

The History of a Transmission

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Islam and the Greek Inheritance

On 20 August 636, with the battle of Yarmuk at the sources of the River Jordan, the Arab hosts defeated the Byzantine armies of Emperor Heraclitus. Palestine and Syria remained under Muslim domination, and in 637 they penetrated into Mesopotamia and also annihilated the Persians. Edessa definitively fell into Arab hands in 639. With the Muslim conquest, the core centres of Syriac culture would gradually lose their political importance and start thereafter a rapid process of cultural and political decay, their mission also languishing at a religious level.

After the conquest, the new authority greatly encouraged and eased the task of translators in order to translate into Arabic all those texts written in Syriac, given that in the early 9th century the cultural influence of classical authors was already evident throughout the Muslim East. In 832, the caliph al-Mamun founded the “House of Wisdom” (*Bait al-hikma*) in Baghdad, which worked as a true translation office and was directed in its time by Honain ibn Ishaq (809-873), the most famous translator of Syriac works into Arabic. Generally, the task of translators mainly focused on the whole of the corpus formed by Aristotle’s works, including certain commentaries by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, as well as a long list of pseudo-epigraphic works attributed to the

Stagirite; also in Plato and neoplatonic authors such as Plotinus, Dionysius Areopagita, Proclus, and a series of pseudo-Plato, pseudo-Plutarcus, pseudo-Ptolomy and pseudo-Pythagoras, all of them sources of a vast literature related to alchemy, astrology and the natural properties. It is worth saying that, although most of the translations were from Syriac into Arabic, some were also directly made from Greek, although less frequently. The Arabic terminology of these disciplines would be born in the 9th century as a result of this task of translation of philosophical and theological works.

The contact of Islam with non-Muslim groups and their particular theological and philosophical conceptions, such as Christians and Jews in Syria, and Mazdaists in Persia, would lead to a reaction and special attitude towards them that would determine the emergence of the *kalam*, the scholastic theology of Islam. Created in the 8th century in Basra and later developed in Baghdad, the *kalam* brings together a series of theological schools of thought characterised by applying a pure rational dialectics to the theological concepts of Islam. They are, therefore, the founders of the first methods of scientific reasoning and the true beginners of Islamic theological and philosophical studies.¹ Notable among the different currents of thought within the *kalam* are the *Motazilites* who, attentive to certain Jewish and Christian ideas that might affect dogmatic and

1. M.A. Makki, *Ensayo sobre las aportaciones orientales en la España musulmana*, Madrid, Instituto de Estudios Islámicos, 1968, p. 208.

moral theology as well as the concept itself of Islam and the figure of its founder, believed it necessary to stand against certain aspects of the Christian dogma of the Trinity and also against the dualist conceptions of the Mazdeist sects in Iran. Thus, they decided to firmly establish a clear conception of the unity of God refusing any positive attribute to the very essence of Divinity, and focused their doctrine on two fundamental principles: in terms of God, the principle of transcendence and absolute unity; in terms of man, the principle of individual freedom that involves immediate responsibility for our acts.

The assimilation by Islam of all this Greek inheritance through a neoplatonised Syrian Christianity would not only involve the appearance of these schools of speculative religious thought that operated with the main elements of Muslim religion but it also left a way open to a philosophical reflection that Muslim scholasticism, with its critical task and impressed by the strength of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, would gradually depurate – de-neoplatonising – in search of what they considered the true philosophy: the pure Aristotelism, represented first by Ibn Sina and later definitively by the major figure of Averroes.

The Arabs, Masters of the Jews

Within the framework of the expansion of the Muslim conquests in North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula also fell under Arab domination. In 711, once the ruinous Visigoth authority was dismantled, the Iberian Peninsula came to form part of the Islamic Empire that extended over the East from Persia to Mesopotamia until the West from the Bay of Biscay and the Pyrenees.

Al-Andalus was born, and from that moment the contacts with the East, despite being distant, would be more frequent and easier. Based on trade, the pilgrimages to the holy places and the study travels to Damascus, Alexandria or Baghdad, eastern culture would penetrate into the Iberian Peninsula and soon find a fertile soil to root itself with strength, given that from the 10th century, al-Andalus moved from a receptive phase to another as a creator and exporter of culture.² The Greek inheritance translated from Syriac and Greek reached the Peninsula resulting in an extraordinary scientific and philosophical awakening.

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During the Middle Ages, Greek philosophy would be better known and much more disseminated through Arabic rather than through Latin. Before the year 1000, the number of Greek translations known through the versions in Arabic greatly exceeded the Greek books known at that time in Latin.

In the Peninsula, the strength irradiated by al-Andalusian culture brought about the equally impressive emergence of Judaic writing. The Jews of al-Andalus would become a key element in the process of transmission of all this wisdom of Greek origin towards medieval Europe, as later they would play the role of nexus between the Islamic and Christian worlds in institutions such as the famous

2. A. Martínez Lorca, "La filosofía en Al-Andalus: una aproximación histórica", in A. Martínez Lorca (coord.), *Ensayos sobre la filosofía en Al-Andalus*, Barcelona, Antropos, 1990, p. 28.



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School of Translators in Toledo³ translating into Latin and Hebrew many of the works previously translated into Arabic from Greek or Syriac. Imbued with Arab culture, the Jews also decided to work in the fields of linguistics, rhetoric and poetry, and later cultivate disciplines such as science and philosophy, thereby reinvigorating their Hebrew language as a language of literary and scientific expression. In al-Andalus, rather than in any other place of the East or West, the Arabs were therefore the masters of the Jews.

However, we find a good example of this mastery first in the East itself, where the Jews soon felt themselves called by the intellectual

concerns shown by their new masters. The true beginning of the Jews' philosophical development took place in the 9th century during the Abassi Caliphate, when rabbinic Judaism confronted the schism represented by the emergence of the Caraites, which mainly criticised the anthropomorphic vision of God in the Midrashic sources and in the Talmud. To this internal threat was added the pressure of the new and triumphant Muslim religion that thought little of Judaism and the attacks on monotheism by Manicheist and Zoroastrian sects. In order to defend Judaism from these attacks, both internal and external, and to provide a clear and measured answer to

3. M. Orfali, "Los traductores judíos de Toledo: nexo entre Oriente y Occidente", *Actas del II Congreso Internacional "Encuentro de las Tres Culturas"*, Toledo, 1985, pp. 253-260.

these challenges, some Jewish thinkers soon fell under the influence of the ideas of the *kalam*, whose philosophy served as a shelter and a base of new interpretations for people such as David al-Mukammis or Saadia Gaon,⁴ among others. Based on this, in al-Andalus many authors followed, philosophically speaking, the neoplatonic current of their Arab contemporaries, until finally all of them tended towards the peripatetic direction behind the commentaries on Aristotle's works made by the most notable of the al-Andalusian and Arab philosophers in general: Ibn Rushd (Averroes).

Maimonides harmonises Aristotelian philosophy with the postulates of the Jewish faith. Maimonides' ideas opened a new era in the history of Judaism

With reference to the Jews of al-Andalus, in the 12th century the harmonious synthesis between philosophy and religion or revelation had to find its culmination in the figure of Maimonides, who represented within Judaism the voice that managed to explain the nature of the Jewish faith from secular thought and that seemed to give a rational base to the belief and practice of Judaism. In order to undertake this synthesis, Maimonides borrowed many ideas from the Arab philosophers al-Farabi (d. 950) and Avicenna (d. 1037), as well as his contemporary Averroes, all of them fervent followers of Aristotle. His *Guide for the Perplexed*, aimed only at an intellectual elite who was able to understand the subtle aspects of philosophical lucubration, tried to clarify the uncertainty

in the minds of those who, devoted to logic, mathematics, natural sciences or metaphysics, did not manage to reconcile the Torah with the principles of human reason. The main objective of the *Guide* was to eliminate confusion and perplexity based on a figurative or allegorical interpretation of some Biblical texts. Far from clarifying the way, Maimonides' method to interpret Jewish faith would unleash a philosophical controversy that shook the intellectual life of the medieval Jewish communities during the 13th and 14th centuries, especially in Catalonia and Provence.

Maimonides

Born in Cordoba in 1135, from a very young age he was familiar with the studies of law and medicine. Following the religious prosecution provoked by the Almohads, who had invaded and occupied al-Andalus in 1148, he fled to Fez and from there to Palestine. Definitively settled in Fustat, the former Cairo, in 1171 he became the personal doctor of the Vizier of Saladin al-Fadhel, and he lived there until his death in 1204 aged 69.⁵ His fame and prestige spread throughout the East and the West based on his works, especially the *Mishneh Torah* (1180), a treatise of Jewish jurisprudence most distinguished for its first part, the famous and also controversial *Book of Knowledge*. Also notable was the *Guide for the Perplexed*, completed in 1190, where Maimonides harmonises Aristotelian philosophy with the postulates of the Jewish faith. Maimonides' ideas opened a new

4. On the influence of the *kalam* on the philosophy of these two specific authors, see C. Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge/Paris, Cambridge University Press/Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1995 (1st edition 1985), pp. 17-37.

5. Maimonides never became Saladin's doctor, as is often said. This is just a legend reported by some medieval historians and has been perpetuated until the present. Moreover, in order to exalt him, it is said that Richard the Lionheart also wanted him as his doctor. See: E. Ashtor-Strauss, "Saladin and the Jews", *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 27, no. 5, 1956, p. 307; B. Lewis, "רמב"ם לב האריאה וסלדין" ("Maimonides, Lionheart and Saladin"), *ארץ ישראל*, 7, 1963, pp. 70-75. For more details on his life, see A.J. Heschel, *Maimónides*, Barcelona, Muchnik, 1995.

era in the history of Judaism: not only did he reconcile the Bible with philosophy but he also substituted the traditional meaning deriving from the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, therefore creating a new concept of God. The people, indoctrinated by orthodox rabbis, had in the end materialised the elements that formed part of the religious belief such as God himself, the soul and the afterlife, and made it almost impossible to understand and believe in immateriality. For them God was concrete and could be represented as something spatial with his own form, as well as the soul. Maimonides, in contrast, reduced all these elements of faith to an intellectual existence, although preserving their spiritual meaning. Reason, rather than sensation, could understand or experience them.

The specific questions for which he was severely criticised were the preponderance that he gave to philosophy above religion, his new and transcendental concept of God, his rational attitude towards the Torah as well as the spiritual conception of scatological doctrines and his firm rejection of any kind of superstition and irrational belief

In Jewish theology, as in Muslim first and finally in Christian, Aristotelism would stir up the conflict between philosophy and revelation, a conflict which, in a virtual confrontation, only sought to rationalise faith. The radicalisation of postures would lead to the birth of attitudes of mistrust and opposition to philosophy. In Islam, al-Ghazali (1110-1180) with his *Destruction of the Philosophers* would lead the heralding of the voices that accused philosophical speculation of undermining the foundation of faith and religious life. In Judaism, the antagonism came from traditionalist groups that, influenced by al-Ghazali, saw the orthodox meaning of the Scriptures endangered, and considered intellec-

tualism and the new theology of Maimonides a threat for the Jewish faith. The specific questions for which he was severely criticised were the preponderance that he gave to philosophy above religion, his new and transcendental concept of God, his rational attitude towards the Torah as well as the spiritual conception of scatological doctrines and his firm rejection of any kind of superstition and irrational belief. The anti-Maimonidian agitation responded in fact to a generalised intolerance towards any kind of innovation in the methods of interpretation and configuration of Jewish theological thought: it was difficult to accept the principle of the unity of God ignoring the attributes that the Torah itself attributed to him, because Maimonides sustained that divine attributes had to be understood in a negative sense: God is the non-existing, the non-living, because if they were understood positively they would imply multiplicity and therefore affect the divine unity. With reference to the anthropomorphic expressions that appeared in the Torah, they had to be understood, according to Maimonides, only in an allegorical sense. It was also difficult to understand the Maimonidian approaches to the issue of the creation of the world: Maimonides argued that the evidence that the Greek philosophers brought for the eternity of the world or matter was unfounded; and, therefore, in accordance with Biblical teachings, cited the evidence in favour of an *ex nihilo* creation. Also related to this question is the issue of the miracles, which Maimonides considered transitory suspensions of natural law and foundations, therefore, of the Jewish religion. According to him, miracles did not involve the direct intervention of the divinity in nature but were rather within the natural order; in other words, it was foreseen that at a precise moment the miraculous phenomenon would take place.

Maimonides adopted many philosophical theses of Aristotelian origin. And the scatologi-

cal issues were precisely those which would provoke the outburst of the controversy around his approaches. The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead and Messianism were posed by Maimonides eliminating as much as possible everything that exceeded natural and philosophical reason. This led him to state that after death what remained of the person was the acquired intellect, which tended to be identified with the universal agent. The principle of the resurrection was not demonstrable and belonged exclusively to the field of faith, but in his *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead*⁶ he explained how the soul entered the future world of the afterlife after death, how in its time the resurrection or reunion of the soul and the body would take place, how the Messianic era would then begin, which would finally end in a perdurable life where only the souls would eternally survive. The rationalisation of many of these concepts, as well as the Messiah himself, or the prophecy, understood by Maimonides as a divine emanation through the active intellect that invades the wisdom and the imagination of the Prophet, awoke mistrust in circles which did not look favourably on this philosophical vision of the religious foundations of Judaism that the wise man from Cordoba presented mainly in his *Code* and in some of his treatises. However, if we look back, we realise that Maimonides was not the first among the Jews to present or formulate these approaches. Thus, why did the attacks and the accusations fall heavily and virulently specifically against him?

The history of Aristotelism among the Jews has, before Maimonides, figures such as Ibn Abi Said Al-Mawsili and Bixr ibn Saman ibn Irs ibn Utman, two Jewish wise men in 10th century Baghdad, and above all, the al-Andalusian Ibn

Daud (1110-1180), the first true Aristotelian in the history of medieval Jewish thought. Ibn Daud's masterpiece, *The Exalted Faith*, was an incisive, firm and well-constructed apology for Aristotle in Arabic which challenged as many traditional interpretations and concepts of Judaism as Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* would later do. But the Jews devoted to "Greek sciences" never requested any translation of it into Hebrew during the 12th or 13th centuries and did not hurry to support him or proclaim publicly all that it said, for which reason Ibn Daud's work was only known by a few who devoted themselves to studying it exclusively at an individual level in the intimacy of their private studies. What, therefore, made the difference? What urged the scholars of Provence to immediately do a translation of the *Guide for the Perplexed*, turning it throughout the 13th century into the symbol and standard bearer of Greek philosophy applied to Judaism? The answer must be found in the great reputation that Maimonides had already earned himself as a codifier and jurisprudent in rabbinic matters, proving his omniscience in affairs related to religion and the interpretation of the Scriptures and the Talmud. Ibn Daud was a historian, while Maimonides was, first and foremost, *the* rabbi.

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With his brilliant and very complete cultural baggage, with his enlightening and precise answers and explanations for always dif-

6. See the Spanish translation in: M.J. Cano and D. Ferre, *Cinco epístolas de Maimónides*, Barcelona, Riopiedras, 1988, pp. 77-109.

ficult and confused questions of the dense and labyrinthine rabbinic literature, or in issues of medicine or astrology, Maimonides had managed to accompany his name with a resplendent aura which gave him enormous and undisputed authority. Taking advantage of the reverence and the prestige that he soon earned himself among the Jewish communities everywhere, the supporters of rationalising the practice and the belief of current Judaism committed to making the key work of this noble purpose known to a wider public, unleashing, however, a controversy of such serious and unexpected effects and consequences as the virtual internal division of the communities into two separate and confronted sides, even at a social and political level. The anti-Maimonidians, always respecting the name and the authority of the wise man from Cordoba as a jurist and codifier, decisively and directly attacked his intellectualism that they saw as an unashamed infiltration of the Greek culture that with impunity crossed the sacred thresholds of Jewish homes and schools endangering their lifelong faith. Thus, they did not hesitate to raise their voice against many of his theories, labelling them, straightforwardly, as heresies.

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by chance, therefore, that it was in Provence where the Jewish philosophical movement was smouldering and where, however, it was denounced and pursued with more fury, as it was also the land of the Cathars and other heretical movements of Christianity that would be pursued and closely watched by the ecclesiastical courts of the Inquisition established after the French-papal crusade of Simon de Montfort. The fight against heresy and anti-Aristotelism that during the 13th century repeatedly condemned in 1210, 1215, 1225 and 1231 the reading and study of the works of the Stagirite, would encourage the anti-Maimonidians, who in a mimetic attitude would attack Maimonides' works, thus opening the Pandora's box of the Maimonidian controversy, which would follow a special path and a very specific development in Catalonia and Provence.

Towards the North: A World of Translators

The invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by the Almohads during the 1240s meant the end of what has been called the golden age of the Jewish culture of al-Andalus. Quite intolerant with the non-Muslims, many Jews then fled either to North Africa – this was the case of Maimonides' family – or to the Christian kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, Catalonia and the Provençal areas.⁷ The Catalan and Provençal Jewish communities therefore hosted whole families of Arabic speakers, bearers of a great culture: philosophy, science, history, literature, grammar and other disciplines unknown by the non-Arabic speakers, until then fully devoted to the traditional studies of the Scriptures and

7. C. Cahen, "Desde los orígenes hasta el comienzo del Imperio Otomano", *El Islam*, vol. I, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1992, pp. 296-297; see also R. Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969, pp. 57-58 and 77.

the Talmud. The meeting of these two worlds led to a major process of exchange and transmission: the newcomers wished to share with their hosts the treasures of their rich culture and their hosts were suddenly interested in all these subjects and willing to acquire all this new knowledge. Longing to know, a part of the intellectual elite of the moment grouped into brotherhoods in diverse centres in order to devote themselves, apart from religious studies, to the study of profane sciences, mainly philosophy, which for those who fled al-Andalus were essential and indispensable for truly seizing the foundations of religion. With the objective of broadening their intellectual horizons in these centres, among which in Provence the town of Lunel stood out, some Jewish scholars devoted themselves to translating works into Hebrew, both religious and scientific, written by other Jewish wise men in Arabic. It seems that they were driven by a spirit of competition with the Christian environment and were impatient to demonstrate that Jews were also devoted to the cultivation of science and philosophical speculation.

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Already during the first half of the 12th century, the two eminent figures Abraham bar Khia from Barcelona (who died around 1136) and Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) from Navarre, introduced in Provence scientific works which, at the request of certain leaders of some Jewish communities, they translated from Arabic into Hebrew. Abraham bar Khia was the first to set out in Hebrew the scientific and philosophical knowledge of the Greek-Arab tradition with the aim of allowing access to the Provençal Jews

who did not know the Arabic language. With his encyclopaedic work, the *Book of the Foundations of Reason and the Tower of Faith*, bar Khia sought to provide an overview of all the sciences of his time, and with the objective of putting them within the reach of his co-religionists, he also wrote widely on arithmetic, astronomy and astrology, while forming an incipient scientific vocabulary in Hebrew. Like Abraham bar Khia, Abraham ibn Ezra also contributed to the dissemination of Arab science. During his journeys through Italy, Provence, France and England, he devoted himself to writing, in Hebrew, his works, treatises or translations, often at the request of the members of the communities who hosted him, therefore initiating them into the different exact and natural sciences. Abraham ibn Ezra managed to have these disciplines accompanied by Jewish religious studies, therefore channelling the integration of all that knowledge to an eminently “traditionalist” public who often mistrusted the profane sciences. A travelling wise man, a famous and admired poet, a Biblical exegete and grammarian, his commentaries on the Scriptures again opened the door to the allegorical interpretation of many passages, and many Jews, aware that this method was more developed among the Christians than among them, then created the demand for works of Greek-Arab philosophy in order not to fall behind. The result of all this was a translating fever from Arabic into Hebrew that put a large number of scientific and philosophical works at the disposal of the Hebrew reader.

The transmission from Arabic into Hebrew of the Greek-Arab philosophy and sciences was undertaken in three different ways:

- The translation of Arabic works, most of which had been translated from Greek or previously from Syriac.
- The writing in Hebrew of encyclopaedic works on knowledge expressed in Arabic,

done by Arabic-speaking Jews for their co-religionists who did not know it.

- The writing or translation of scientific or philosophical works by Arabic-speaking Jewish wise men.

A considerable part of translations in the fields of philosophy and sciences was due to the members of a family who made translation their work transmitted from father to son: the famous Tibbon family. The grandfather of this family, Judah ben Saul ibn Tibbon (1120-c.1190), left his native Granada fleeing the Almohads, and settled in the small town of Lunel, close to Montpellier, but which under the aegis of Rabbi Meshulam ben Jacob, would become a very important centre devoted both to rabbinic jurisprudence and profane studies. Rabbi Meshulam surrounded himself with a circle of scholars constituting the famous *khabura* of Lunel, a “brotherhood” of wise men devoted to religious studies which would also promote numerous translations from Arabic into Hebrew. Of this circle of Lunel intellectuals around Meshulam ben Jacob would later emerge the figures that headed similar circles of Jewish scholars and translators in towns such as Arles, Narbonne, Montpellier, Béziers, Vauvert and Perpignan.

The first important translations came from the hand of Judah ibn Tibbon, and they are works of religious philosophy written in Arabic by Jewish authors: of special note are the *Book of the Beliefs and Convictions*, by Saadia Gaon, and the *Book of Kuzari*, by Judah ha-Levi. Based on these works, the reader of Hebrew entered into direct contact with the ideas and notions of Greek natural philosophy and became familiar with the names of other Greek wise men and thinkers who shared that determined vision of the world. But the most famous of the Tibbon family saga would be his son Samuel ibn Tibbon (1150-1230), thanks to the translation that he did into Hebrew of

Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*. Samuel was called “the father of the translators” as he established and imposed as a model the techniques and the style of the translations of his father Judah ibn Tibbon. The son of Samuel, Moses ben Tibbon (active from 1240-1285), and one of his grandchildren, Jacob ben Makir (c. 1236-1304), as well as a son-in-law, Jacob Anatoli (1194-1256), would complete the saga of the Tibbon family translators.

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Maimonides finished writing the *Guide for the Perplexed* in 1196, and Samuel ben Tibbon completed the translation in 1204. By then the figure of Maimonides already enjoyed a prestige and an authority incomparable among the Jewish communities everywhere as a unique codifier of Jewish law thanks to his *Mishneh Torah* as well as by the position achieved in the leadership of the Jews in Egypt. It is then when his “heroic” image was forged, and Maimonides largely fulfilled the image of the new cultural and religious ideal of the Jews throughout medieval times. It is in this framework that the Hebrew version of the *Guide for the Perplexed* appeared. However, the book would provoke a true cultural upheaval, especially among the Jewish communities in Provence, therefore marking the beginning of a new era in terms of the attitude of non-Arabic-speaking Jews in relation to the attention and consideration to profane sciences. In fact, Maimonides’ philosophy meant that the study and exploration of philosophy had to be considered not only as legitimate but also as a religious duty. In order to make it understandable, Samuel ibn Tibbon would add to it a true philosophical dictionary where he detailed the concepts defined by the new terms, because most of them were hith-

erto unknown, as well as many of the sources of the Arab Aristotelian tradition on which Maimonides drew in order to demonstrate the concordance of Biblical texts with reason. In an interesting letter that Samuel received from Maimonides himself, the latter evaluated and recommended to his translator a series of classical and contemporary philosophers so that he would know which of them deserved to be studied and which could be ignored. These recommendations seemed to greatly influence the destiny of future translations and he therefore determined the figures to be studied by Jewish thinkers in later periods: Aristotle and his commentators, Alexander of Aphrodisia, Themistius, Averroes; the most important Islamic philosophers, al-Farabi, Ibn Bakha, Avicenna; the works of the doctors Isaac Israeli and Abu Bakr al-Razi, among others. To know their works and theories became, therefore, a priority for a good and comprehensive training, and this is how a great many translations of Greek

or Islamic philosophical works done during the century and a half after the death of Maimonides followed, verbatim, the recommendations of the latter to Samuel ibn Tibbon. It would be from the hand of Maimonides through this letter that the basic corpus of the scientific and philosophical education of the Jews in western Europe would be established.

The course of the translations was, therefore, defined and marked above all by Maimonides, and all these authors would then be the object of study of Jewish European intellectuals, mainly in the Mediterranean, returning to Europe the thoughts and lucubration of Greek, Arab, and al-Andalusian Jews who, for many centuries, had drawn on those early translations done from Greek into Syriac in that distant Bizantine-Assanid East. Greek thought entered Europe through Hebrew translations, wise men and translators some centuries before the direct translations from Greek into Latin done by the scholars and Humanists of the Renaissance.