

¹Ibn Daud and Gundisalvi - Exploration of an Intellectual Kinship in the Context of Twelfth-Century Toledo

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This article will address the relation between works of two medieval scholars whose work and mutual encounter was shaped by the cultural and intellectual environment of 12th century Toledo. Abraham ibn Daud (c. 1110 – c. 1180) is known as an important historian of Rabbinic Judaism and the first Jewish Aristotelian philosopher. His chronicle *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (“The Book of Tradition”) is considered to be one of the very few truly historical works of Medieval Jewish literature, his philosophical tractate *Emunah Ramah* (“Exalted Faith”) is one of the first Jewish books devoted to the philosophical interpretation of religious belief. Dominicus Gundisalvi¹ (c. 1110 – after 1190) was one of the first Christian scholars engaged in the activities of the Toledo School of translators and thus contributed significantly to transmission of many works of Greek and Arab science and philosophy to Western Latin scholarship. In his own writings, notably *De Divisione Philosophiae* (“The Division of Philosophy”), *De Processione Mundi* (“The Procession of the World”), *De Anima* (“The Soul”) or *De Unitate et Uno* (“The Unity and the One”) he tried to summarise and explain to Christian audiences the ideas of the philosophers whose works he had studied.

The role which Gundisalvi played in the development of medieval Aristotelian philosophy is well established in modern scholarship, mainly thanks to the work of Alexander Fidora and Charles Burnett. Ibn Daud has also been the subject of considerable research in the field of Jewish studies, both as an historian and a philosopher.

While the collaboration of the two men as translators is generally acknowledged, not much attention has so far been given to a direct comparison of their original works. The one notable exception is an article by Fidora,¹ in which he examines if and how the authors reflect the topic of religious tolerance in their philosophical writings. As far as I am aware, however, no comprehensive critical study comparing Ibn Daud’s and Gundisalvi’s philosophy in general has yet been written.

This article is based on my Master’s dissertation which made an attempt to explore any possible influence of one author on the other. The texts of the major works of Ibn Daud and Gundisalvi, however, showed very little evidence of such influence. On the other hand, mutual similarities and relatedness of both authors’ approaches were evident. It seemed reasonable, therefore,

¹ Another often used version of his name is Gundissalinus. Throughout this article, however, the former version shall be used, as it seems to be more historically authentic, see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, ‘The Social Condition of the Arabic-(Hebrew)-Latin Translation Movement in Medieval Spain and in the Renaissance’, in *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. by Andreas Speer, Lydia Wegener (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 68-86 (p. 73, note 30). For other variants of the name, see John A. Laumakis, *Dominicus Gundissalinus, The Procession of the World (De Processione Mundi. Translated from the Latin with an Introduction and notes)* (Marquette University Press, 2002), p. 9.

² Alexander Fidora, ‘Abraham ibn Daūd und Dominicus Gundissalinus: Philosophie und religiöse toleranz im Toledo des 12. Jahrhunderts’, in *Juden, Christen und Muslime. Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter*, ed. by Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, Alexander Fidora (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004).

to make a critical analysis of chosen specific topics which were especially important to both authors. The case study presented here will suggest that there existed an authentic intellectual relation between Ibn Daud and Gundisalvi, whether direct or indirect.

The text-based comparison of both authors' understanding of the relation between faith and reason (religion and philosophy) will show that their views were formed by the same influences, that they were intrigued by the same questions regarding the interpretation of this world and that they sought the answers in similar philosophical conceptions.

Historical and Cultural context

The re-conquest of Toledo, the ancient ecclesiastic metropolis of Spain,³ by Christian forces led by King Alfonso VI of Castile in 1085, was one of the major battles of the *reconquista* wars which considerably weakened the position of Muslims in the Iberian peninsula.⁴ Consequently, the atmosphere in Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) became strongly radicalised: in the last decades of 11th century, the Muslim kingdoms and principalities of Southern Spain were effectively taken over by the North African Islamist movement of the Almoravids. They, however, failed to ensure political unification and lasting military success. In the 1140's, the continuing weakness in the Muslim camp provoked yet another invasion from North Africa, this time led by the even more radical Almohads.

The Almohads, whose approach to Islam was highly fundamentalist, were strongly opposed to secular culture and sciences and extremely hostile to all non-Muslim religions. This brought an end to the liberal, culturally advanced environment that had so far been typical for the Muslim part of the peninsula. Therefore, the Almohad invasion also brought about a disastrous change to the lives of Andalusian Christians and Jews, who were effectively left with the choice between conversion to Islam and exile. The Jews were particularly unwilling to give up their faith and many of them left the country in a great wave of emigration.

On the other hand, in the Christian states of Northern Spain, the political and military conflict with Muslims did not mean a rejection of Arab science, scholarship and cultural influence. Similar to the situation in Al-Andalus before the Almoravid invasion, the atmosphere of relative openness and tolerance towards religious minorities was the norm. Whilst Jews and Muslims in Catalonia, Aragon or Castile had by no means an equal status with the Christians, they were not threatened by state-sanctioned persecution and did enjoy considerable religious freedom. Therefore,

³In accordance with current practice, this term, used in a cultural rather than political sense, refers to the area of modern Spain in general, and its Christian part in particular - in such cases, the Muslim territories are referred to as Islamic Spain or Al-Andalus, cf. Dimitri Gutas, "What was there in Arabic to the Latins to Receive? Remarks on the Modalities of the Twelfth-Century Translation Movement in Spain", in *Wissen über Grenzen*, pp. 3-21 (p. 3).

⁴The main historical data in the following summary are taken from Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), chapter 1, pp. 2-41.

Christian Spain became a haven for thousands of Jews fleeing repressions as they tried to save their lives and preserve as much of their culture as possible. It was especially the Kingdom of Castile and its capital Toledo that became the centre of Jewish economical, religious, scholarly and cultural activities.

Abraham ibn Daud, one of the Jewish émigrés who found their new home there, came to a city with a rich cultural life and advanced scholarship. Although Toledo was not a university town, its Cathedral functioned as a natural centre of sciences, philosophy and religious studies. During the 12th century, the city's scholarly community became involved in cultural enterprise known as the "School of translators of Toledo", which played a key role in building a connection between the world of Arabic scholarship and the Latin culture of Christian Europe, introducing to it many works of Classical Greek literature, which had so far only been available in Arabic translations and paraphrases.

The school of translators, active for several decades, came into being thanks to the initiative of Raymond the archbishop of Toledo in 1126 - 51.⁵ The two Christian scholars, who could be seen as founding figures of the movement, were Gerard of Cremona (1114 - 87), one of the numerous "Frankish" priests that came to Toledo in connection with the translation program,⁶ and a native Spanish cleric, Dominicus Gundisalvi, who concentrated chiefly on translating the philosophical works of Arab neo-Platonism and Aristotelism.⁷ At the centre of their attention were works of Greek writers and their Medieval Arab commentators and successors. All the theoretical disciplines that were included in the broadly defined field of philosophy (i. e. natural sciences, mathematical disciplines and metaphysics or philosophy proper) were given considerable attention. It can be safely presumed that the translators were expected to supply the emerging Latin scholarship with sufficient sources and manuals to enable the further independent development of the relevant disciplines in Christian Europe.

It was on the platform of this school of translation that Gundisalvi and ibn Daud met. It seems to have been a common practice that Jews and Mozarabs (Arab Christians) were engaged in the translation program: although they usually had no or only a basic knowledge of Latin, they supplied the Christian translators with a raw word-to-word translation into the Romance vernacular of Castile.⁸ This "intermediate" translation was then transferred to Latin by the educated cleric, who had sufficient background in philosophy, sciences and Classics.⁹ Sometimes, the names of these intermediate translators are known, as is the case with the two collaborators of Gundisalvi: Iohannes Hispanensis (John of Spain), possibly a Mozarab, and a Jew, who in a letter to Archbishop John of

⁵ See Laumakis, *Dominicus Gundissalinus*, p. 9.

⁶In fact, these priests came from various countries of Catholic Europe (see Charles Burnett, 'The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century', *Science in Context* 14 [2001], 249-288, p. 251).

⁷ Ibid., p.11. He is one of the few Toledan translators who engaged in their own original work, too.

⁸ Or possibly a local dialect of colloquial Arabic that was more familiar to Castilian Christians than the Classical Arabic of the originals.

⁹ See Burnett, 'Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program', p. 252.

¹⁰ There, he describes his contribution to the translation of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). For relevant passages of the letter, see Laumakis, p. 10.

debate, but most modern scholars agree that he is none other than Abraham ibn Daud.¹¹

Ibn Daud stands out among the Arabic speakers engaged in the school of translators as the only one who is known to have produced his own works of considerable significance and to have been an important leader within his own community.

The following outline of both authors' lives and works will suggest that a relationship between their philosophical works exists as there are similarities which are otherwise difficult to explain: Both Gundisalvi and Ibn Daud attempted to provide their readers, so far unfamiliar with the world of Aristotelian philosophy, with a compendium which would explain to them the basic philosophical truths as they saw them. Although their backgrounds differ considerably and in the texts, there are no direct quotations or parallel passages that could be proven to have been taken by one author from the other, they often approach the same philosophical questions accenting similar particular problems and expressing similar concerns in a way that does not seem to be accidental.

The Authors and Their Works

1. Dominicus Gundisalvi

Dominicus Gundisalvi was probably born around 1110, and died no sooner than 1190.¹² Although not many biographical facts are known to us, there is material evidence of his presence in Toledo; his post in the Spanish Catholic Church was Archdeacon of Cuéllar. While holding this title, he was active as a canon in the diocese of Segovia and later in Toledo. Several charters issued by the archdiocese of Toledo in the 1160's and 1170's bear his signature as a member of the Toledan chapter.¹³

In his work in the translating program of Toledo, he was mainly interested in the works of Arab and Judeo-Arab Aristotelism.¹⁴ Among the most important authors he translated are the Arab Aristotelians Al-Farābī (e. g. *De Intellectu*) and Ibn Sina (e. g. parts of his major philosophical compendium *al-Šifā*). Gundisalvi, however was also interested also in the writings of neo-Platonist thinkers, most notably the Jewish poet and theologian Solomon ibn Gabirol.¹⁵ This demonstrates one

¹¹ The study that came as close as possible to a decisive confirmation of this view is Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny, 'Avendauth?', in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallcora*, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954), pp. 19-43. In modern scholarship, her conclusions are generally considered correct, see for example Gershon D. Cohen, *A Critical Edition with a Translation and Notes of The Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah) by Abraham ibn Daud* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), Fidora, 'Abraham ibn Daūd und Dominicus Gundissalinus' or Dimitri Gutas, 'What was there in Arabic to the Latins to Receive? Remarks on the Modalities of the Twelfth-Century Translation Movement in Spain', in *Wissen über Grenzen*, pp. 3-21. Others, however, either identified Avendauth with John of Spain or considered him to be a different Jew named Ibn Daud, cf. Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961). Although such views are occasionally followed today (cf. Laumakis), the general consensus is to agree with D'Alverny.

¹² The discussion about the years of his birth and death is summarised in Laumakis, pp. 9-10.

¹³ See Miguel Alonso Alonso, *Temas filosóficos medievales (Ibn Dāwūd y Gundisalvo)* (Comillas Santander: Universidad Pontificia, 1959), pp. 20-25; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'The Social Conditions of the Arabic-(Hebrew)-Latin Translation Movement in Medieval Spain and in the Renaissance', in *Wissen über Grenzen* (pp. 68-86), p. 73.

¹⁴ On the other hand, his contemporary Gerard, was more interested in translating scientific literature in broader sense (see 'The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program').

¹⁵ He wrote his philosophical work originally in Arabic, but only its early Hebrew translation under the title *Meqor Chayim* ("Fountain of Life", *Fons Vitae* in Gundisalvi's translation) is preserved. Gundisalvi, who worked with the original, rendered the author's name as *Avenebrol* or *Avicbron*. The translator did not know the author's identity and as there are no explicit references to Judaism in the work, Gundisalvi probably supposed that "Avicbron" was Muslim (see Raphael Jospe, *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), p. 111).

important aspect of the intellectual atmosphere in Toledo: while the translating program was instrumental in introducing Aristotelian philosophy to European scholarship, which led to the gradual weakening of the previously dominant position of (broadly defined) Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophical traditions, it did not mean categorical refusal of the earlier schools of thought. In fact, it even seems reasonable to speak of a “Platonic-Aristotelian continuum” in Christian philosophy at this time.

The character of Gundisalvi’s original works suggests that his goal was to provide his readers with a comprehensive corpus of texts that would prepare them to study sciences and philosophy from the sources made available by the Toledan translators. His particular emphasis on metaphysics¹⁶ is apparent: among his works, only *De Divisione Philosophiae* (DDP) deals with all main scientific disciplines studied by medieval scholars. Gundisalvi’s other texts are more closely connected to philosophy proper: *De Processione Mundi* (DPM) addresses questions of creation and organisation of this world. His short “philosophical essay” *De Unitate et Uno* (DUU) presents unity as the basic condition of every created being as well as the supreme unity of God. *De Anima* (DA) is Gundisalvi’s summary of philosophical psychology, explaining existence, character, parts and immortality of the soul.

However diverse Gundisalvi’s works are, it is possible to identify and track a unifying motive that is present, in one form or another, in all of them: they all make an attempt to offer the sum of philosophy (in the broader sense) as the author understands it, his qualified evaluation of what its true objectives are and what methods it should employ to achieve them. His account, on the whole, carefully explores his topic with the obvious intention to be as clear and understandable – and indeed, as acceptable for the reader – as possible.

2. Abraham ibn Daud

Similar to Gundisalvi, very little about Ibn Daud’s life is known. But those facts we do know play an important role in forming the background of his work: born in Al-Andalus around 1110,¹⁷ he fled his homeland in the wake of the Almohad conquest in the late 1140’s and settled in Toledo, where he was instrumental in forming a lively Jewish community. He became one of its leaders and possibly played some role as a representative of Toledo Jews in their dealing with the Christian authorities.¹⁸ It seems reasonable to suppose that his stay in Toledo was permanent and his involvement in the School of Translators indicates that he was engaged in scholarship even outside his community and

¹⁶ In the Aristotelian sense of the discipline, which is studied after the natural sciences (i. e. philosophy, in the modern sense, of the term and theology).

¹⁷ Ibn Daud was born in to an influential family connected to Córdoba, which is most commonly considered to be the town of his youth (see Cohen, p. xvi). Some authors (e. g. ‘The Social Conditions of the Arabic-(Hebrew)-Latin Translation Movement’, p. 72) believe that Ibn Daud was born in Toledo and then brought up in Muslim Spain to come back after the Almohad conquest. However, there is not much evidence to support this view.

¹⁸ In *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, Ibn Daud describes the respect of the Christian authorities which the leaders of the Castilian Jewish community enjoyed and the offices that were occasionally entrusted them (see SHQ, pp. 71-72). In addition, the wording of Avendauth’s letter to Archbishop John (as well as the fact that he addressed him directly) suggests that the writer was a person of some importance.

gained considerable recognition amongst Christian intellectuals. We know nothing definite about Ibn Daud's later life and death, but he probably died in Toledo after reaching his seventieth year.¹⁹

His literary work is of a much more compact character than Gundisalvi's. After he settled in Toledo, he wrote the two major works for which he is chiefly known today: *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (SHQ),²⁰ his historical account of the origins and development of Rabbinic Judaism, and philosophical tractate *Emunah Ramah*, written in Arabic.²¹ This work consists of three books, the first being the most general. It explains the basic terms and concepts of philosophy in the Aristotelian sense "natural science and what comes after it". The second book deals with the questions of religious faith and addresses more directly the specific problems of Jewish religion. The short third book is devoted to "practical philosophy", i. e. ethics and the management of household and community.

It has been suggested that the two works could be seen as complementary and that they were written intentionally as two parts of a single project: a detailed, carefully constructed defence of Rabbinic Judaism through historical and philosophical argumentation, respectively.²² However, this categorical statement does seem to over-simplify the situation. *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* is first and foremost an ardent (often even aggressive) polemic with Karaite Jews who refuse the authority of Rabbis and post-Biblical religious literature. On the other hand, *Emunah Ramah* does not defend Judaism against external or internal attacks, but rather explains the most important philosophical concepts as Ibn Daud understood them from the works of Arab Aristotelians. Moreover, the argument of the book and its tone strongly suggest that the eponymous "exalted faith" means the very phenomenon of faith, explained in philosophical terms, rather than a specific religious denomination. While *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* encourages the reader to be proud of what he is, *Emunah Ramah* tries to help him to find new horizons and look at the world from a new perspective.

In this respect, the works of Abraham ibn Daud and Dominicus Gundisalvi seem to be notably similar. Both men tried to summarise their knowledge and philosophy and to give their accounts such a form which would be most beneficial to their respective readerships. To gain a better understanding of the similarities and differences of their approaches, we will now have a closer look at the ways in which both authors presented the crucial topic of a mutual relation between Faith and Reason.

¹⁹ Some later Jewish Medieval authors (e. g. Isaac Israeli, *Yesod Olam*, IV,18, cited by Moritz Steinschneider, *Geschichtsliteratur der Juden* (Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag von J. Kauffmann, 1905), p. 45) claimed he died a martyr's death as a victim of anti-Jewish riots, but there is no direct evidence of this.

²⁰ SHQ is followed by two accompanying historical texts, one of them summarising the history of Ancient Rome, the other the events of the First Judeo-Roman War. In addition to his main works, Ibn Daud is also known to have written two astronomical treatises, of which nothing survives today (see Cohen, p. xxviii). This confirms Ibn Daud's wider interests in the field of secular sciences, which he has in common with Gundisalvi.

²¹ The original, *Al-'Aqīdah al-Rafī'ah*, was lost and the text survives only in Hebrew. Two early translations were commissioned by Jewish communities outside Spain, whose members had no knowledge of Arabic. One of them (*Ha-'Emunah ha-Niss'ah* by Samuel Motot) is preserved in only one manuscript. The other (*Ha-'Emunah ha-Ramah* by Solomon ibn Labi) was apparently much more popular (eleven manuscripts exist today) and has become a principle source of all modern editions. All quotations in this article are taken from this version. For information about the textual tradition, see Weiss's comments in Abraham ibn Daud, *The Exalted Faith. Translated with commentary by Norbert M. Samuelson, translation edited by Gershon Weiss* (Rutherford – Madison – Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London – Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), pp. 13-20.

²² Cohen in his detailed and generally enlightening introduction to SHQ even calls *Emunah Ramah* an "*apologia pro religione Indaica*" and even concludes that either of the two Ibn Daud's books is "only a part of a total and integrated scheme" (Cohen, p. xxix).

Relation of Religion and Philosophy in the Works of Ibn Daud and Gundisalvi

While Gundisalvi's and Ibn Daud's works are fundamentally philosophical rather than theological, they do approach the field of philosophy from the viewpoint of unequivocal monotheism. Their philosophical views are firmly based on the premise that there is one, eternal God who is the ultimate source of all existence. Moreover, both authors see their respective religious traditions as a natural framework of their belief, while philosophy enables them to "build a bridge" between faith and reason.²³ The different nature of Ibn Daud's and Gundisalvi's works (one comprehensive treatise on religious philosophy versus a collection of more specific and independent philosophical texts) means that also the approach to religion is expressed in different ways.

Book Two of *Emunah Ramah* is the most obviously religious (in the stricter sense) part of Ibn Daud's work and it is also most closely connected to the spiritual world of Judaism. Its goal is to apply the principles of philosophy explained in Book One to the core topics of Jewish religion. It is, however, remarkable, that a considerable part of this book is devoted to philosophical definitions of the "sources of faith", and the attributes and actions of God (ER, 125a - 163a). This treatise is followed by a philosophical explanation of more "specifically Jewish" topics, prophecy and the metaphorical nature of Biblical language. Juxtaposition of these subjects and the fluent transition from the general philosophical debate to the specialised, more technical discussion of particular theological problems shows that in Ibn Daud's understanding the two phenomena (faith and reason) are not in mutual contrast or opposition, but form a continuous complex.

Ibn Daud comments in considerable detail on the division of religious principles to "revealed" (תועימש, lit. "heard", i. e. announced), and "rational" (תוילכש) and explains the differences between various religions by their adherence to the former, while the latter "do not vary greatly from nation to nation."²⁴ On these grounds, Ibn Daud claims that the existence of one state where all the faiths that differ in the revealed religious laws could live peacefully together is possible. This statement is remarkable, since it could be interpreted as the first and only Ibn Daud comment (however indirect) on his *hic et nunc*.²⁵ Whether he describes what he sees as the actual reality (especially in the light of the disastrous situation in Al-Andalus under the Almohad regime), or what he believes to be the best realistically achievable state of affairs that is yet to be created, remains an

²³ Ibn Daud states this clearly in his initial dedication of *Emunah Ramah*, where he declares that he wrote it to address the relation between Divine Providence and freedom of choice (ER, 1b). Gundisalvi, too, makes occasional references to the dichotomy of faith and reason, probably most clearly in the introduction to *De Anima*: "...ut fideles, qui pro anima tam studiose laborant, quid de ipsa sentire debeant, non iam fide tantum, sed etiam ratione comprehendant." ("... so that the faithful, who care for their soul with such effort, comprehend not only by faith, but also by reason what they should think about [its nature].") DA, p. 31.

²⁴ "דשאו מוארקי תוילכש אל פלחתת מהב המוא המוא", ER, 172b.

²⁵ "ומיכסמ תומואה תופלחתמה דע היהיש הנידמב תחא תוליהק מישנאמ מהיתותד סיבר מהיתונמאו מהיתולבקב תורתוס מתצקו לזלזמ תלבקב תצק מביזכמו מזבמו תומורופמהו" ("Nations, differing [in the revealed religious laws] agree [about the rational ones], so that there may be in one state communities of people of many faiths and mutually disagreeing religious traditions. Some of them might degrade, deny and mock the traditions of the others, but the universally acknowledged [truths] bring them together and their business unites them into a single state as if into one body.") ER, 173a.

on rationally comprehended religion. In this way, it might be argued that Ibn Daud suggests the existence of a set of universal and universally acknowledged values which have the power to truly unite all people, regardless of their confessional differences. This approach demonstrates clearly that for Ibn Daud, religion does not mean only an accepted tradition (which he defends in *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*) but also a rational understanding of this world which logically leads to a true piety.

In Gundisalvi's work (which does not deal with explicitly theological questions), such direct division of "revealed" and "rational" religion is not explicitly stated, but the dynamics between religion and philosophy is addressed nevertheless, if more subtly: One philosophical concept, which is important for both authors and which shows the central position of God in their philosophical system, is *necessary existent* (מביוה תואיצמה; *necessarium esse*). Both Ibn Daud and Gundisalvi try to demonstrate that whereas the being of all created things is based on the transition from *potential* to *actual* existence, there inevitably must be a principle whose existence is *necessary*. This principle is the source of all subsequent degrees of creation and as such is uncreated and absolutely independent on anything else. Gundisalvi deals with the problem of the necessary existent in *De Processione Mundi*, where he describes the ultimate source of existence and explains the difference between existence on itself (*esse per se*) and existence derived from the existence of something else (*esse per alterius esse*).²⁶ He argues that the causal chain which directs the hierarchy of the created world must have a beginning, i.e. a principle from which the existence of everything else is ultimately derived and which itself is derived from nothing else. The necessary existence is opposed to the possible, which can be described as "something generic" (*aliquid generale*), belonging to many diverse entities as their common characteristic, whereas the necessary existent is "something specific" (*aliquid speciale*), which is unique and absolutely remote of any diversity.²⁷ It is described as so simple (*simplex*) and so primary (*primum*), that it cannot be in any way relative, multiple and changeable. Thus, Gundisalvi characterises the beginning of the causal chain (or the necessary existent), chiefly in negative terms. In this respect he is remarkably similar to Ibn Daud, who explicitly says that all attributes of God can be expressed by negation and implies that this negative characteristic is the most widely accepted way of understanding God.²⁸ Only after detailed explanation of the basic characteristics of the necessary existent, Gundisalvi identifies him as God the creator whom he describes in generally philosophical language, rather than in specifically Christian terms.²⁹

²⁶ DPM, pp. 13-19

²⁷ "Manifestum est etiam, quod essentia, cui debetur necessitas essendi, impossibile est aliquid esse generale, quod dividatur per differentias aut per accidentia. Restat ergo, quod sit aliquid speciale." ("It is also evident that the essence to which the necessity of being belongs cannot be something generic, which is divided by differences or by accidents. It remains, therefore, that it must be something specific.") DPM, p. 14.

²⁸ "התאו מא תבטה ויחבהל המב ונראתש ותוא מיראתב לע הז תילכתה מאצמת ובושי מלכ לא חרד תוללושה" ("And if you probe better into what we attributed to Him by the attributes for this purpose, you will find that all of them refer to the way of negation.") ER, 137a. It should be noted that the negative characterisation of God is prominent in Medieval Muslim philosophical tradition (*kalām*) and Ibn Daud's reference is arguably directly influenced by it.

²⁹ "...et hoc non est nisi solus Deus, qui est prima causa et primum principium omnium, quod unum tantum necesse est intelligi, non duo vel plura." ("and this is nothing but God Himself, who is the first cause and the primary principle of everything, which must necessarily be understood to be one only, not two or more.") DPM, pp. 16-17; "Restat ergo, quod aliquid sit primum principium, quod nullo modo moveatur; et hoc est id, quod dicitur Deus." ("It therefore follows that there is a first principle, which cannot be moved in any way; and this is what is called God.") DPM, p. 18.

Gundisalvi does make few references to (from the Christian point of view) more traditional description of God, and he does occasionally quote the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is significant that Gundisalvi himself clearly understands God in fundamentally philosophical terms, as the first cause and first mover, as an independent entity *par excellence*.

Although Ibn Daud shares Gundisalvi's rationalistic approach to belief (even to such an extent that is unusual in the context of Jewish religious thought), he keeps in his writing a much closer connection to the traditional religious discourse. It is therefore rather surprising, how similar his language is to that of Gundisalvi in the passages of Book Two of *Emunah Ramah*, in which he characterises the necessary existence of God.³⁰ This necessity is explained in strictly philosophical terms. God is a necessary existent, because He is the beginning of the causal chain which gives existence to all subsequent degrees of creatures. Ibn Daud, just like Gundisalvi, claims that the existence of God is necessary, because only a principle absolutely independent of anything else can be the ultimate source of everything there is.³¹ That this unequivocally philosophical argument for the existence of God is included in the section of *Emunah Ramah* which is devoted to an explanation of the doctrines of Judaism, is most significant. Even in this context, Ibn Daud clearly shows that the God of Jewish religion is the rationally comprehended First Principle of Aristotelian philosophy.

Let us close these comments on the relation of religion and philosophy in the works of Gundisalvi and Ibn Daud with one stylistic observation concerning Ibn Labi's Hebrew translation of *Emunah Ramah*: In the passages where God is described as a philosophical phenomenon, Ibn Labi very often translates the original term³² by the rarely used word הוליא,³³ rather than its much more usual *pluralis maiestaticus* מיהוליא, used in a Jewish context as a "default" term for God. This choice suggests that the translator thought it appropriate to make a clear distinction between the two discourses (Jewish and generally philosophical), as he probably felt that this approach corresponds to Ibn Daud's intentions. It also reminds us strongly of Gundisalvi's generic language that he uses for God in similar circumstances, as we have already seen (*"hoc, quod dicitur Deus"*).

Ibn Daud described the situation of a religious Jew who tries to approach his faith philosophically as that of a man who serves two masters, "one of whom is very great, while the other is not so small."³⁴ Gundisalvi, on his part, sees the true understandings of philosophical principles as the result of two motions: the ascending of the human mind and the descending of God's goodness.³⁵ It might be concluded, that both approaches are to a certain degree present in the work

³⁰ ER, 129a-130a

³¹ "תרכהב יא רשפא אלש יהי הנה רבד אוה ביוחמ תואיצמה ותומצעב אל הנקי תואיצמה ותלוזמ סאו אל ויה מיאצמן לעפנ ילעב רודס בב"ת" ("It is absolutely impossible that there is not something, whose existence is necessary and not acquired from anything else. If there [were no such thing], it would mean that the sequence of actually existing things would be infinite.") ER, 129a.

³² Presumably הלא, a Judeo-Arabic transcription of the Arab term for God.

³³ See for example ER, 46b: "הולש מלועה הולא גיהני ותוא וחכשו בב"ת" ("...that this world has a Divinity that governs it and that its capacity is infinite.")

³⁴ "שיאכ ול ינש מינדא דחא מהמ לודג דואמ ינשהו ונניא נטק לכ רכ" ER, 185a.

³⁵ "...ad Deum mens humana contemplanado ascendit et ad hominem Divina bonitas descendit," DPM, p. 3.

of both men, who *mutatis mutandis* seem to share the basic premises of their philosophical conceptions and a common belief in the fundamental compatibility of faith and reason.

Conclusion

This article tried to address a relationship of minds that took place and was made possible by the specific political and cultural environment in twelfth-century Toledo. Examination of mutual similarities in the ways in which a Christian philosopher and a Jewish religious thinker tried to answer one crucial philosophical question showed us that rather than looking for a direct influence of one on the other we should see them as “intellectual kinsmen”. We cannot identify any one particular place in the works of either author that would have a direct equivalent in the writings of the other. Nevertheless, the many and varied, yet coherent common features of their work show clearly that their mutual similarities are not accidental. In their works, one can recognise a common understanding of this world, and despite the differences in style they put similar emphasis on the balance between their monotheistic faith, the power of reason and the value of true wisdom as they understand it. A detailed critical analysis of many aspects of Gundisalvi’s and Ibn Daud’s work that could not be addressed here would certainly be worth an independent study and could deepen our knowledge of these two highly interesting men who embodied a Jewish-Christian intellectual encounter in one of the crucial periods of the Middle Ages.