

lowers of Aristotle, at times as his critics, included, during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries – Samuel ibn \*Tibbon, Jacob \*Anatoli, Shem Tov ibn \*Falaquera, Levi b. Abraham of Villefranche, Joseph \*Kaspi, Zerahiah b. Isaac \*Gracian, \*Hillel b. Samuel of Verona, Isaac \*Albalag, Moses \*Abulafia, \*Moses b. Joshua of Narbonne, and \*Levi b. Gershom (Gersonides), their most outstanding representative; from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century – Simeon b. Zemaḥ \*Duran, Joseph \*Albo, the brothers Joseph and Isaac \*Ibn Shem Tov, Abraham \*Bibago, \*Judah b. Jehiel Messer Leon, Elijah \*Delmedigo, Moses \*Almosnino, and Joseph Solomon \*Delmedigo. (The exact relation of these philosophers to Aristotle may be gathered from the entries appearing under their names.)

### Issues in Jewish Aristotelianism

Jewish Aristotelianism is a complex phenomenon, the general trends of which can be seen from some of its characteristic discussions. Jewish Aristotelianism differs from the antecedent types of medieval Jewish philosophy in its heightened awareness of the boundaries of faith and reason (see \*Belief). Jewish Kalām and Neoplatonism used a variety of rational arguments to establish the truth of revelation, without seeing, on the whole, any sharp boundaries between philosophy and religion. By contrast, Jewish Aristotelians held that philosophic speculations must proceed without any regard to theological doctrines. They recognized as valid only demonstrative arguments, that is to say, arguments based on the standards for such arguments laid down by Aristotle (see *Analytica posteriora*, 73a, 21ff., and passim). Once the content of faith and reason had been delineated independently, it could be asked how the two realms are related. According to one view, represented by Maimonides, the teachings of religion and philosophy could be harmonized only in part. For example, Maimonides maintains that while many doctrines, such as the existence of God and His unity, can be demonstrated scientifically, the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* cannot, and one therefore has to be guided by prophetic revelation (Guide, 2:15). By contrast, Jewish Averroists like Isaac Albalag, Joseph Kaspi, and Moses of Narbonne (Narboni) opposed the tendency to harmonize faith and reason. Thus, e.g., they accepted the doctrine of the eternity of the world, holding that it had been demonstrated by Aristotle. More than that, Kaspi and Narboni more or less openly alleged that Maimonides' defense of *creatio ex nihilo* was only apparent, i.e., exoteric, and that his real, i.e., esoteric, view agreed with Aristotle's (Kaspi, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 99–101; Moses of Narbonne, *Commentary to the Guide*, 34a; see on the latter Joseph Solomon Delmedigo's *Epistle*, published by A. Geiger, in his *Melo Hofnajim*, Ger. pt. 18 and 65, n. 70). Using the terms of the Christian Averroists, Albalag opposes the way of faith based on the prophets (*ex prophetis*) to the way of reason (*via rationis*), the one being the way of miracle, the other the way of nature. The two realms, according to Albalag, are distinct and incompatible (see G. Vajda, *Isaac Albalag*, 153–7, 165–75, 251–66; and Ch. Touati, in: REJ, 1 (1962), 35–47). A central and most crucial issue in Jewish Aristotelianism was

the question of \*creation. Aristotle based his notion that the world is eternal on the nature of time and motion (*Physics*, 8:1–3; *Metaphysics*, 12:6, 1–2; *De Caelo*, 1:10–12) and on the impossibility of assuming a genesis of prime matter (*Physics*, 1:9). In contrast to the Kalām theologians, who maintained the doctrine of temporal creation, the medieval Muslim philosophers interpreted creation as eternal, i.e., as the eternal procession of forms which emanate from the active or creative knowledge of God (see \*Emanation). The task with which the Jewish Aristotelians were faced was either to disprove or to accept the notion of the world's eternity. Maimonides offers a survey and refutation of Kalām proofs for creation and advances his own theory of temporal creation (Guide, 2:17), for which he indicates the theological motive that miracles are possible only in a universe created by a spontaneous divine will (2:25). He rejects the emanationist theory of the Muslim Aristotelians since it fails to account for the origin of matter (2:22). In the course of the subsequent discussion, the more radical Aristotelians veered toward the Muslim philosophers' position, namely, the doctrine of eternal creation. Isaac Albalag, echoing Avicenna, regarded eternal creation as much more befitting to God than temporal creation (see Vajda, loc. cit., 134ff.). Gersonides maintained the notion of creation in time, but denied the possibility of a temporal origination of prime matter (*Milḥamot*, 6:1, 7). Crescas, on the other hand, sought to combine the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* with that of eternal creation of the world by God's design and will (*Or Adonai*, 3:1, 4–5). For a survey of the problems involved and the main positions taken, see Isaac \*Abrabanel, *Shamayim Ḥadashim*. In the period following Crescas, when there was greater emphasis on the possibility of miracles, the doctrine of temporal creation gained greater adherence. Closely allied to the problem of creation is that of divine \*providence. The Muslim philosophers, who accepted the doctrine of eternal creation, understood Aristotle to teach that providence is identical with the operations of nature, which safeguards the permanence of the species, but is unconcerned with individuals. To bring the Aristotelian position more into harmony with the teachings of religion, Ibn Daud (*Emunah Ramah*, 6:2) makes the point, later elaborated by Maimonides (Guide, 2:17), that divine providence extends to individual men according to their degree of intellectual perfection. The question of divine providence and the related problem of God's knowledge gave rise to a concurrent problem, that of divine foreknowledge and man's \*free will. Narboni shows that God's foreknowledge does not necessarily preclude man's free action (see Guttman, *Philosophies*, 203–7). Crescas, on the other hand, adopts a determinist position, but states that this does not invalidate the divine commandments (*Or Adonai*, 2:5, 3; see Guttman, op. cit., 238–40). The topic of providence is linked with that of \*reward and punishment in the hereafter, which, in turn, raises the question of individual immortality. Since Jewish Aristotelianism inherited not only Aristotle's own rather ambiguous doctrine of the soul, but also the discussions of the Greek commentators and Muslim philosophers that revealed