Aristotle's hylomorphism, see Christopher Shields, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 2014), 60-73.
[35] *Lumen*, 21: "Terra autem erat confusum et perplexum, quasi dicat quod per terram huiusmodi creatam, intelligit quid confusum sive chaos, cui elementa potentialiter inerant. Quamvis interpretes nonnulli ibidem 'inanis et vacua' transtulissent."
[36] See the first example in Table 5.2.

to show that a state of being existed prior to the actualization of the four terrestrial elements. Since this state was temporally prior, the four elements could not have existed eternally. According to his exegesis, therefore, Genesis 1:2 conclusively proves the non-eternity of the four elements.

Sforno extends this commitment even further with his subsequent exegesis of Isaiah 45:7. As illustrated in the fourth example of Table 5.1, his Latin rendering of the verse is unaffected by his identification of its deeper philosophical import. Nevertheless, his interpretation leads the passage away from its literal meaning, and to the question of whether prime matter itself is eternal. To decipher Isaiah's statement, "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil," he has recourse to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* together with Averroes' elucidation from his Long Commentary on the work. Sforno equates the רע ("evil") mentioned by Isaiah with the philosophical notion of prime matter, since, according to certain ancient philosophers alluded to by Aristotle, "evil, itself, is one of the elements," and according to Averroes, "all existents have two beginnings, which are evil and good, namely, matter and form."[37] Prime matter is called רע ("evil"), Sforno reasons, because it represents absolute potentiality lacking any actualised form. Hence, Isaiah's use of the term בורא ("create") in connection with this "evil" or prime matter is particularly important because it demonstrates that it is a created substance. Moreover, when Isaiah attributes to it שלום ("peace"), he alludes to the fact that it functions as a shared substratum of every generable-corruptible being, permitting all kinds of transformation and change. Such a substratum could not have existed independently

[37] *Or*, 16v: "...ולכן נקרא החומר הראשון רע אצל רבים מהקדמונים כאשר באר הפילוסו' בספר מה שאחר מאמר י"ב פרק מ"ט באמרו הרע בעצמו הוא אחד מהיסודות. ודבריו אלה ביאר אבן רשד באמרו כי רבים אמרו ששתי התחלות הם לכל הנמצאות והם הרע והטוב היינו החומר והצורה עכ"ל."
Lumen, 27: *Lumen*, 27: "...quam antiquorum nonnulli malum appellarunt, prout habetur a Phylosopho, Metaphysicorum 12 t.c. 49, ubi dicit: Malum enim per se est unum elementorum. Ubi Aven R. exponens, ait: Quidam ponunt omnibus duo principia: malum scilicet et bonum, quae sunt materia et forma."

without some informing principle. Therefore, Sforno concludes, Isaiah has proven that prime matter is a non-eternal existent, whose being was created *ex nihilo*.

Another instance in which Sforno's Latin translation of Scripture differs from the Vulgate's occurs in his citation of the second half of Genesis 1:2. As illustrated in the second example of Table 5.2, Sforno prefers the verb *circumvehebat* to the Vulgate's *ferebatur*. I would argue that this is because this verb highlights the idea of circular motion, which plays an important role in his argument. He first cites this passage briefly in his demonstration regarding prime matter, but returns to it in his fifth *quaestio*, where he elucidates it at greater length. Whereas in the first citation he merely exchanges the verb without further comment, in his second citation he adds a word in order to highlight the significance of his lexical choice.[38] He indicates his awareness of the Vulgate version and complements it with his alternative rendering: "*ferebat* ***sive circumvehebat***."

Sforno's reason for emphasizing circular motion in particular is connected with his dialectical purpose. In the fifth *quaestio* where the verse is cited, he argues against the eternity of motion by reading Scripture in terms of Aristotle's theory of celestial mechanics as interpreted by Averroes. He equates the subject of the verse, "the Spirit of God" (רוח אלהים; *spiritus Dei*), with the incorporeal intelligences in charge of moving the celestial spheres: "This mover is the intellect of the sphere, or its soul, which is a substance that is unmixed with physical matter. It is called: 'the Spirit of God'..."[39] He then supports his interpretation of Genesis 1:2 with another verse, which also contains the term, but which explicitly connects it with angels

[38] In his first citation, he also adds the term for "face" or "surface" (*super* ***facies*** *aquae*) in an attempt to bring the Latin rendering closer to the Hebrew phrase על פני המים ("on the surface of the waters"). In his second citation he does not alter the conclusion of the verse, possibly in an effort to call attention to his awareness of the Vulgate version.

[39] *Or*, 24r: "...וזה המניע הוא שכל הגלגל או נפשו שהם עצמים בלתי מעורבים עם גשם, ונקראים רוח אלקים"
Lumen, 39: "Huiusmodi autem orbis motorem sive animam merito sacrum Genesis documentum appellat 'spiritum Dei,' cum sit intellectiva substantia corpori immixta, ut supra."

(Psalm 103:4): "He makes His angels spirits."[40] It is important to note that Sforno is not merely reading these passages of Scripture in order to render them intelligible to a student of philosophy. Rather, he is a pragmatic exegete, whose interpretations should be viewed in terms of their discursive context. In this case, Sforno immediately clarifies that context through a barrage of citations from the works of Aristotle and Averroes: *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *De anima*, *Substantia orbis*, and *Destructio destructionum*. In all of these citations, a single point is reiterated: the circular motion of the celestial spheres is caused by non-corporeal intelligent beings, which, acting as the souls of those spheres, move them intelligently, voluntarily, and by means of a faculty commensurate with human emotion or passion.

Sforno argues that since this motion is not a product of nature but rather of desire, it logically follows that its direction must be circular instead of linear. In order to prove this point he relies on Ghazali as quoted by Averroes in the *Destructio*, which he paraphrases: "This motion is not natural, but rather, it is intended by a volitional agent. This is because circular motion is not suited to nature, since nature—as Ghazali explained—only moves via local motion to a place that is appropriate to the moved object. This, however, is not achieved by circular motion because by such motion the moved object does not reach any place or position in which it can remain for an extended period of time."[41]

Thus, Sforno's translation of the second half of Genesis 1:2 reflects his philosophical perspective on the circular motion of the celestial spheres. This

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[40] See Table 5.1, example 3.

[41] *Or*, 24r: "...שזאת התנועה אינה טבעית אבל היא מכוונת מפועל רצוניי וזה כי התנועה הסבובית היא בלתי נאותה לטבע כי אמנם הטבע כאשר באר אלגזיל לא יניע תנועה מקומית כי אם אל מקום נאות למתנועע וזה לא יושג בתנועה הסבובית כי בתנועה ההיא לא ישיג המתנועע שום מקום ולא שום מצב אשר בו יעמוד זמן מה."

Lumen, 39: "...scilicet quod huiusmodi motor non est naturalis, immo est voluntarius finem intendens. Et per consequens est quid intellectuale, et hoc quia non contingit ut natura circulariter moveat. Natura enim, sicut habetur ab Algazele, ibidem, non movet localiter nisi ad locum mobili competentem, quod non contingit fieri per circularem motum, per quem scilicet mobile nullum acquirit locum neque situm, in quo per tempus maneat."

perspective, in turn, is connected with his identification of the biblical "Spirit of God" (רוח אלהים;*spiritus Dei*) with the celestial intellects or souls causing that circular motion. However, the question remains: Why does he invest such effort into promoting this particular reading of Scripture? The answer lies in the purpose of the fifth inquiry, which is to demonstrate the non-eternity of motion. By using Genesis 1:2 and Psalm 103:4 to prove that the celestial spheres are moved by immaterial intellects in a circular motion, he thereby demonstrates that this motion is voluntary; by showing that it is voluntary, he ultimately proves that it is non-eternal. How he achieves this final step in his tortuous chain of reasoning is articulated in the climax of the *quaestio*: "Since voluntary motion is temporally preceded by the voluntary mover as well as by the moved object and other such objects, as explained above, it necessarily follows that the motion of the first celestial sphere is non-eternal. From this, it necessarily follows that motion itself, in an absolute sense, is non-eternal. This is what the Torah wanted to clarify."[42] Sforno reads these two scriptural passages in such a way that they locate the concept of celestial motion within a temporal sequence. Since Scripture does not identify it as the first element in that sequence, it cannot be eternal. This, in Sforno's eyes, is proof for the non-eternity of motion.

Genesis 1:17-18 provides a third example of Sforno's adjustment of the Vulgate translation so that it conforms to a philosophical viewpoint that allows it to play a dialectical role in his discourse. As illustrated in Table 5.2, he exchanges the Vulgate's *in firmamento caeli* with *in orbe caelorum* in order to render the Hebrew phrase ברקיע השמים. Although in this example he does not explicitly point out his

[42] *Or*, 24r: "...כי בהיות שלתנועה הרצוניי' יקד' בהכרח קדימה זמני' המניע הרוצה והמתנועע וזולתם כמבואר לעיל יתחייב שתנועת הגלגל שהיא הראשונה היא בלתי קדמונית ומזה יתחייב שהתנועה במוחלט היא בלתי קדמונית וזה הוא שרצתה התורה לבאר."
Lumen, 39: "...cum ad voluntatum motum habebat necessario volens, et mobile, et alia, ut supra, secundum tempus praecedere patet, quidem ut orbium motus, qui dicitur esse omnium primus, non habuit esse ab aeterno. Et per consequens, neque motus absolute habuit esse ab aeterno; quod est intentum."

deviation from the standard translation, it is clear from the context that an emphasis on the spherical shape of the heavens plays an important role in Sforno's selection of the phrase. Once again he turns his attention to the question of the eternity of the heavens. The verse is summoned as proof against this heresy. He argues that if the heretical view were correct, nature would dictate a different position for the celestial luminaries—the sun, the moon, and the stars. According to the order of nature, Sforno reasons, these celestial bodies should not be relegated to orbit the earth, since they are naturally superior to it in terms of their spherical shape and illuminating form. Nevertheless, this verse demonstrates that the spherical orbits of the planets and the stars defy the order of nature because they are the result of a voluntary intention rather than of natural necessity.

For Sforno, therefore, this verse advocates a geocentric model of the universe, in which the earth is the principal focus of existence. Such a perspective conforms to Aristotle's scheme of the cosmos, but more importantly, it proves the non-eternity of the heavens. Using a line of reasoning very similar to that of the previous example, Sforno sees Scripture as attesting to the fact that the orbit of the stars represents a voluntary phenomenon rather than a natural one. As such, neither the orbiting bodies themselves nor the heavens containing them can be eternal since they are temporally preceded by the entity that desires their circuit. This entity is, of course, God. As illustrated in Table 5.2, Sforno inserts the word *Deus* into his Latin translation of Genesis 1:17-18 in order to mirror the Hebrew אלהים, and to substantiate his own exegesis of the passage.

5.5 DIVINE NAMES AS PROOFS

At the conclusion of the sixth *quaestio*, which addresses the general subject of creation *ex nihilo*, Sforno returns to the theme of the superiority of the Hebrew Bible. He enlightens the reader of the *Lumen gentium* about a feature of the original text that Latin translations lack, namely, the Hebrew names of God. In both texts of the treatise, he prefaces his treatment of the divine names with a criticism of "the gentile sages" (חכמי האומות; *gentilium sapientes*) for their obliviousness to the very notion of creation *ex nihilo*: "The gentile sages were not able to apprehend the possibility of creation because it was impossible for them to consider that something could be generated unless it possessed a prior substratum."[43] This criticism is directed primarily at Aristotle and Averroes, whose works he subsequently cites, further rebuking the latter for falsely attributing ridiculous opinions to the theologians in an effort to discredit them. However, the main thrust of the prefatory comment is to draw attention to the uniqueness of the Jewish nation and its literary tradition regarding the Creator and His works. His concluding statement succinctly sums it up: "Therefore, in earlier ages, the recollection of creation occurred only among the Jews."[44] Sforno here connects the knowledge of God's role in creation to the knowledge of His sacred names, asserting that the transmission of such truths had always occurred through Hebrew Scripture.

The notion of the divine names is initially presented to the Latin reader in much the same way as it is to the Hebrew reader, albeit with a minor revision that reflects the prefatory comments to the section. The Hebrew reads: "Therefore, we call

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[43] *Or*, 27v: "וכאשר לא יכלו חכמי האומו' לצייר אפשרות הבריאה בהיות נמנע אצלם שיתהוה דבר בלתי נושא קודם."
Lumen, 42v: "Cunque gentilium sapientes nunquam potuissent huiusmodi creationis possibilitatem imaginari, habentes pro penitus inconveniens ut detur productio non dato subiecto, quod agens deducat de potentia ad actum."
[44] *Or*, 27v: "על כן לעולמים אשר היו מלפנינו לא היה זכרון מציאות בריאה כי אם בישראל"
Lumen, 42v: "Ideo, superioribus saeculis, apud Hebraeos tantum facta est de creatione vel creatore aliqua mentio."

the Creator, blessed be He, primarily and essentially by three sacred names, which indicate the truth of creation and the necessity of its coming into being;"[45] the Latin reads: "Therefore, in the sacred scriptures of the Jews, the Creator is primarily called by three names."[46] Having informed his gentile reader of the superiority of the Jewish tradition because of its knowledge of creation through recognition of the Creator's designations, Sforno then expounds their meanings, employing each of them as a scriptural proof for creation *ex nihilo*.

He first elucidates the Hebrew name אלהים, which occurs throughout the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. He asserts that this name confirms the fact that there is a creator who provides existence with direction and order. Such order, he maintains, is evidence of a final cause, which implies a voluntary agent, namely, God. He does not give a source for his exegesis, which interprets this name as signifying the notions of directing or ordering, but instead treats his explanation as the literal meaning of the Hebrew term requiring no further substantiation. He indicates that this name functions as an allusion to his second philosophical proof already expounded in syllogistic form in the previous part of the same *quaestio*. The name אלהים is fully articulated in the *Or ammim*, but surprisingly, no name whatsoever is offered in the *Lumen gentium*. The Latin reader is expected to accept this revelation regarding the first of three divine names and to consider it as a demonstration of creation *ex nihilo*, without the actual name.[47]

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[45] *Or*, 27v: "ולכן יקרא הבורא יתברך אצלנו בג' שמות הקודש בראשונה ובעצמות מורים על אמתות הבריאה וחיוב המצאה."

[46] *Lumen*, 42v: "Quare in sacris Hebraeorum scripturis, creator tribus principaliter appellatur nominibus."

[47] Or 27v: "האחד הוא אלהים המורה שהוא מנהיג ומסדר המציאות ובאמצעות הסדר הנראה מכוון אל תכלית יתבאר שהוא המציאות בכונה ומזה יתחייב שברא אותו כמבואר לעילא במופת השני מזאת החקירה."
Lumen, 42v-43r: "...quorum unum significat ipsum esse universi rectorem et ordinatorem, quo ordine ad finem sensu apparente indicatur ipsum esse eiusdem universi voluntarium efficientem, et per consequens eiusdem creatorem, prout supra in secunda huius quaestionis resolutione habetur."

The second name, שדי, is also fully articulated for the Hebrew reader; indeed, it is actually spelled out, letter by letter: שי"ן דל"ת י"וד. As with the first name, such consideration is not given to the Latin reader. Since the Hebrew name literally denotes "that which is sufficient," Sforno's subsequent elucidation is certainly obscured for his Latin reader by this omission. Nevertheless, he attempts to convey the substance of the proof to both Jew and gentile, even though the latter is not provided with a philological basis for the connection between this second name and proving creation *ex nihilo*. He elaborates: "The second name signifies that His existence is sufficient for the performance of the action proper to Him, without assuming any other existent. This would be appropriate for such a first being, and no other being would be praised for this. It would necessarily follow that He is the Creator. This is elucidated above in the third proof of this inquiry."[48] The third proof to which Sforno refers consists of four propositions that employ the metaphysical notions of efficient causation, transition from potentiality to actuality, and the loss and gain of substantial forms by their material substrates. Although the three letters of the name שדי might not immediately convey the complexities involved in his third philosophical demonstration, Sforno treats the name as an allusion to its finer details.

The treatment of the third divine name in the *Lumen gentium* differs from that of the initial two names. In this instance, Sforno actually identifies the name to his Latin reader although he still withholds its Hebrew equivalent: "Indeed, the third name attributed to God is the one that is designated by four letters, which the Greeks

[48] *Or*, 27v: "והשם השני לאל יתברך הוא שי"ן דל"ת יו"ד שמציאותו מספיק לפעולה המיוחדת לו בלתי מציאו' זולתו כראוי לנמצא ראשון ובזה לא יתפאר שום נמצא זולתו ומזה יתחייב שהוא בורא כמבואר לעילא במופת השלישי מזאת החקירה."
Lumen, 43r: "Secundum vero nomen, quo idem creator ibidem appellatur, significat quod est ens quoddam, quod sufficit scilicet ad actionem sibi propriam faciendum secluso quocumque alio ente. Et hoc non contingit nisi creatori ad eius actionem, quae est creatio nullum requiritur subiectum, prout supra diffusius in tertia habetur demonstratione."

called the *Tetragrammaton*."[49] Even in the *Or ammim*, this name is in conformity to Jewish convention not spelled out. Instead he uses the rabbinic term: "the Unique Name of Four Letters" (השם המיוחד בן ד' אותיות).[50] Later, Sforno elaborates on this terminology for his Hebrew reader: "Therefore, among us this name is called "the Unique Name" (שם המיוחד), because none of its meanings apply to any other god;"[51] a similar statement regarding its uniqueness is offered to the Latin reader.[52]

Sforno proceeds to the exegesis of the *Tetragrammaton* without offering any preliminary information regarding its literal meaning or its etymology. Since it is unlikely that the Latin reader would have possessed an awareness of the derivation of the Hebrew word and might not even have been familiar with its identification, the absence of any such introduction would have obscured the intelligibility of the subsequent argument. Nevertheless, Sforno does connect the name to the notion of originating and sustaining:

> It indicates that He brings all existence into being from absolute absence, and that he sustains it. For after He has brought it into being, it only endures because the One who brings it into existence [continuously] emanates being upon it, without any existential foundation other than what is derived from the First efficient cause, Who brought it into being, creates it, and sustains its existence [through the act of] apprehending Himself. It necessarily follows that [this entity] is the Creator, as elucidated above in the fourth proof of this inquiry.[53]

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[49] *Lumen*, 43r: "Tertium vero nomen eidem Deo attributum est illud quod quattuor annotatur litteris, quod Graeci 'Tetragrammaton' dicebant."

[50] See *Or*, 27v.

[51] *Or*, 27v: "ולכן נקרא זה השם אצלנו שם המיוחד כי בכל הוראת זה השם לא ישתתף עם האל זולתו."

[52] *Lumen*, 43r: "Quare huiusmodi nomen tanta significans, sibi creatori proprium dicitur."

[53] *Or*, 27v: "...המורה שהוא המציא המציאות בכללו אחר העדר מוחלט ומקיים אותו כי גם אחרי שהמציא אותו לא היה לו קיום מציאו' אם לא היה שופע עליו מציאו' מאת הממציאו מבלי אין שום יסוד מציאו' זולתי הנמשך מאת הסבה הראשונה הפועלת אשר הוא הממצי' ובורא ונותן קיום למציאות בהשכילו את עצמו. ומזה יתחייב שהוא בורא כמבו' לעי' במופת הרביעי מזאת החקירה."

Lumen, 43r: "...per quod nomen, significatur universi creator, et eiusdem essentiae conservator. Universum enim, cum sit quid productum, ut supra, non per se habet essentiam et perdurationem nisi pro quanto eidem ab eodem emanat creatore. Creata enim, cum per se non habuissent esse, quare non ab aeterno, sed per essentiam a creatore emanantem, prout supra. Scilicet per benignam eiusdem intellectionis naturam, quae est quid idem cum eo, patet quod multo minus haberent continuam vel perseverantem essentiam."

Here, Sforno sees the *Tetragrammaton* as conveying the philosophical notion of First Cause, the principle that continuously creates and sustains all existing things by means of an act of self-intellection. He characterises the process as an uninterrupted flow or emanation, using the Hebrew verb שופע, which he renders into Latin as *emanat*. In the fourth philosophical proof, to which Sforno considers this divine name an allusion, such a notion of creation through divine self-intellection is derived from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (12:51), Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* (3:36), and Averroes' *Destructio destructionum* (12:2). He uses these three sources to advocate a scheme of creative emanation in which all existence derives its being from God's apprehension of Himself. In fact, as is the case throughout the *Light of the Nations*, the crux of Sforno's theory relies on a somewhat creative reading of his sources, and in this particular case, Averroes' paraphrase of Themistius is taken as his own opinion on the matter. Sforno's citation of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *De anima* encapsulates the ideas that he sees as inherent in the *Tetragrammaton*: "Beings have no existence except [by means of] the knowledge of God, blessed be He, and the causes of beings have no existence except [by means of] His knowledge. How wondrous is that order and how extraordinary is that mode of existence!"[54]

Returning to the theme of the distinctive character of the Hebrew Bible, which he designates "the original text of the Jews" in the *Lumen gentium*,[55] Sforno continues to direct his reader's attention to the fact that the *Tetragrammaton* refers uniquely to the Creator. He cites the book of Job, whose authorship he attributes to Moses for his Hebrew reader only, making the rather bizarre assertion that gentiles do not refer to

[54] *Or*, 26v: "הנמצאו' אין להם מציאו' כי אם מציאות ידיעת האל ית' וכן סבות הנמצאים אין להם מציאות כי אם מציאות ידיעתו ומה מאד נפלא זה הסדר ומה מאד זר אופן זה המציאות."
Lumen, 42r: "Entia enim nihil aliud sunt, quam scientia eius, scilicet Dei, neque causae entium aliud sunt, quam scientia eius. Et quam mirabilis est iste ordo, et quam extraneus est iste modus essendi."
Cf. Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, 399.
[55] *Lumen*, 43r: "in originali Hebraeorum textu."

the *Tetragrammaton* in their discourse on the Creator and His creation. He ascribes the reason for this absence of the unique name of God in the Hebrew text of Job to a commensurate absence of knowledge in the minds of the gentile interlocuters: "When [Moses] recounted the opinions of the gentile sages, to whom the possibility of creation had never occurred, the Unique Name [i.e., the *Tetragrammaton*] is not mentioned. Instead, the name אלוה is mentioned, since [although] they were aware that existence has a Mover and One who sets it in order, they did not know or realize that existence truly has an efficient cause."[56] Sforno concludes his treatment of the three divine names—אלהים, שדי, and the *Tetragrammaton*—with a scriptural citation of Deuteronomy 4:39, which he uses to review and summarise his demonstrations regarding creation.[57] He takes the verse as instruction to use these names as symbols for the philosophical ideas presented in the *quaestio*. In the *Or ammim*, he describes the verse as מופת ("proof") which he attributes directly to Moses himself, and in the *Lumen gentium* he calls it *demonstratio*, although characteristically omits any reference to authorship.

5.6 REASONING BY ANALOGY

Sforno's notion of Scriptural assertion as a form of intellectual demonstration is further developed in the conclusion of his twelfth *quaestio*,[58] where he relies primarily on his exegesis of the beginning of the first chapter of Psalms in order to

[56] *Or*, 27v: "כאשר ספר דעות חכמי האומות אשר לא עלה על לבם איפשרות הבריא' לא נזכר זה השם המיוחד אבל נזכ' שם אלוה כי אמנ' היו חושבים שיש למציאו' מניע ומסדר אבל לא ידעו ולא עלתה על לבם שיש למציאו' פועל באמת"
Lumen, 43r: "Quare in originali Hebraeorum textu, ubi in libro Job dialogo, narrantur gentilium opiniones, qui scilicet universum putarunt habere conservatorem et ordinatorem, non autem entificantem sive creatorem, aliquid actu producentem post purum non esse, nunquam ponitur huiusmodi Dei nomen; sed nomen tantum significans ipsum rectorem ordinatorem et conservatorem."
[57] Deuteronomy 4:39: "Know therefore this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other."
[58] The philosophical section of this *quaestio*, in which Sforno relies on Aristotle and Averroes in order to prove the soul's immortality, is examined in the third chapter herein.

prove the soul's immortality. Unlike most of the scriptural sections in the previous *quaestiones*, here he does not cite any philosophical sources to supplement his reading of Scripture. He takes an analogy constructed by the Psalmist, which revolves around the central image of a tree planted in springs of water, and advocates a non-literal reading by redefining both the subject and predicates of the verse.

The passage describes the blessed or spiritually successful person, who is compared to a fructifying tree planted by the river. Three features are listed: the tree (and the righteous person to whom the tree is compared) brings forth its fruit in due season; produces leaves that will not wither; and will prosper in everything. The author of Scripture leaves the analogy somewhat un-interpreted and the reader is expected to supply his own elucidation based on the context of the analogous subjects, which are explicitly identified. Sforno interprets the passage as a philosophical description of a human being's realization of intellectual perfection. He identifies the scriptural image of the tree as the human intellective faculty that has achieved its second stage of actualisation (second perfection), and considers the features of the tree enumerated by the Psalmist as referring to aspects of such an intellect, which, correctly interpreted, testify to its immortality. Throughout his exegesis, his reasoning relies on the conceptual similarity that he observes between a tree and a fully actualised human intellect. In effect, he equates the success or happiness described in the Psalm with the achievement of personal immortality.

Before interpreting the biblical analogy of the tree, Sforno first explicates the preceding verses in the Psalm, which convey certain activities from which a spiritually successful person has abstained. His interpretation of these verses, which occupies approximately a dozen lines in the Hebrew, is missing from the Latin text. In the *Or ammim*, Sforno starts by presenting the two criteria for achieving immortality:

"This happiness is achieved by moral perfection and intellectual perfection."[59] The subsequent explication in the Hebrew text consists of exegeses of several phrases of Psalm 1:1-2 and is connected with the first criterion, moral perfection. For example, the biblical phrase "in the seat of scorners he does not sit," is interpreted as referring to those who are drawn after their desires, which prevents them from apprehending the truth and fully actualising their intellects.[60] Sforno concludes his exegesis of these verses with a succinct overview, which is also missing from the Latin text: "His desire is in the teaching of God (תורת ה'): This refers to the theoretical part of the Torah, which demonstrates the truth of the Creator, His greatness, and His goodness... However, the practical part is called commandment (מצוה), as the Blessed One explained by saying: *The teaching* (תורה) *and the commandment* (מצוה) *that I wrote in order to teach them*. (Exodus 24:12)"[61] Thus, the Hebrew reader gets a lucid formulation of the two criteria for immortality: the first is called "teaching" (תורה), which represents the theoretical or intellectual component; the second is called "commandment" (מצוה), which indicates the practical or moral component.

In the *Lumen gentium*, by contrast, these moral criteria together with an explication and unambiguous formulation of the two elements comprising human perfection, are presented as a general abstention from licentious deeds, which leads to a surrendering of oneself to a life of theological contemplation: "The first psalm of the Psalter teaches the same things succinctly and demonstratively, promising happiness to a man who avoids a lustful life, and constantly gives himself over to meditation.

[59] *Or*, 51r: "בהתחילו אשרי האיש (תהלים א') אמר שזה האושר יושג בשלמות המדות ובשלמות המושכלות."
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.: "והוסיף ואמר כי אם בתור' ה' חפצו וזה אמר בכל החלק העייוני המורה אמתות הבורא גדלו וטובו אשר מהם תהיה אהבתו ויראתו באמת אשר הם כוונת כל התורה בכללה. אמנם החלק המעשי יקרא מצוה כמו שביאר הוא ית' באמרו והתורה והמצוה אשר כתבתי להורותם."

Hence, *He reflects on the teaching of God by day and by night*."[62] Conscious of the irrelevance of the scriptural commandments to his Latin reader, Sforno here glosses over their role in human perfection.[63]

In both texts, a full exegetical treatment of Psalm 1:3 is then presented. The scriptural passage proposes a comparison between a spiritually successful person and a tree planted in springs of water, attributing three features to both subjects. Sforno, however, takes the tree alone as the subject and considers the aspect of its location as a fourth attribute. This enables him to align these four scriptural attributes with the four philosophical proofs for immortality that are presented earlier in the philosophical section of the *quaestio*.

Regarding the first attribute, he argues that just as a fontinal tree does not require an external agent to work the soil in order for its fruit to develop from a state of potentiality to actuality, so too, the intellective faculty does not require anything external to it—namely, a physical organ—in order to perform its intellectual activities. It would logically follow that this faculty is non-physical, and is, therefore, a simple substance that is immortal. Sforno therefore regards the first aspect of the Psalmist's analogy between a tree and the actualised human being as the first of four proofs for the immortality of the human intellect. He interprets the second attribute, "which shall bring forth its fruit in due season," as an allusion to the intellect's ability to predict the future—a decidedly non-physical power. He argues that this second attribute represents Scripture's further demonstration for the eternity of the intellect.

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[62] *Lumen*, 62v: "Et idem succinte et demonstrative docet primus Psalterii psalmus, beatudinem promittens viro lascivam vitam evitanti, et contemplativae se semper tradenti, cum scilicet: In doctrina Dei, die nocteque, meditetur."
It is noteworthy that Sforno's renders תורת ה' ("teaching of God") of Psalm 1:2 with *doctrina Dei* rather than the Vulgate's *lege Domini*. This lexical choice may further reflect his desire to call his Latin reader's attention to the theoretical aspect of the Bible as a cause of human perfection rather than to its legal or practical side.

[63] As discussed in the previous chapter, the role of moral virtue in the emulation of God is fully presented in the thirteenth *quaestio* in both texts of the *Light of the Nations*. See the fourth chapter herein, 4.6 "Perfection through Moral Virtue."

"Its leaf shall not wither," is for Sforno yet a third proof for the intellect's immortality since it affirms that the faculty will not weaken, but rather grow stronger in old age. It must, therefore, be eternal since anything that does not age is undoubtedly incorruptible. Finally, Sforno expounds the fourth attribute of the tree, "all that he will do will prosper," as a two-part proof that demonstrates the separateness or transcendence of the intellect. First, unlike physical faculties, the more the intellect intensifies in its activities, the stronger it becomes; it does not experience fatigue. Secondly, unlike physical faculties such as the imagination, its activities are always correct and are never subject to error. Both of these attributes, he reasons, show that the intellect is non-physical and unaffected by physical activity. Hence, Sforno concludes, it is eternal and incorruptible.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In the *Light of the Nations*, Sforno brings together Scripture and philosophy in order to demonstrate the basic doctrines of religion. He does this through the use of various exegetical methods, through which he harmonises or reconciles his reading of one tradition with that of the other. As I have shown in this chapter, his dialectical strategy is to read Scripture philosophically, treating biblical passages as premises for syllogistic proofs or as logical demonstrations in their own right. He advocates the superiority of the Hebrew text of Scripture over that of the Vulgate, offering his Latin reader his own translations of certain verses. Through his lexical choices, he renders these key passages so that they conform to his philosophical exegesis, which, in turn, enables him to employ them in his demonstrations. Throughout the treatise, he remains committed to the conceptual frameworks of Aristotle and Averroes, all the

while adapting them to match his understanding of Scripture as he argues against their conclusions.

CONCLUSION

MERGING TRADITIONS

In this dissertation I have analysed how the sixteenth-century Italian rabbi, Obadiah Sforno, responded to Aristotelian-Averroan philosophy in the Hebrew and Latin texts of his treatise *Light of the Nations*. He tailored his work to two different readerships: for his Hebrew reader, he offered a rational understanding of the tenets of Scripture; for his Latin reader, he promised a refutation of the heretical claims of the Peripatetic philosophers. However, as both texts of the book unfold, the interrelationship between these two purposes emerges since the author defined rational understanding through the prism of Aristotle's conceptual framework as interpreted by Averroes. Thus, Sforno did not turn to alternative systems of thought such as the Kabbalah, which was gaining popularity among many of his Jewish contemporaries, nor did he attempt to return to the language and literature of classical antiquity like the humanist scholars of the period. Instead, he preserved much of the medieval theories of his forebears—the Judeo-Arabic Aristotelian worldview espoused by Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon. He chose to enter into discussion with Peripatetic philosophy on its own terms, using its logical categories, terminology, and methods of demonstration in order to forge a syncretic system of thought, whose conclusions matched what he regarded as the religious tenets of Hebrew Scripture.

Throughout this study, I have argued that Sforno's project was one of resolution and reconciliation; rather than stepping outside of the Peripatetic paradigm, he sought to rebuild it from within. His strategy was not to reject the authority of Aristotle and his followers despite the incongruity of their conclusions with those of

Holy Scripture. In other words, his purpose was not to demolish the edifice whose tradition of ancient knowledge had achieved such prominence among Jewish and Christian scholars of the medieval and Renaissance periods. Instead, he endeavoured to respond to that tradition by deliberately limiting himself to the literary corpus whose conclusions he sought to challenge. To this end, Sforno advocated an account of a two-fold transmission of wisdom comprised of biblical figures on the one hand and gentile philosophers on the other. Using the ancient Chaldean sages as a bridge between the biblical narrative and Averroes' reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he argued that although the two lines of transmission were originally linked, only the Jewish strand retained its knowledge of the Creator and His creation. Moreover, he was convinced that the modes of discourse proper to each of the two traditions—syllogistic logic and biblical exegesis—were on a par with one another in terms of intellectual demonstration. He therefore considered both kinds of discourse as legitimate and complementary means of achieving rational assent to religious truth. The basic structure and method of the treatise is a reflection of that consideration.

Accordingly, by employing statements of Aristotle and Averroes in conjunction with biblical texts in order to formulate his theories regarding creation, God, and humankind, Sforno sought to provide his reader with an alternative to a faith-based assent to religion, a refutation of the incorrect conclusions of the Peripatetic philosophers, and a rational understanding of Holy Scripture. Moreover, the underlying premise behind the project was that the two systems of thought were sufficiently valuable to attempt such reconciliation. In light of the status of Scripture and the *fortuna* of the Philosopher and his Commentator throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in both the Hebrew and Latin philosophical traditions, such an attempt is not surprising.

As I have demonstrated, Sforno preferred to read Aristotle through Averroes' Long Commentaries, which contained the original statements of the Philosopher in the form of *lemmata*. He also cited Averroes' Middle Commentaries and independent works, from which he derived the opinions of other thinkers such as Plato and Avicenna. Although there is no evidence to suggest that he read the Hebrew translations of the corpus, I have proven that he quoted the Latin translations of Michael Scot and other medieval translators verbatim in his Latin text of the treatise. In many cases, Sforno conflated Averroes' interpretations of the Philosopher with the statements of the Philosopher himself. These preferences for reading Aristotle can be explained by the prominence of Averroes' works in sixteenth-century Italy in both Jewish and Christian scholarship. Given the dearth of any other explicitly cited Hebrew or Latin sources, all this evidence has led to the conclusion that the author's purpose was to reconcile philosophy and religion for two distinct readerships, which yet shared a common respect for Averroes' understanding of Aristotle.

However, in his endeavour to recast Aristotelian-Averroan philosophy so that it would no longer support the conclusions reached by its inventors, Sforno was compelled to read his sources in ways that did not accord with their original meanings. The twelfth *quaestio* on the immortality of the individual human intellective soul proved a particularly persuasive case study. Like many scholars in the medieval and Renaissance periods, Sforno's method of interpreting his sources was not governed by an unbiased desire to uncover the original intention of the authors he was reading. Rather, the polemical purposes of his treatise caused him to misread and misrepresent his sources, ignoring the original contexts of his citations so that he might impart new meaning useful to the dialectical contexts of his own discussions. This is clearly illustrated in his citations of Averroes' Long Commentary

on the *De anima* in order to resolve the metaphysical problems inherent in postulating a multitude of numerically distinct incorruptible human souls, which also function as the formal cause defining each individual human being. In his effort to escape the inevitable conclusions of the philosophical system on which he relied for the fundamental principles of his own theory, Sforno was compelled to overlook certain explicit statements made in his source texts, which contradicted the way he interpreted those texts.

I have also shown how Sforno used the metaphysical schemes advocated by Averroes in his earlier works, despite the fact that he cited the Long Commentaries, which were composed later in Averroes' career after he had significantly revised his philosophical doctrine, two of which—the Long Commentaries on the *De anima* and the *De caelo*—played very modest roles in the medieval Hebrew philosophical tradition. As I pointed out, this may have been partly connected to Sforno's desire to engage with Averroes' mature noetic theory of a single material intellect shared by all humankind since that was one of the opinions specifically rejected by the papal Bull *Apostolici regiminis* promulgated in 1513 at the Eighth Session of the Fifth Lateran Council. Furthermore, it provided him with an essential ingredient for his own theory, namely, a single potential human nature that is numerically and existentially ambiguous. I also explored his tendency—exemplified in his discussion on generation versus creation *ex nihilo*—to harmonize the viewpoints of Plato and Aristotle all the while ignoring the metaphysical underpinnings of the latter's philosophical system.

Another facet of Sforno's eclectic approach to the Aristotelian philosophical tradition was his willingness to depart completely from that tradition when it suited his purposes. Thus, he disregarded the prevailing Judeo-Arabic understanding of Aristotle—including that of Averroes in all stages of his career—by carefully

excluding any mention of the transcendent agent intellect from his treatise. As discussed, although Sforno did insert into the *Or ammim* a hint that the source of human souls may in fact be a single separable being, which would correspond neatly to the Avicennian role of the agent intellect as *dator formarum* ("giver of forms"), he completely removed any aspect of an active counterpart to the passive or material intellect from his epistemology. Instead, he replaced it with the divinely given faculty of volition. This departure from the conventional Judeo-Arabic understanding of Aristotle also represented a significant shift away from the philosophical conception of the *summum bonum* of humankind. Rather than requiring an external force to effect the realization of the human potential, for Sforno, the human will itself—a direct bestowal from and reflection of God—became the independent agent of change. Also implicit in that departure was his rejection of the notion of the human intellect's conjunction with the agent intellect—a central feature of Maimonides' theory of human perfection and immortality. I have argued that in order to make sense of Sforno's changes to the traditional understanding of Aristotle, it is important to put him into dialogue with Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon, despite the fact that he only mentioned their opinions a handful of times in the Hebrew text of the treatise. I have tried to do this where relevant, especially in the fourth chapter herein.

Finally, I presented a close analysis of Sforno's methods of scriptural exegesis by which he reconciled his reading of Aristotle and Averroes with allegorical interpretations of certain biblical passages. Perhaps not surprisingly, the conceptual framework of Peripatetic philosophy even in this aspect of the project continued to define the contours of Sforno's thought in a very substantial way. Just as he remained committed to that framework throughout his philosophical demonstrations even as he adapted it to suit his purposes, so he continued to apply it to his reading of Scripture

at the conclusion of each *quaestio*, bending the word of God—as Sforno certainly saw it—to fit his philosophical interpretations. Here again, his methods should not be taken as unique or even innovative, since earlier scholars such as Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon had already invented and developed a sophisticated method of philosophical exegesis. Indeed, as I have stated, despite Sforno's criticisms of these two scholars at the outset of his Hebrew text of the treatise, much of his own work is congruent with their approaches. However, the main difference between his method and theirs—as Sforno would have it—was the superiority of Scripture over philosophy both in terms of the quality of its discourse and the comprehensiveness of its treatment of the workings of the natural and divine realms.

Nevertheless, throughout the treatise, Sforno seems to have granted the logical demonstrations of philosophical discourse a rank not lower than that of scriptural assertion, in many cases supplementing his reading of Scripture with citations from Aristotle and Averroes. In addition, he combined the two modes of discourse by inserting biblical passages as premises into an already developed syllogistic argument. In other cases, his definition of scriptural proof consisted of a statement or divine name, which signified a fully articulated syllogism whose subjects and predicates conformed to the categorial framework of Peripatetic philosophy. In practice then, having decided to merge the two traditions into a single system, it became difficult for Sforno subsequently to disentangle them. Such is the danger inherent in the reconciliation of diverse forms of thought.

APPENDIX

ANALYTICAL SUMMARY OF QUAESTIO XII

This summary is intended to guide the reader through Sforno's demonstrations presented in the twelfth *quaestio* of the *Light of the Nations*. The main sections of the inquiry are indicated using capital Roman numerals; these sections correspond to the outlines presented in the first and third chapters of this study.[1] The subsections are indicated using Arabic numerals, miniscule Roman numerals, Greek letters and Hebrew letters. In some instances, I depart from the original sequence of the arguments in order to make the syllogistic structure coherent. For example, the premises and conclusion of each syllogism are presented before their elaboration despite the fact that Sforno sometimes elaborates on them immediately. I also attempt to identify the metaphysical concepts underlying the arguments.

I. QUESTION:

Whether the individual human intellective soul is incorruptible.

II. FOUR PROVISIONAL ARGUMENTS CONTRA:

(1.0) First syllogism proving that the human intellective soul is corruptible:

(i) Every form of a corruptible being is itself corruptible.

(ii) Every human intellective soul is the form of a corruptible being.

(iii) ∴ every human intellective soul is itself corruptible.

[1] See the first chapter herein, 1.5 "Structure and Contents," Table 1.1, and the third chapter, 3.3 "Sforno's Noetic Theory," Table 3.1.

(1.1) Demonstration of the major premise:

(i) Every corruptible being is a composite substance comprised of a principle of potentiality (its matter) and an actualizing principle (its form). Upon the uniting of these two principles, a corruptible substance *in actu* is generated. (This kind of form is a material form or a form in matter.)

(ii) Every incorruptible being is a simple entity comprised solely of an actualizing principle. As such, it is always a substance *in actu*. (This kind of form is a separable form or a form separate from matter.)

(iii) No single being can possess two actualizing principles (forms) simultaneously, since that would mean that a single being would have two identities; it would be two substances at once.

(iv) ∴ no single corruptible being *in actu* can possess an incorruptible form (since that would mean that it possesses two actualising principles: the initial substantial form of the corruptible compound (a form in matter) and the incorruptible form (a form separate from matter)).

(1.2) Demonstration of the minor premise:

(i) Just as every being's principle of potentiality (its matter) is distinguishable by its affections (Aristotle's tenth category), so every being's actualizing principle (its form) is distinguishable by its actions (the ninth category).

(ii) The actions proper to the human being are intellectual.

(iii) ∴ the actualizing principle (the form) of the human being is intellectual.

(2.0) Second syllogism proving that the human intellective soul is corruptible:

(i) If the intellect is incorruptible, then it is a separable substance and the following dilemma ensues:

Either:

(a) The intellect is numerically one, shared by all humankind (per Averroes and Plato).

Or:

(b) The intellect is as numerically many as the number of individuals comprising humankind.

(ii) But neither (a) nor (b).

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not incorruptible.

(2.1) Disproof of option (b) of the dilemma (2.0):

(i) If (b), then there exist as many separable intellects as there are individual human beings, resulting in a further dilemma:

Either

(α) The intellects are separable beings distinguishable from one another in both form and action derived from form.

Or

(β) They are separable beings, identical in form but distinct in number.

(ii) But neither (α) nor (β).

(iii) ∴ not (b); the intellect is not as numerically many as the number of individuals comprising humankind.

(2.1.1) Disproof of option (β) of the secondary dilemma (b):

(i) If (β), then matter is their principle of individuation or numerical distinction.

(ii) But upon their separation from matter, especially after death, the intellects cease to be distinguishable by substratum or time; they therefore revert to a state of non-distinction, becoming numerically one. Hence, matter cannot be their principle of individuation.

(iii) ∴ not (β); the intellect does not consist of separable beings identical in form but distinct in number.

(2.1.2) Disproof of option (α) of the secondary dilemma (b):

(i) If (α), then individual human beings differ in kind and the term "human being" is merely homonymous.

(ii) But sense perception proves that all human individuals share the faculty of speech and the fundamental premises of thought, which are the specific form common to all humankind. This demonstrates the falsity of the consequent.

(iii) ∴ not (α); the intellect does not consist of separable beings distinguishable in form and action.

(2.2) Disproof of option (a) of the initial dilemma (2):

(i) If (a), then whatever is intellectually apprehended by one individual human being would be apprehended by all other members of the species or at least by those of equal intellectual status. This is proven by the following proportional analogy:

(α) As sense perception is to sensible objects (vis-à-vis action), so the intellect is to intelligible objects (per Aristotle).

(β) If many individuals were to see through a single shared eye, then all those individuals would see the same image.

(γ) Likewise, if many individuals were to apprehend intellectually through a single shared intellect, then all those individuals would apprehend the same intelligible thought.

(ii) But experience proves that whatever is intellectually apprehended by one individual human being is not apprehended by all other members of the species.

(iii) ∴ not (a); the intellect is not numerically one, shared by all humankind.

(2.3) Attempted resolution of (2.2) in order to salvage option (a) of the dilemma:

The consequent of the first premise of (2.2) does not necessarily follow: not all individuals who share a single common intellect would apprehend the same intelligible. Rather, individuated intellection can occur as a result of the corporeal faculty of imagination possessed by each member of the species (per Averroes).

(2.4) Rebuttal of (2.3):

(i) If the single shared intellect, which is separate from matter, acquires multiplicity as a result of the imaginative faculty, which is immersed in matter, then the following dilemma ensues:

Either:

(a) The truth acquired by intellection remains in the single material intellect, causing it to attain the stage of second perfection (per Aristotle).

Or:

(b) The truth transfers from the material intellect to the imaginative faculty, where it remains.

(ii) But neither (a) nor (b).

(iii) ∴ a single shared intellect, which is separate from matter, cannot acquire multiplicity as a result of the imaginative faculty.

(2.5) Disproof of option (b) of the rebuttal's dilemma (2.4):

(i) If (b), then the imagination—a corruptible faculty immersed in matter—is what receives intelligible thoughts.

(ii) But our natural ability to apprehend divine concepts despite the fact that such knowledge is useless to generable-corruptible beings proves the falsity of the consequent.

(iii) ∴ not (b); truth does not transfer from the material intellect to the imaginative faculty.

(2.6) Disproof of option (a) of dilemma (2.4), which is identical to disproof (2.2):

(i) If (a), then any concept apprehended by one member of humankind would also be apprehended by all other members equal in intellectual stature, just as seers who share a single eye would see the same image.

(ii) But the consequent is false.

(iii) ∴ not (a); the truth acquired by intellection does not remain in the single material intellect.

(2.7) Attempted resolution of (2.6) in order to salvage option (a) of the dilemma:

The consequent of the first premise (i) of (2.6) does not necessarily follow: an individual's apprehension of a concept does not necessarily lead to its apprehension by all other members of humankind, since no two thinkers are equal with regard to their intellectual preparation or their ability to conjoin with the material intellect.

(2.8) Rebuttal of (2.7) by re-establishing the first premise (i) of (2.6):

Although different thinkers possess different intellectual aptitudes, the more proficient thinker would be able to conjoin with the shared intellect and apprehend all intelligible thoughts contained in it despite the fact that those thoughts were transferred to it from the imaginative faculties of many different individual human beings. This is proven by the following proportional analogy:

(α) As each person's common sense is to his individual senses [vis-à-vis action], so the single shared intellect (material intellect) is to the imaginative faculties of individual human beings.

(β) The different sensations from a person's various senses are conveyed to his common sense, which combines them and interrelates them in order for them to be apprehended by that individual as a single coherent representation.

(γ) Likewise, representations from the imaginations of many different human individuals are conveyed to the single shared intellect (material Intellect), which combines and interrelates them in order for them to be apprehended by an individual who conjoins with that intellect.

(2.9) Disjunctive syllogism, using options (a) and (b) of the initial dilemma (2):

(i) Either:

(a) The human intellect is a single potential being shared by all humankind.

Or:

(b) The human intellect is as numerically many as the number of individuals comprising humankind.

(ii) But not (a).

(iii) ∴ (b).

(2.10) Disproof of option (a) in (2.9):

(i) If (a) (if the human intellective soul is a single material or potential intellect shared by all humankind), then the following dilemma ensues:

Either:

(α) It is in a state of potentiality with respect to some completion, which it will never attain.

Or:

(β) It is in a state of potentiality with respect to some completion that it can attain.

(ii) But neither (α) nor (β):

(א) Not (α) because that would imply a potential for nought.

(ב) Not (β) because by now it would certainly have already achieved its potential, acquiring a state of complete actuality. This would mean that upon conjoining with it, an individual would apprehend every possible apprehensible intelligible.

(iii) ∴ not (a); the human intellective soul is not a single substance shared by all humankind.

(2.11) A combination of the conclusions of (2.9) and (2.1.1) prove the soul's mortality:

(i) The intellective soul is numerically distinct; the number of souls is proportional to the number of individuals comprising humankind (2.9).

(ii) No separable beings identical in form are numerically distinct (2.1.1).

(iii) ∴ the intellective soul is not a separable being; it is not eternal.

(3.0) Third syllogism proving that the intellective soul unique to each individual human being is not eternal:

(i) Every eternal being exists *in actu*.

(ii) The human intellective soul does not exist *in actu*.

(iii) ∴ the human intellective soul is not an eternal being.

(3.1) Demonstration of the conclusion using a hypothetical syllogism:

(i) If the human intellective soul is an eternal being, then it always exists—even after the corruption of the individual body to which it is connected.

(ii) If it exists after the corruption of the individual body, then it becomes a being *in actu*. (No longer a form in matter, it becomes a form separate from matter. Having been stripped of its principle of potentiality, it is comprised solely of an actualizing principle. As such, it is a substance *in actu*.)

(iii) ∴ if the human intellective soul does not exist *in actu*, then it is not an eternal being.

(3.2) Demonstration of the minor premise:

The human intellect has no nature of its own, other than that of being a potentiality for thought (per Aristotle). As such, it is not a being that exists *in actu*.

(3.3) Rebuttal of the demonstration of the minor premise:

Upon thinking, the intellect actualizes its potential thereby becoming a being *in actu* (per Aristotle).

(3.4) Using the rebuttal to demonstrate the corruptibility of the human intellect by means of three syllogisms:

(3.4.1)

(i) Every newly generated being is a generable-corruptible being.

(ii) The intellect *in actu* (having actualized its potentiality through the act of thinking) is a newly generated being.

(iii) ∴ the intellect *in actu* is a generable-corruptible being.

(3.4.2)

(i) If a single being could be generable-corruptible and eternal simultaneously, then that being would possess the potential for both eternal existence and non-eternal existence.

(ii) Possessing such contradictory potentials is impossible.

(iii) ∴ a single being cannot be generable-corruptible and eternal simultaneously.

(3.4.3)

(i) A single being is either generable-corruptible or eternal.

(ii) The intellect *in actu* is a generable-corruptible being.

(iii) ∴ the intellect *in actu* is not an eternal being; it is corruptible.

(4.0) Fourth syllogism proving that the human intellective soul is not eternal:

(i) No material power is eternal because a power immersed in matter perforce corrupts upon the corruption of its material substrate.

(ii) The human intellective soul is not an intellective substance; it is the imaginative faculty, which is a material power.

(iii) ∴ the human intellective soul is not eternal.

(4.1) Demonstration of the minor premise of (4.0):

(i) The human intellective soul is either the intellect or the imagination.

(ii) The human intellective soul is not an intellective substance; it is not the intellect.

(iii) ∴ the human intellective soul is the imagination.

(4.2) Demonstration of the minor premise of (4.1)

(i) Every intellective substance always acts correctly because its action is the discernment and apprehension of truth, which is always correct.

(ii) The human intellective soul does not always act correctly (per experience).

(iii) ∴ the human intellective soul is not an intellective substance.

III. THREE ARGUMENTS PRO:

(1.0) First syllogism proving that the human intellective soul is eternal:

(i) Every substance unmixed with matter (called a separable substance) is eternal.

(ii) The human intellective soul is a substance unmixed with matter.

(iii) ∴ the human intellective soul is eternal.

(1.1) First demonstration of the major premise (1.0):

(i) Every separable substance is a simple substance; it is not a composite substance comprised of matter and form.

(ii) Every simple substance is perforce incorruptible.

(iii) ∴ every separable substance is incorruptible or eternal.

(1.2) Demonstration of the minor premise of (1.1):

(i) No substances lacking antagonistic principles inhering in a single subject undergo corruption.

(ii) Simple substances lack antagonistic principles inhering in a single subject.

(iii) ∴ no simple substances undergo corruption; the process applies only to composite substances.

(1.3) Second demonstration of the major premise (1.0):

(i) All change requires a substratum (matter) to undergo the change; change such as corruption only occurs to composites of matter and form.

(ii) No simple substances are combined with matter; simple substances lack a substratum to undergo change such as corruption.

(iii) ∴ no simple substances undergo change such as corruption.

(1.4) First demonstration of the minor premise (1.0):

(i) If the intellective faculty is mixed with matter, then it cannot apprehend other forms (per Anaxagoras). In other words, if the intellect is a material being, then it possesses its own substantial form, which would hinder it from receiving other forms (per Averroes).

(ii) The intellect does understand and apprehend all other forms without hindrance.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not mixed with matter; it does not possess its own substantial form.

(1.5) Second demonstration of the minor premise (1.0):

(i) No corporeal faculty apprehends or judges future events.

(ii) The human intellect apprehends or judges future events (per Aristotle).

(iii) ∴ the human intellect is not a corporeal faculty; it is a separable being unmixed with matter.

(1.6) Third demonstration of the minor premise (1.0):

(i) If the intellect is a material being, then it is one of three kinds:

(a) Prime matter (principle of potentiality).

(b) Particular form (principle of actualization and individuation).

(c) Compound of (a) and (b) (resulting in an individual actualized potentiality).

(ii) The intellect is neither (a), (b), nor (c). The nature of these three kinds of beings relates to the reception of particular sensible forms whereas the nature of the intellect relates to the reception of universal intelligible forms; hence, only the intellect has the ability to apprehend and discern intelligible concepts or abstract universals not individuated by matter.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not a material being; it is separate from all matter.

(1.7) Fourth demonstration of the minor premise (1.0):

(i) Every substance generated from the four elements (i.e., every material being) performs actions relatable to the four elements (i.e., physical actions).

(ii) The intellect does not perform actions relatable to the four elements.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not a substance generated from the four elements; it is not a material being.

(1.8) Fifth demonstration of the minor premise (1.0):

(i) Every corporeal faculty possesses the quality of heat or cold or functions via a corporeal instrument, like the sense perceptions of the perceptive soul.

(ii) The intellect neither possesses qualities of heat or cold nor functions by means of a corporeal instrument.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not a corporeal faculty.

(2.0) Second syllogism proving that the intellective faculty is an eternal substance:

(i) If the intellect were corruptible, then it would be more appropriate for it to undergo corruption by the weariness accompanying old age.

(ii) The intellect does not undergo corruption by the weariness accompanying old age; it remains unaffected by old age.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not corruptible; it is an eternal substance.

(2.1) Elaboration of the major premise:

Aging is the affection (Aristotle's tenth accident) resulting from the process of deficiency, which develops into corruption.

(2.3) Reformulation of the argument in broader terms:

(i) Every substance not subject to affection is also not subject to corruption because corruption is merely the final stage of a process by which a substance is affected.

(ii) The intellect is not subject to affection; it does not suffer change.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not subject to corruption.

(3.0) Third syllogism proving that the human intellective faculty is incorruptible:

(i) Every power not subject to affection is not subject to corruption.

(ii) Unlike the senses, which are adversely affected by strong impressions such as loud sounds or strong odours, the intellect is not adversely affected by

apprehending complicated concepts; in fact, this improves its apprehension of simpler concepts.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not subject to corruption; it is eternal.

IV. SOLUTION:

(1) The human intellective soul is the substantial form of the human being.

(2) It is an incorruptible or eternal substance.

(2) There are as many individual souls as there are individual human beings.

(3) The source of human souls is a single potential nature shared by all humankind.

(4) This single potential nature emanates from separable beings.

(5) As prime matter is to individual perceivable substrata *in actu*, so this emanating nature is to individual human forms. As prime matter is pure potentiality until it is informed (thereby becoming part of a composite substance), so this emanating nature exists solely in a state of potentiality until it conjoins with its individual substratum.

(6) Upon emanating onto its individually unique substratum, this nature becomes the form of a substance *in actu*. This stage of actualization is called the first perfection.

(7) In the first perfection, the human intellect is merely potential vis-à-vis actual thought.

(8) The second perfection occurs as a result of the extraction and apprehension (abstraction and reception) of intelligible concepts from the perceivable representations produced by the imaginative faculty of each individual human being.

(9) Every individual human being voluntarily engages in this intellectual process of extraction and apprehension.

(10) As the soul of a celestial sphere is to its sphere, so the human intellective soul is to its individual substratum; it is a form that remains unmixed with its body.

(11) The unmixed or separable character of the intellect accounts for its ability to apprehend (receive) the form of any intelligible concept without hindrance.

(12) The intellective soul is "a fourth kind of being," since it is neither matter, nor form, nor a compound of matter and form; it is a separable form only loosely connected to its individual substratum.

V. REBUTTALS OF THE ARGUMENTS CONTRA:

(1.0) Rebuttal of the first provisional argument proving that the human intellective soul is corruptible [I. (1.0)]:

(1.1) Rebuttal of the major premise [I. (1.0) (i): every form of a corruptible being is itself corruptible] by denying the universality of its predicate:

(i) Forms of corruptible substances (vis-à-vis their connection to matter) are of two kinds:

(a) Form mixed with matter (*forma informans*).

(b) Form unmixed with matter (*forma assistens*).

(ii) The predicate of the major premise applies only to members of the first kind (a). Thus, every form of a corruptible substance that is mixed with its matter undergoes corruption when that composite being corrupts.

(iii) The human intellect and the souls of celestial spheres are members of the second kind (b); upon the corruption of their individual substrata, such forms do not corrupt.

(iv) ∴ not every form of a corruptible being is itself corruptible.

(1.2) First rebuttal of the third premise in the demonstration of the first argument's major premise [I. (1.1) (iii): no single being *in actu* can transform into another being by gaining a new actualizing principle (form), which is itself *in actu*, because this would mean that it possesses two actualizing principles (forms) simultaneously] by denying the universality of its predicate:

(i) Transformations (gaining a new actualizing principle or form) are of two kinds:

(a) Transformation in which the actualizing principles (forms) of both beings *in actu* are retained; both identities endure.[2]

(b) Transformation in which the actualizing principle (form) of one being ceases to exist; only one identity endures.

(ii) The predicate of the premise applies only to members of the first kind (a). Thus, no single being *in actu* can gain a subsequent actualizing principle, which is itself already *in actu*, when its initial actualizing principle endures.

(iii) The transformation involved in the intellect's conjunction with its substrate is of the second kind (b); upon the arrival of the intellective form, the initial form (the animal desire) diminishes, allowing the new form to become the defining principle of the substance. This is also the kind of transformation involved in beings comprised of the four elements: the initial forms of the elements are diminished upon the generation of the composite being.

(iv) ∴ a single being *in actu* can transform into another being.

[2] It is unclear whether Sforno argues for the collapse of this option (a) altogether or maintains it as a valid kind of change.

(1.3) Second rebuttal of the third premise in the demonstration of the first argument's major premise [I. (1.1) (iii)]:

Prior to informing its substrate, the intellect exists only *in potentia*; it does not exist *in actu*. Since it only actualizes when it conjoins with its substrate, the metaphysical problem of a single being possessing two forms simultaneously is resolved.

(2.0) Rebuttal of the second provisional argument proving that the human intellective soul is corruptible [I. (2.0)]:

(2.1) Escaping the consequences of the dilemma in the first premise:

(i) Numerically ambiguous substances avoid the metaphysical problems that would occur to separable beings whose number is defined.

(ii) The intellect is a numerically ambiguous substance:

(a) In its first phase of being, the intellect exists in a state of pure potentiality; as such, it is a single nature common to all humankind. However, it is not a numerically single entity *in actu*.

(b) In its second phase of being (post emanation), the intellect acquires numerical multiplicity in proportion to the number of individual bodies comprising humankind *in actu*.

(iii) ∴ the metaphysical problems of neither numerical singularity (a) nor multiplicity (b) apply to the intellect because in some respects it is both (a)

and (b), and in other respects it is neither (a) nor (b).[3] The intellect is not necessarily subject to corruption.

(3.0) Rebuttal of the third provisional argument proving that the human intellective soul is corruptible [I. (3.0)]:

(3.1) Rebuttal of the minor premise [I. (3.0) (ii): the human intellective soul does not exist *in actu*] by challenging its universality:

(i) Prior to its emanation, the intellect exists *in potentia*; in this phase of its development, it would be correct to deny its eternity or incorruptibility.

(ii) Upon its emanation onto individuals of humankind, it acquires existence *in actu*; it becomes the actualizing principle (form) of the individual substratum (matter) capable of action by providing that substratum with the first principles of thought (first perfection). The intellect further actualizes when it subsequently combines these first principles with abstracted perceptions and actually thinks (second perfection).

(iii) ∴ in its second phase of development (comprising the first and second perfections), the human intellective soul does exist *in actu*.

(3.2) Rebuttal of [I. (3.4.1) (i): every newly generated being is a generable-corruptible being] by denying the universality of its predicate:

(i) Coming into being is of two kinds:

(a) That which is caused by the motion of generation through which matter is moved from form to form.

[3] Sforno does not explain how the intellect is exempt from the problems presented in the second proof against incorruptibility [I. (2.0), (2.1), and (2.2)]. For example, he seems to ignore the problem of post-mortem individuation.

(b) Generation from a formless state to an informed state; this kind of coming into being is called "creation."

(ii) The predicate of the premise applies only to members of the first kind (a). Thus, every substance whose production is caused by a transition of its matter from one form to another is subject to corruption.

(iii) The human intellect is a member of the second kind (b). It possesses no substratum that emerges from potential to actual; hence, it is not subject to natural corruptibility.

(iv) ∴ every newly generated being is a generable-corruptible being.

(4.0) Rebuttal of the fourth provisional argument by denying the soundness of the demonstration of its minor premise [I. (4.2): the intellect is not an intellective substance because it does not always act correctly]:

(4.1) First explanation of the non-intellectual cause of human intellectual error:

(i) If the cause of judgmental error is the intellect, then the intellect is not an intellective substance; it is not a separable being.

(ii) The cause of judgmental error is not the intellect; its cause is a voluntary inaction of the intellect. When the intellect is inactive, a human being's judgment relies on the material faculty of imagination, which is subject to error.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not a non-intellective substance. It always acts correctly; it is a separable substance.

(4.2) Second explanation of the non-intellectual cause of human intellectual error:

(i) If the cause of judgmental error is the intellect, then the intellect is not an intellective substance; it is not a separable being.

(ii) The cause of judgmental error is not the intellect; its cause is false premises provided by the imagination. Prior to the intellect's actualization (second perfection) through acts of extraction and apprehension (abstraction and reception), it remains a non-separable being. As such, the faulty information on which it relies determines the correctness of its judgment.

(iii) ∴ the intellect is not a non-intellective substance. It always acts correctly; it is a separable substance.

(4.3) Division of the explanations for human intellectual error into three kinds:

(a) False representations deriving from the material faculties upon which intellection is contingent (i.e., the senses and the imagination). This can be rectified through voluntary investigation and thought with the aim of acquiring the Second Completion. (4.2)

(b) Voluntary laziness. This results in the intellect's yielding to the corporeal emotive faculty, whose inclination is toward error. Here, the intellect is inactive. (4.1)

(c) The intellect is drawn after the emotive faculty. Although its activity remains correct, it has been turned toward evil; it has become the instrument of the emotive faculty.

(4.4) Discussion about the human faculty of volition and its role in the realization of the intellective soul in terms of intellection, ethical traits, and performance.

VI. SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS PRO (Psalms 1:3):

(1) "He is like a tree planted beside streams of water:" The intellect does not require external corporeal instruments for its actions of extraction and apprehension; hence, it is a non-physical eternal substance (This corresponds to [III. (1.8)].)

(2) "Which yields its fruit in season:" The intellective faculty judges future events; hence it is a non-physical eternal substance. (This corresponds to [III. (1.5)].)

(3) "Whose foliage never fades:" The intellect's power does not corrupt with old age; hence, it is eternal. (This corresponds to [III. (2.0)].)

(4) "Whatever it produces thrives:" The intellect is distinct from physical faculties in two ways:

> (a) The more it engages in its unique activity (intellection), the stronger it becomes; hence it is an unaffected, non-physical, eternal substance. (This corresponds to [III. (3.0)].)
>
> (b) All of its actions are correct; hence it is a non-physical faculty. (This corresponds to [V. (4.0)].)

The two ways in which the intellect is distinguishable from physical faculties is also demonstrated using Isaiah 40:29-31.

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