Nurhanisah, Khadijah & Wan Adli, “Preliminary Analysis on Muslim-Jewish Discourse in Medieval Period,” *Afkār* Vol. 20 Issue 2 (2018): 195-216

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS ON MUSLIM-JEWISH DISCOURSE IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD: THE CASE OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ (D. 1111) AND MAIMONIDES (D. 1204)

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol20no2.6

Khulasah

Makalah ini menyorot wacana Muslim-Yahudi pada abad pertengahan. Ia membincangkan perbahasan ahli kalam dan falsafah Muslim-Yahudi yang muncul berikutan usaha mereka dalam membahaskan konsep ketuhanan. Hal ini bermula apabila Mu’tazilah secara tidak langsung mempengaruhi Karaite yang merupakan salah satu aliran Yahudi menerusi penulisan-penulisan yang ditulis dalam bahasa Arab dan dikaji oleh kedua-dua sarjana Islam dan Yahudi. Hal ini dapat dilihat dalam perbahasan al-Ghazālī dan Maimonides yang kedua-duanya merupakan sarjana yang dihormati dalam agama masing-masing. Walaupun mereka tidak hidup dalam masa yang sama dan menggunakan metod yang berbeza dalam perbahasan, penulisan mereka mempunyai persamaan dengan wujudnya pengaruh al-Ghazālī dalam penulisan Maimonides. Tuntasnya, terdapat dua faktor persamaan dalam wacana Muslim dan Yahudi iaitu latar belakang abad pertengahan Arab serta konsep monoteisme yang menjadi asas kepada kedua-dua

agama Islam dan Yahudi secara khususnya dalam perbahasan al-Ghazālī dan Maimonides.

Kata kunci: Al-Ghazālī; Maimonides; wacana Muslim-Yahudi; abad pertengahan.

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the Muslim-Jewish discourse in the medieval period. It discusses the intertwining discourses between Muslim-Jewish theologians and philosophers which emerged through their endeavors in elucidating the concept of God. This takes place further when the writings of the Mu'tazilites indirectly influenced the Karaites of the Jewish sects through the Arabic writings that were commonly shared by the Muslims and the Jewish scholars. This can be observed as well in the case of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides who were both prominent scholars in their respective religions. Although they did not chance upon each other and employ different methods of arguments, their writings however correspond which al-Ghazālī's influence can be seen in Maimonides' writing. Hence, it can be summed that the Arabic medieval period as well as the concept of monotheistic belief which was the fundamental of Muslims and Jewish were the two factors that bind the Muslim and Jewish discourses in particular al-Ghazālī and Maimonides.

Keywords: Al-Ghazālī; Maimonides; Muslim-Jewish discourse; medieval period.

Introduction

In the Muslim world, the quest for knowing and discussing God's divine nature gives rise to disputes among philosophers and theologians. The metaphysical discourse mainly focuses on God's essence, attributes, actions and His relationship with His creation, man and the universe. The studies of metaphysics and cosmology have emerged within the context of Greek philosophy. Various interpretations of God have been presented: Plato's idea of

Good, Aristotle's prime mover, Plotinus's trinity and Epicurus's blessed and immortal God.[1]

Further developments were made in medieval times by Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindī (801-873AD), al-Fārābī (872-950AD) and Ibn Sīnā (980-1037AD) after vigorous movements of translating Greek philosophy into Arabic.[2] The influence of Greek philosophy on early Muslim philosophy was inevitable as Neo Platonism and Neo Aristotelianism began in the realm of Islamic intellectuals. Consequently, the influence immersed into Islamic and Jewish traditions, which led to the excessive rationalization of religious doctrines and the neglect of the revelations. This was observed among the Mu'tazilite and other theological sectarians such as the Shia and its sects, who held reason above revelation in understanding the concept of God.

The discussion on the metaphysical subject was later known as *kalām*.[3] *Mutakallimīn* such as Abū Ḥāmid al-

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[1] See Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy* (UK: Oxford University, 2010).

[2] The translation movement emerged in 832 along with the establishment of the House of Wisdom during the Abbasid caliphate. The assimilation of Greek philosophy with Islam may be seen as impossible if we look at the doctrine, language and cultural factors. However, it is through Christianity that the attachment to Greek philosophy in the fourth century occurred by St Basil in the east and St Augustine in the west, who employed Stoicism and Platonism in their arguments for Christianity and against other faiths. Oliver Leaman, *Introduction to Medieval Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University, 1985), 4.

[3] Branch of knowledge in Islam that is usually translated as 'speculative theology.' *Kalām* literally means speech, talk or words. It has a negative connotation among early scholars, such as Imam Abū Hanīfah, Imam Mālik and Imam Shāfi`ī, as it leads to disunity and debates on God. The term is only widely accepted in the later period of the ninth century when the creedal belief of Islam was contested due to the illumination of philosophical premises within the discussion of predestination and others. As Ibn Khaldūn mentioned, *Kalām* is merely intended to refute heretics. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah,*

Ghazālī (1111 AD) applied some philosophical argumentation in establishing systematic proofs and propositions. Philosophy basically established premises that the *mutakallimīn* subsequently applied to religious texts[4] either for interpretation or defense purposes.

Meanwhile, in the Jewish sphere, theological-philosophical discourse emerged due to the assimilation of Muslims and Christians in the east and west. This coexistence consequently sustained them in explaining their religions rationally vis-à-vis the others. Besides, the pressure of converting to Islam or Christianity may also somewhat mark their vulnerability. The Jewish *Kalām* primarily began to surface in the ninth century along with the influence of Muslim and Christian theology.[5] The influence was apparent with the Karaite Jews[6] who were swayed by the Mu'tazilite's rational arguments. As a result, Islamic and Jewish traditions were both confronted with the rational Mu'tazilite and Karaite thought.

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trans F. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 155. See also Ḥasan Maḥmūd Shāfi'ī, *al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsah 'Ilm al-Kalām* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah. 1991), 26; M. Abdel Haleem, "Early Kalam," in *History of Islamic Philosophy,* ed. Syed Hossein Nasr & Oliver Leaman (London: New York, 1996), 71.

[4] Oliver Leaman, *Introduction to Medieval Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University, 1985), 8.

[5] Direct contact between Jewish scholars such as Muqammas with Christian theologians was obvious in the 9th century, when Muqammas, who studied under the guidance of his Christian teacher in Nisbis for many years may have very much been influenced by Christian theology. Simultaneously, Muqammas' Islamic influence can be seen through his exposure to Aristotelian philosophical material, which was mainly written in Arabic. Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2009), 34. See also M. Cook, "The Origins of Kalam," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 43, (1980), 32-43.

[6] A Jewish sect who denies the genuinity of Oral Torah as the sayings and discussions of the Rabbinates (religious scholars of the Jews).

Thus this paper attempts to advocate further the Muslim-Jewish discourses and in particular highlighting the indirect correspondence of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides through their writings. Despite different religious beliefs, affiliations, times and locations, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides indeed corresponded indirectly to each other through their discourses on God. There is apparent affinity between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, which is observed to be the result of a background similar to the medieval Arabic milieu. The possibility of an indirect influence or borrowing among traditions in understanding the concept of God is also demonstrated.

Muslim-Jewish Theological-Philosophical Discourse

The claim of knowing the truth solely with reason and by relying less on religious traditions was unacceptable to the Ash‘arite and Rabbinic societies who held that revelation is superior to rational thought. Although the Mu‘tazilite and Karaite applied philosophical tools in developing their distinctive doctrines, they were still mainly considered theologians. The Mu‘tazilite specifically labelled themselves as ‘members of justice and unity’ (*Ahl al-‘Adl wa al-Tawḥīd*), indicating their two main doctrines: justice and the unity of God. According to the Mu‘tazilite, being just refers to God’s incompetence to do evil and giving human beings free will, while the concept of unity entails denying that God would have attributes.[7] Conversely, the Ash‘arite rebutted the denial of attributes and strongly affirmed that God has attributes. Instead, al-Ghazālī maintained that God’s attributes do not mean His plurality but rather God’s attributes separate His actions from His divine essence.

Likewise, the Mu‘tazilite had a vast impact on the Karaite Jews as well. The Karaite questioned the authority of the rabbinic chain of tradition and rejected the oral Torah as part of the Jewish sacred texts. Externally, the Rabbinic Jews[8] also faced attacks from Muslims and Christians for their custom of only accepting Moses' Law as the word of a true prophet of God.[9] Owing to such internal and external counterparts, the urge for a comprehensive component to harmonize reason with religion was in high in demand, which then led to employing a philosophical stance in rationalizing the Scriptures.

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[7] Al-Shāfi’ī, *al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsah ‘Ilm al-Kalām,* 98.

Al-Ghazālī's emergence during the turmoil of the third phase of the Abbasid caliphate witnessed its own political turmoil. The Muslim territory expansion caused the caliphate's weakening management outside Baghdad due to internal and external factors. In al-Ghazālī's time, Seljuqs' reign had reached its peak since its emergence in the 10th century, which partly caused the high dissemination of the Batinites' Sufi doctrine of the Shi'ite. Consequently, *'Ilm al-Kalām* was highly required in order to rebut the deviated doctrine from illuminating the Sunni's Sufi doctrine.[10] This leads to another emerging *Kalām* factor which was due to the prerequisite of a systematic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an's ambiguous verses that may lead to understanding anthropomorphism[11] and subscribing imperfect virtues to God.

In Judaism, the rabbinic scholars were inclined to accept the verses as they are without allegorical interpretation. As for Islam, anthropomorphic verses, in

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[8] The term 'rabbinates' refers to religious scholars or jurists in the Jewish community. It has been employed since the times of the prophets to address rabbis. It also connotes a similar meaning to *aḥbar*. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Musīrī, *Mawsū'ah al-Yahūd wa al-Yahūdiyyah wa al-Ṣaḥyūniyyah,* 2 (n.p: Dār al-Shurūq, n.d), 61.

[9] Norbert Sammuelson, *Jewish Philosophy: An Historical Introduction* (New York: Continuum. 2003), 164.

[10] Ḥāmid Dar' 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jumayly, *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa Arā'uh al-Kalāmiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2005), 19.

[11] The attribution of human qualities to the divine thus conceives God or the Gods in human form. William Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), 18.

Arabic generally known as *mutashābihāt,* had been discussed extensively among Mujassimah and Mushabbihah who interpreted the *mutashābihāt* literally and without purifying God's essence.

Alternatively, Maimonides, also known as Rambam (acronym for Rabbi Moses ben Maimon) embraced philosophy, for he believed that philosophy is readily imbued within the Scriptures. For Maimonides, philosophy was not something alien to religion, as the Scripture itself was revealed in a rational way and man must explore it further.

Medieval Jewish philosophy only emerged in the early tenth century as part of the intercultural assimilation with the Muslim community in the Islamic East, which extended to Muslims in the West, such as North Africa, Spain and Egypt. The Jews had anticipated the golden era of the Muslim community through the use of the Arabic language as a means of communication.[12] It is not that the Jews did not produce rich literature on biblical and rabbinic subjects, but there were no extensive writings on purely scientific and philosophical topics. Most writings were only available in Arabic and therefore, only by knowing Arabic could they access philosophical writings.

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[12] A comprehensive account of this long-lasting phenomenon is described by Alnoor[12]: Most of this translation activity was performed in Spain, especially in Toledo, where Jews, Christians and Muslims lived side by side, and also in Sicily. Some translators were Jews who translated Arabic works into Hebrew, or collaborated with others to translate Hebrew works into Latin. The family of Judah ibn Tibbon, based in Languedoc in southern France, is famous for the translation into Hebrew of several works by Jews who had written in Arabic, including Saadiah Gaon (d. 942 CE), Judah Halevi (d. 1141 CE), Solomon ibn Gabirol (d. 1058 CE) and Moses Maimonides (d. 1204 CE), as well as several philosophical works by Ibn Rushd. Other translators were Christian, including Constantine the African (flourished 1065-1085 CE), Adelard of Bath (flourished 1116-1142 CE), Robert of Chester (flourished 1141-1150 CE), Gerard of Cremona (circa 1114-1187 CE) and others. Translations were made not only of originally Greek works that had been translated into Arabic (for example, Euclid's *Elements*, Ptolemy's *Almagest* and the Aristotelian corpus), but also of works by Islamic scientists and philosophers. The latter were known through their Latinized names of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Avempace (Ibn Bajja), Abubacer (Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl), Algazel (al-Ghazālī), Alhazen (al-Ḥasan Ibn al-

The reason was clearly to investigate relations between Jewish tradition and philosophical thought.[13] It can generally be observed that philosophical views were advocated by Jewish philosophers via contact between Jews and other cultures.[14] Although rabbinic and Biblical literature supplies the core argumentative concepts, the emergence of philosophical thought nonetheless demonstrates a lack of continuity between Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism. This is apparent owing to the influence of Jewish philosophers who were excessively fascinated by Arabic translations of Greek philosophy by Muslims.[15]

Medieval Jewish philosophy has contributed not only to Jewish thought but also as an intermediary between Islamic philosophy, Greek philosophy and the Christian world. The reciprocal complement between both religion and philosophy was adopted by Maimonides. He negated the contradiction between philosophy and revelation and

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Haytham), Rhazes (al-Rāzī), Haly Abbas (ʻAlī ibn al-ʻAbbās al-Majūsī) and so on. See Alnoor Dhanani, "The Muslim Philosophy and Science," in *The Muslim Almanac* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Inc, 1996), 189 – 204.

[13] Arthur Hyman, "Jewish Philosophy in the Islamic World," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr & Oliver Leaman, vol 1 (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 677-678.

[14] As early as the tenth century till late twelfth century, Jewish society was in contact with the Islamic civilization in Spain. Later, from the late twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, Jews were in contact with the Christians in Spain and Italy. David Shatz, "The Biblical and Rabbinic Background to Medieval Jewish Philosophy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy* eds. Daniel Frank & Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2003, 19.

[15] Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5.

instead proposed that the revealed texts allude and lead to their connection.[16]

Arguments on the oneness of God and the cosmic system resulted in a number of important and interesting questions. The absolute and simple being of God as advocated by the philosophers seemed to be in conflict with the Qur’anic image of God as the Omniscient and Omnipotent. The knowledge God possesses while ignoring the minute details that happen below Him result in God’s deficiency. Meanwhile, the emanation structure proposed by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā and that was also apparently adopted by Maimonides, consequently hampers God’s omnipotence.[17]

In this context, the fear that philosophy might damage Qur’anic teachings and creedal beliefs led al-Ghazālī to confront the philosophers by proposing an absolute concept of theism in achieving knowledge of God. Al-Ghazālī argued that philosophy is not capable of demonstrating the truth. Philosophical tools are not sufficient to penetrate the innermost secret of God, who remains unknown to human understanding - not because of the insincerity of philosophy, for it too acknowledges the oneness of God, His power and supremacy.[18] Hence, al-Ghazālī challenged the philosophers’ arguments and confronted philosophy with philosophical tools to reveal their incoherence.

The *Kalām* was indeed essential to both Islam and Judaism in rebutting deviated opinions and counterparts. Al-Ghazālī was a 12th century Muslim scholar and successor of the Ash‘arite theology. He plausibly discussed the science of metaphysics in a theological fashion, contesting the philosophers and deviant sectarians such as the Batinite and Mu‘tazilite. This is apparent in his popular treatises *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah, al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād* and *Faḍāi'h al-Bāṭīniyyah.*

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[16] Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 4.

[17] Massimo Campanini, *An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 126.

[18] *Ibid.,* 126.

On the other hand, Maimonides adopted Aristotle's arguments in attesting philosophical proofs, which he believed were readily imbued within the Scriptures. Maimonides sensed the urgency to embrace this truth and have it transcribed.[19] He further considered that the principle of God's unity and incorporeality must be the truth and demonstrative instead of merely assumptions made by the theologians. Since human knowledge depends upon the multiplicity of sensible data, it is important that the intellect be coupled with the divine law.[20] Maimonides believed man can only attain truth through the perfection of the human intellect, which is the nearest man can come to an imitation of God. This clearly demonstrates Maimonides' view was parallel with Aristotle's.

Thus, it is somewhat intriguing to study how al-Ghazālī and Maimonides argued and affirmed divine unity. Although they did not live in the same era or location, what binds them is their sources of knowledge and relative discourses.

Al-Ghazālī on Inter-religious Dialogue

The establishment of Madrasah al-Niẓāmiyyah entailed widely flourishing knowledge among Muslim scholars. It was even known as the golden age of Islam, when rigorous assimilation between Muslims, Christians and Jews took place. Islamic knowledge, such as Qur'anic studies, Islamic law and theological studies had surpassed great achievement and advancement. Islamic theology is also distinct with its extensive dialectical approach in debates and arguments.[21]

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[19] Maimonides provided an example of seeing the need to write philosophical truth of the Scriptures similar to the writings of Mishnah (Biblical exegesis) when the issue of vulnerability rises regarding oral tradition. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedlander (New York: Dover Publication, 1965), 108.

[20] Campanini, *An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, 126.

Apart from al-Ghazālī’s participation in intra-religious and philosophical debate, he also participated in inter-religious dialogue. Al-Ghazālī employed *kalām* not only within the Islamic prism. His *kalām* argument was also extended towards Christianity, whereby al-Ghazālī refuted the divinity of Jesus in his treatise *al-Radd al-Jamīl li al-Ilāhiyyāt Īsa bi Ṣariḥ al-Injīl* (The Excellent Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus through the Text of the Gospel). His refutation was apparent in rebutting the anthropomorphic figure of Jesus that the Christians subscribed to.

Al-Ghazālī’s argument was that Christians must distinguish between the Divine Text and human text. Textual passages referring to Jesus’ divinity should be understood metaphorically or allegorically, while texts that demonstrate his humanity are to be taken literally.[22] Al-Ghazālī perhaps studied and became familiar with Christianity through the Christian Greeks. Watt claimed that Greek teachings were mainly professed by Christians and the best school was located in Basra during the Abbasid time.[23] Therefore, it can be inferred that al-Ghazālī was not only leaning towards intra-religious dialogue but also participated actively in inter-religious dialogue with Christians.

Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī’s debate with the Jews is not apparent in any specific book. However, the assimilation of the Muslims, Jews and Christians in Baghdad was widely recognised as early as the 8th century. The Jewish community settled in Iraq as part of the diaspora period, much earlier than the 12th century.[24] In the 10th century, the most famous rabbinic scholar was Saadia Gaon, who led the Jewish academy in Iraq. In fact, he was the most eminent Jewish exponent of *kalām* with his treatise on theology written in Arabic known as *The Book of Doctrines and Opinions.*

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[21] *Ibid.*, 23.

[22] Isidore Nwanaju, “Al-Ghazālī and the Christian-Muslim Controversy in the Middle Ages”, *Historical Research Letter*, vol 26, 2015, 3.

[23] Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (London: Aldine Transaction, 2008), 37.

During the 11th and 12th centuries, the rabbinic academy disappeared due to the rising number of false messiahs. However, several other Jewish institutions (*yeshivot)* that focused on the study of traditional religious texts attempted to solve this problem.[25] The employment of *kalām* among Jewish scholars was certainly acknowledged by al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī's philosophical works somehow influenced the Jewish thought indirectly, particularly his treatise *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah,* which enticed Jewish philosophical students to extract as much information as possible on Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. Thus, it is quite certain that Maimonides, as an Aristotelian student, definitely refered to al-Ghazālī's works.[26]

Although no direct debate was recorded between al-Ghazālī and Jews as far as this study is concerned, al-Ghazālī nonetheless mentioned in his *Iqtiṣād* sects of Jews regarding understanding prophecy.[27] His address towards

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[24] See Simon Dubnov, *History of the Jews: From the Roman Empire to the Early Medieval Period,* trans. Moshe Spiegel, 2 (New York: South Brunswick, 1968), 339.

[25] Sara Karesh & Mitchell Hurvitz, *Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2006), 232.

[26] Kaufmann Kohler, & Isaac Broyder, Jewish Encyclopedia, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6650-ghazali-abu-hamid-mohammed-ibn-mohammed-al, accessed 3 April 2016.

[27] Al-Ghazālī in his *Iqtiṣād* highlighted two sects of Jews: the ʻAysawites and the Jews. The ʻAysawites were a sect separate from the mainstream Judaism who followed Abū ʻĪsā Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb al-Asfahānī who claimed to be the awaited Messiah in the 8th century. See al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal,* 1, 257-258. The ʻAysawites claimed that prophet Muhammad was a messenger to the Arabs only. While the Jews, according to al-Ghazālī, totally rejected the prophecy

Judaism could not be denied blatantly. The Jews in Baghdad were mostly influenced by Mu‘tazilite theology and al-Ghazālī’s refutation of Mu‘tazilite’s arguments was perhaps was addressed indirectly towards them as well.[28] Therefore, al-Ghazālī’s participation in both intra and inter-religious dialogue demonstrates his eminent scholarship.

Maimonides’ Interactions with Muslims’ Writing

In Maimonides’ milieu, there were generally two groups of Jewish intellectuals: the philosophers and the theologians, or rationalists. The first group was basically influenced by Greek philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Jewish thinkers associated with this group were for instance Maimonides himself and Abraham Ibn Daud (1110-1180). The group of rationalists from the Mu‘tazilite sect, which was closer to Islam, included for instance Saadia Gaon (822-942) and al-Mukammis (d.937).[29]

The Jewish *Kalām* first began to surface in the ninth century along with the influence of Muslim and Christian theology.[30] The Jewish *Kalām* emerged due to the influence of the Mu‘tazilite theology, which was adhered by the Karaite Jews. Among Jewish philosophers who were partially influenced by Mu‘tazilite theology were Marwan al-Muqammis (d.937), Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Kirkisani and Saadiah ben Joseph Gaon (822-942). Maimonides explained the factor of Mu‘tazilite influence among the early Karaites:

> “In certain things our scholars followed the theory and the method of these Mu’tazilah. Although another sect, the Asha’irah, with their own peculiar views, was subsequently

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of Muhammad including prophet Isa. They claimed there was no prophet after Musa. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fi al-I‘tiqād*, 263.

[28] Kohler, & Broyder, Jewish Encyclopedia.

[29] Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages,* 13.

[30] Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker,* 34. See also M. Cook, “The Origins of Kalam,” 32-43.

> established amongst the Mohammedans, you will not find any of these views in the writings of our authors; not because these authors preferred the opinions of the first-named sect to those of the latter, but because they chanced first to become acquainted with the theory of Mu'tazilah, which they adopted and treated as demonstrated truth"[31]

Here, Maimonides claimed that the Mu'tazilite's influence was not through their endeavour but occurred coincidentally due to its earlier emergence than the Ash'arite . The argument taken from the Mu'tazilite shows their commonality in agreeing with the simple concept of unity. Although Judaism has externally been known for its monotheistic stance, it remains ambiguous internally. Although Maimonides claimed that the Jewish *Kalām* is only indebted to the Muslim *Kalām,* it remains questionable.[32] Whether Maimonides was not aware of the direct contact between Jews and Christians or if he perhaps semiconciously intended to present the Jewish *Kalām* as having imitated the Muslim *Kalām* remains vague.[33]

Maimonides' background under three different rulings, the Almoravid, the Almohad and the Ayyubid, obviously infused diverse thinking into his intellectual journey. The Almoravid enabled him to embrace multiculturalism. Meanwhile, the Almohad taught Maimonides to establish a sturdy faith within Judaism. As for the later period of his life, Maimonides focused on transcribing what he believed, which can be read in his two magnum opus *Mishnah Torah* and *The Guide of the Perplexed.*

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[31] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed,* ed. M. Friedlander (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 108.

[32] This matter is still disputable. Christian influence on the development of Jewish kalam is also apparent especially towards al-Muqammas (in the ninth century) as well as the later generations of Saadia and Qirqisani. Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World,* 34.

[33] This may be due to his unfavorable stand towards *kalām* why he did not take the discussion to greater lengths.

Apart from that, Maimonides' intellectual journey, of which no scholar could escape reading its Arab translations of Greek works, indeed extensively influenced Maimonides. As a result, Maimonides found truth in Aristotle's works, consequently adopting Aristotle's method of deliberating the Torah and understanding God.

Al-Ghazali's Influence in Maimonides' Writings

Despite the different religious beliefs, affiliations, times and locations, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides indeed corresponded indirectly to each other through their discourses on God. There is apparent affinity between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, which is observed to be the result of a background similar to the medieval Arabic milieu. The possibility of an indirect influence or borrowing among traditions in understanding the concept of God is also demonstrated.

First, it is clear that both discourses are similar in the structure of discussion. Both scholars referred to the main elements of God that constitute His essence, existence, attributes and acts. Besides, both discussed the concept of anthropomorphism in the Qur'an and the Hebrew Bible, which was then interpreted allegorically. This kind of arrangement was common among theologians and philosophers in debating God. It demonstrates that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides embraced the tradition of discourse.

Other junctions indicate that the structure and technique of writing Maimonides employed seem similar to al-Ghazālī. For instance, in his *Iḥyā'* al-Ghazālī posited 'the Book of Knowledge' as the first chapter of the book. Similarly, there is also a chapter on the Book of Knowledge in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* but the content slightly differs. Al-Ghazālī's Book of Knowledge contains a usual epistemological discussion, whereas Maimonides emphasized on what one must know and believe.[34] Second, Maimonides' book title *Dalālat al-Hāi'rīn* (The Guide of the Perplexed) is also found in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* referring to God as the 'guide of the perplexed' (*dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*).[35] The phrase '*dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*' is mentioned twice in *Iḥyā'*. It is mentioned once in the *Book of Excellent Characteristics* of the Prophets and again in the explanation on the true meaning of blessings under the *Book of Patience and Gratefulness*. In both junctions, al-Ghazālī refers to God as a guide for the perplexed.

Third, it is also very obvious when in his book *Epistle to Yemen*, Maimonides describes the Torah as that "which guides us, and which delivers us from error" *(al-munqidh lanā min al-ḍalāl).* This phrase is found in al-Ghazālī's renowned autobiography, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl,* which elaborates his spiritual journey.[36] These three proofs demonstrate Maimonides' acquaintance with al-Ghazālī's writings. He may not have mentioned al-Ghazālī in any of his works, but to claim that he did not acknowledge or was not familiar with al-Ghazālī is implausible. This is likewise applicable to other Muslim or Jewish theologians, be it the Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite , Jewish Rabbinite or Karaite, whose lines of arguments Maimonides rebutted in depth but did not mention directly in his writings.

Secondly, it can be claimed that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides were known as spokesmen for their respective religions in discussing the notion of God's unity and incorporeality. Al-Ghazālī attempted to establish *Tawḥīd* in such a comprehensive theistic notion that it is extended in most of his works, such as *Iḥyā', Iqtiṣād, Tahāfut* and others. Although earlier scholars like his predecessors al-Ashʿarī (873-935), al-Bāqillānī (950-1013), al-Juwaynī (1028-1085) and others had delineated the *kalām* account, al-Ghazālī nonetheless continued to strengthen and deliberate the majority of proofs once claimed by al-Ashʿarī and his successors.[37]

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[34] S. Harvey, "Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides and their Books of Knowledge," in *Be'erot Yitzhak – Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky,* ed. J.M. Harris (Massachusetts: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2005), 99–117. The phrase *dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* is mentioned twice in *Ihyā'*.

[35] See A. Gil'adi, "A Short Note on the Possible Origin of the Title *Moreh Ha-Nevukhim*", *Tarbiz,* 49, 1979, 346-347. See also Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World,* 25

[36] Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World,* 69.

Maimonides may perhaps be considered the earliest philosopher of Jewish thought. He proclaimed that none of the rationalists preceding him could be called philosophers as there are no Jewish philosophers mentioned in his *Guide*.[38] He established the concept of the unity of God based on Aristotelian arguments and refuted the theological arguments that he termed mere imagination. Maimonides' greatest contribution was in listing the 13 articles of faith[39] that have been widely accepted by Jewish adherents and five of which emphasize that God was revealed in the commandments. This occurs when dogma and creedal doctrine are not used to being central to Judaic belief. Consequently, it becomes customary of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles in a slightly more poetic form beginning with the words *Ani Maamin* – “I believe” - every day after the morning prayers in the synagogue.[40]

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[37] Mudasir Rosder, *Asas Tauhid: Pertumbuhan dan Huraiannya* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989), 41.

[38] Only two Jewish philosophers namely Isaac Israeli (d. 950) and Joseph Ibn Nadiq (d. 1148) are mentioned (probably because Ibn Tibbon had only asked about these two) which Maimonides only acknowledged as pure physician. Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World*, 27

[39] 1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in God's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in God's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship God exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy.
7. The belief in the primacy of the prophecy of Moses, our teacher.
8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah.
9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.
10. The belief in God's omniscience and providence.
11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.
12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.

It is evident that although al-Ghazālī’s affiliation with Judah Halevi was closer than Maimonides, Judah Halevi (1075-1141) employed al-Ghazālī’s arguments to rebut Aristotelian philosophy in Spain. Besides Judah Halevi, Hasdai Crescas (1340-1411) was among those influenced by al-Ghazālī’s writings, as he employed al-Ghazālī’s work to critique the Aristotelian philosophy.[41] Both Halevi and Crescas generally applied al-Ghazālī’s profound argument to expose the danger of philosophy in religious thought. Nevertheless, Maimonides’ influence and scholarship among Jewish scholars is more credible, since he was the one who established the 13 principles of faith that present-day Jews still hold and recite during daily prayers.

Third, al-Ghazālī’s effect on Maimonides is plausible owing to the Almohad prism of theological implications.[42] Again, the structure of Maimonides’ treatise was founded on the epistemological concept of knowledge highlighting the close relation of true knowledge with belief. Maimonides explained that belief does not merely entail utterances as Jews normally understand. Belief must be represented outwards in seeking certain knowledge

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13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

[40] Online *Mishneh Torah*, Chabad, http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332555/jewish/Maimonides-13-Principles-of-Faith.htm, accessed 12 April 2013.

[41] Harry Wolfson, *Crescas’ Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1929), 11-16.

[42] Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World*, 68-70.

regarding faith. This is similar to what al-Ghazālī implied when he mentioned the necessity to learn *Farḍ 'Ain,* which would lead to attaining knowledge of God.

Thus, the influence of al-Ghazālī on Maimonides' work is obvious despite not having mentioned al-Ghazālī's name directly in his treatises. Moreover, anthropomorphism, which is incompatible with monotheism, was seen as an impact of the Almohad indoctrination. Although Maimonides was not the first Jewish philosopher to reject anthropomorphism, none had actually clearly defined this as an article of faith. This may have been possibly due to al-Ghazālī's influence on the Almohad theological realm. Al-Ghazālī's thought basically founded the Almohad reign. It was spread by Ibn Tumart, who was once known as al-Ghazālī's disciple. Writings by al-Ghazālī are easily traceable to the Almohad rule period.[43] Thus, Maimonides could not have missed reading al-Ghazālī's works, especially his reiteration and refutation of Greek philosophy.

Fourth, although al-Ghazālī's influence on Maimonides' writings may not have been substantial, despite the contrasting ideas of the two scholars some of al-Ghazālī's views appear similar to Maimonides' argument in his writings. This demonstrates al-Ghazālī's significant effect towards Maimonides' writings.

Among the apparent similarities between both scholars, Leo Strauss mentioned their opinion on the created world. Maimonides seemed to have agreed with al-Ghazālī on the subject of God's will and particularization.[44] Nevertheless, Maimonides still subscribed to Aristotelian thought, which he fully embraced when discussing the unity and incorporeality of God. This is evident in their basic stances, where al-Ghazālī attempted to adopt reason as a tool per se in understanding revelation. On the other hand, Maimonides believed that philosophy is embedded within Judaism and he was therefore very much inclined to demonstrate the philosophical thought within the Scriptures.

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[43] *Ibid.*, 69. See also M. Flethcer, "Ibn Tumart's Teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī", *al-Qantara*, 18 (1997), 305-330.

[44] Strauss phrased the acquaintance as 'considerable interest.' In Strauss "The Translator's Introduction," *The Guide of the Perplexed,* cxxvii.

Nevertheless, certain discrepancies between the two scholars include their theories regarding God's knowledge and the positive-negative attributes of God that subsequently establish the notion of divine unity. This discrepancy is due to the great influence of Greek philosophy on Maimonides. However, for the scope of this study, the two scholars' imminence and comprehensive understanding of their religions and discussing God in particular, is the main factor in exploring the developmental thinking on divine unity through the lens of these two prominent scholars.

Conclusion

In sum, it can be observed that the uprising of Arab intellectuals starting from the tenth century bore fruits in later centuries, which were embraced not only by Muslims but equally by Christians and Jews. The assimilation that took place, especially during the Umayyad rule in the east and west, brought scholars together in reading Arabic materials that had been vastly translated by Arab Muslim scholars. This leads to the indirect correspondence between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. Despite practicing different religious beliefs, both scholars argued on the unity and divinity of God which was based on the concept of monotheistic belief.

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