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PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

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THE LATIN WEST (HOENEN)

In his autobiography, the British philosopher R. G. Collingwood argued that historical concepts and theories must be understood in relation to the context in which they were produced. They should not be taken according to our modern understanding, especially when our modern perceptions of them have been affected by developments that have radically changed their meaning.[1] This is the case with the notions of *philosophy* and *theology*, which are today separated as a proximate result of the Enlightenment. For example, nowadays almost no one would think of theology as a branch of philosophy, whereas in the medieval period this was one of the accepted meanings of the term. Theology in this philosophical sense originated in Antiquity and was identified with metaphysics and cosmology, not as something based on divine revelation, as it is generally understood today. It was, in short, the science of first principles, like the movers of the heavenly bodies, which are the causes of change down on earth.[2]

Had theology therefore nothing to do with divine revelation? Of course it had. However, to appreciate the role of revelation in the medieval period, it is necessary to refer to a development in late antiquity that had an enormous impact on philosophy, namely the dissemination of Christianity in the intellectual culture of the time. To its adherents, Christianity was considered a form of wisdom superior to that of the Platonists, the Stoics, and the Epicureans. Important advocates for this early view were Origen and Augustine, who regarded it as a failure of those ancient schools that they looked only for a natural foundation for human knowledge. Human beings must, according to Origen and Augustine, be receptive to divine revelation. This advice was not new. In his

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[1] R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 53–76.

[2] A telling example is the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De mundo*, written in the first century CE and translated several times the Middle Ages, in which the anonymous author argues he will "theologize about all things of the cosmos, finding the nature, position and motion of each" (391b3–5). See *Aristoteles Latinus* XI:1–2, p. 30 (tr. Nicholai).

dialogues, Plato had already referred to religious beliefs as evidentiary when dealing with difficult philosophical questions (*Meno* 81a). What was original, however, was the kind of beliefs that Christians regarded as crucial for obtaining wisdom. These beliefs were listed in the so-called doctrinal creeds, which unanimously held that there was a triune, omnipotent God who had created the world and that His Son, Jesus Christ, through his death and bodily resurrection, had shown human beings the path to eternal life (see Appendix A).

This insistence on the necessity of divine revelation underscored the limitations of human rational power and its need for divine help. So-called 'human wisdom' therefore became the object of sharp criticism. According to Sacred Scripture, God had "made foolish" the wisdom of the world. On the other hand, the same scriptures stated that Christians should give reasons when asked about their faith and that they should destroy all attacks against the knowledge revealed by God.[3] At work here was the ancient notion of *logon didonai*, the mandate to "give an account" of one's convictions. To fulfill this obligation, arguments of both pagan and Christian philosophers were employed. In his *De doctrina christiana*, for example, Augustine explained the way in which pagan philosophy could be used to elucidate the Christian faith. Crucial for him was the final goal; dealing with creation merely for its own sake was seen as vain curiosity in contrast to the benefit of studying nature for the purpose of knowing God. Significantly, Augustine attributed a crucial role to logic for the study of the Bible. On his account, logic was the science of all sciences, which helps us adhere to the truth of revelation. Heresies occur, Augustine claimed, when the wrong conclusions are drawn from the revealed truths of faith.[4] This view was accepted by most subsequent Christian scholars, who therefore employed logical argumentation even when dealing with revelation. In this way, Christian theology – understood as the science of revelation – integrated strong philosophical elements. Of course, the foundations of theology were not self-evident. In order to account for these foundations and to draw conclusions from them, theology in the Latin West opened itself to philosophy. Therefore, it is not surprising that modern researchers, when discussing philosophical developments in the Middle Ages, often focus their attention on theological works.

The fact that philosophical theories were applied and further developed in the discussion of theological issues does not, however, imply that medieval philosophy is intrinsically theology. It is an old but persistent prejudice that medieval philosophy is basically theology. Hegel, for one, was an influential

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[3] 1 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Peter 3:15.
[4] Joseph T. Lienhard, "Augustine on Dialectic: Defender and Defensive," *Studia Patristica* 33 (1997) 162–6.

advocate of this view. Only recently, since research has focused on medieval logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics in their own right, has the perception of medieval philosophy and its relation to theology changed. This chapter will address logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics in some detail in order to reveal how rational methodologies were used in the Latin West to elucidate matters of faith. In the final part, it will broach the question of how medieval philosophy came to be regarded as theologically biased and what a modern scholarly answer to this claim is.

LOGIC

The best example of the way medieval theology made itself receptive to philosophy is the presence of logic in theological writings. This happened for different purposes: to counter the arguments of adversaries, to draw conclusions from Sacred Scripture, and to reinforce theological claims. At the same time, it can be observed that developments in the history of logic were incited by theological debates. Logic was thought to have particular application to the special nature of revealed truth, in particular the doctrine of the Trinity. This is because, from the outset, logic was seen as the instrument to expose fallacies and to eliminate ambiguities. Particularly difficult to understand was the notion of the Trinity, according to which there are three divine persons, altogether different but sharing one and the same undivided divine nature. For its clarification, theologians turned to logic.

Remarkably, theologians in the Latin West did not develop a special kind of Christian logic, but used elements from ancient logic, even in the early years. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, for example, drew heavily on Stoic logic.[5] In the long run, however, Aristotle's Organon played the chief role. Its influence can be traced back to the Carolingian period and increased after the rediscovery of the hitherto unavailable parts of the Aristotelian corpus in the twelfth century. Moreover, developments in logic that had been induced by theological debates and had no counterpart in Aristotle were incorporated into the Aristotelian Organon. For example, in the late medieval period, the theory of supposition was included in most handbooks of Aristotelian logic as if it were an integral part of that science (see Chapter 11).

The rationale behind the use of logic in theology was given by Augustine. In his *De doctrina christiana* he emphasized that logic is concerned only with

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[5] Ronald E. Heine, "Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 44 (1993) 90–117; R. G. Tanner, "Stoic Influence on the Logic of St. Gregory of Nyssa," *Studia Patristica* 18 (1989) 557–81.

the truth of the connection between propositions (*veritas connexionum*) and not with the truth of that which the propositions signify (*veritas sententiae*). Augustine argued that, because of this peculiar nature, logic could be taken over from the pagans without any danger to the faith. Hrabanus Maurus adopted this argument in his *De institutione clericorum* and thus substantiated the use of pagan logic in the education of Christian theologians in the Latin West.[6] A lucid model of this use was provided by Hrabanus's teacher, Alcuin of York. In his adaptation of the *Categories* Alcuin showed how Aristotle could be used to undermine the arguments of heretics who claim that only the divine person of the Father is eternal, not that of the Son. According to Aristotle, relatives – or relations – are simultaneous by nature. When there is a half there is a whole, and when there is a slave there is a master. Thus, Alcuin argued, the necessity of the logical argument shows that when the Father is eternal, so too must be the Son, since Father and Son are also relatives.[7]

To be sure, the use of logic in theology also provoked criticism. The problem was whether logical arguments were sufficient or whether they eventually clashed with arguments from authority – not as far as content was concerned, but rather regarding the attitude of the theologian. Some believed that, in theology, theological rather than philosophical sources should decide matters of dispute, since in essence theology is based on revelation and tradition. A famous case in point is Lanfranc's criticism of Anselm of Canterbury. In his *Monologion*, the latter had argued for the essential unity of the divine Trinity, not on the basis of the Bible or the works of the Fathers, but by using reason alone (prologue and chs. 63–4). Lanfranc considered this rational approach to the Trinity to be excessive and rebuked his former pupil for not taking the Church Fathers' expositions into account. Anselm, however, was not persuaded. He claimed that nothing of what he had said in his *Monologion* was contrary to tradition. Rather, the logical approach showed that the claims of Christian faith, according to the rules of sound human reasoning, were coherent and rightfully true, even though the proper nature of the Trinity itself remained inscrutable.[8]

Yet concerns like Lanfranc's did not stop the use of logic in theology. By the thirteenth century, Dominicans and Franciscans included logic in their educational programs, and at the universities the Aristotelian Organon was the standard in all matters of demonstration and proof (see Chapter 4). Soon theologians became highly productive in the development of logic and its

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[6] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II.31.49; Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum* 3.20.
[7] Alcuin of York, *Dialectica* 340.5 (ed. Migne, *Patr. Lat.* 101: 958–9); Aristotle, *Categories* 7 (7b15–19).
[8] See Richard W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 118–27.

application to theology. William of Ockham, for example, brought the theory of supposition to bear in his discussion of the Trinity, arguing that the names of the three divine persons refer to the same divine nature in different ways and thus each has a different meaning or supposition (*Ordinatio* I.2.11). In this way, the rules of logic were used to account for the revealed truth, according to which the three divine persons have the same undivided nature without implying that the Father is the Son or the Holy Spirit.

In general, scholastic theology was highly theoretical. Almost every theologian accepted the use of logic to explain the Christian faith on a conceptual level. Matters were somewhat different, however, when attention shifted from theories to the Bible or the works of the Church Fathers. These writings often had a rhetorical nature, which meant that expressions like 'all' – as in "there went unto John all the land of Judea" – were not intended to be taken in their literal and thus logical sense. Rather, such a term was obviously to be taken as a hyperbole for 'some.'[9] But if 'all' cannot be taken literally, how can necessary conclusions be drawn from it – especially since logically speaking 'all' and 'some' are different, with the former excluding that someone did not go to John, while the latter does not? These and other conundrums led to a renewed reflection on the use of logic when explaining Sacred Scripture and the Church Fathers, which took place especially from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards.[10] It was maintained that the meaning is dependent on the intention of the author and that therefore it is necessary to go beyond the literal meaning of the words and investigate what the author wanted to express. John Gerson in his *De duplici logica* argued that the logic of theology should not be thought of as logic as taught in the universities, but rather as rhetoric. Only rhetoric is able to evaluate the style of a written text and the intention of the author and to draw the right conclusions from the author's statements (*Œuvres complètes* 3:60). Thus, towards the end of the Middle Ages, the value of rhetoric as a hermeneutical tool increased, partly replacing but never eliminating the use of logic in theology.

Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics

With a few exceptions, the application of logic to theology was never seriously questioned. In the case of natural philosophy and metaphysics, however, things were different. Astronomy in particular, when used to predict contingent

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[9] Mark 1:5. The example is taken from John Gerson's *De duplici logica* (*Œuvres complètes* 3:57–63).

[10] Alexander Brungs and Frédéric Goubier, "On Biblical Logicism: Wyclif, Virtus Sermonis and Equivocation," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 76 (2009) 199–244.

human behavior, was regarded as vain curiosity, since it putatively challenged divine providence.[11] Yet in physics and metaphysics too there was an interaction between philosophy and theology in which both pagan sources and newly developed medieval theories played an important role. A telling example is the *computus*, the discipline that determined the date of Easter. By tradition, it was celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox. Its date accordingly changed every year, depending on the constellation of the sun and the moon. Because of the significance of this feast, tables were developed that allowed Christian scholars to determine its date for every possible year. The incommensurate movements of moon and sun, however, made it very difficult to produce accurate tables. To solve this problem, special methods were developed that adjusted ancient astronomy to the special needs of the Christian religion (see Chapter 16).

Some authors, like Abbo of Fleury, considered the establishment of these tables as a special kind of theology. In a complex poem, Abbo provided a set of rules to determine the date of Easter for each year, closing the poem with a prayer asking that his preoccupation with the heavenly bodies provide him with knowledge of God. For him, it was astronomy that opens up the path to God. Natural philosophy here grew into a peculiar form of theology not unlike the ancient tradition mentioned at the outset.[12] This attitude becomes even more obvious in the writings of Hermann of Reichenau, who was dissatisfied with the traditional computistical methods on the grounds that they produced too many mistakes. He therefore looked for a new approach, which was basically theologically inspired: he argued that astronomical movements must be commensurate, as they are the products of divine creation. The archetype of creation is the Divine Word, the Son of the Trinity, which, according to tradition, is defined as *aequalitas*. To comply with his (in fact false) assumption that the motions of sun and moon are commensurate, Hermann developed a whole new theory of how numbers can be divided. This theory allowed him to operate with indefinitely small units and thus to solve, at least in theory, the problem of incommensurability.[13] Hermann's work is a vivid example of how assumptions taken from Christian revelation had a crucial impact on the ways in which ancient astronomy and natural philosophy evolved in the medieval period.

A similar interaction between natural philosophy and theology can be seen in the authors of the so-called School of Chartres. Especially in their

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[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* 2a2ae 95.5.
[12] See Nadja Germann, "À la recherche de la structure du temps: Abbon de Fleury et le comput," in A. Dufour and G. Labory (eds.) *Abbon: un abbé de l'an mil* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008) 153–76.
[13] See Nadja Germann, *De temporum ratione: Quadrivium und Gotteserkenntnis am Beispiel Abbos von Fleury und Hermanns von Reichenau* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 177–285.

commentaries on the theological writings of Boethius, these authors used philosophical theories from various traditions (such as Plato's *Timaeus* in the translation of Chalcidius) to discuss the divine Trinity. At the same time, these authors used the Trinity as the model to describe the structure of the universe. An example of this is Thierry of Chartres's commentary on the opening part of Genesis. There, he reinterprets the Aristotelian four causes in a Christian way: the efficient cause is the Father, the formal cause the Son, and the final cause the Holy Spirit. These three causes work on the material cause – the four elements – thus forming the cosmos.[14] However, such linking of philosophical and theological motives did not go uncriticized. Thus, for instance, William of St. Thierry accused William of Conches of equating the Holy Spirit with the Platonic world soul. Based on references to Augustine, he argued that the two cannot be the same.[15]

With the rise of the universities in the thirteenth century (see Chapter 4), things changed radically. Philosophy and theology each had their own faculties with separate programs of study, as well as different sources and methodological approaches. The works of Aristotle played a fundamental role in grounding this distinction. He had argued that each science is distinguished by its principles and its object. Since theology is based on revelation whereas philosophy is based on human reason, the medievals concluded that they must be different sciences. Thomas Aquinas put it this way: philosophy studies things according to their own natures and for their own sakes, while theology studies the same things, but in order to know the divine nature. This does not mean, however, that theology can operate without philosophy. Theology must use philosophy, since a wrong understanding of the nature of things may lead to a wrong understanding of God, the creator of things (*Summa contra gentiles* II.3–4).

Such a view of the relationship between philosophy and theology was not, however, shared by all. Once again, Aristotle was the key figure. For many medieval scholars, Aristotle was the model of what human beings were able to know when they used reason unaided by revelation. The problem was that, according to some, Aristotle in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics* held that God had not created the world in time, that God cannot create something new only by himself, ex nihilo, and that bodily resurrection is impossible – claims that are evidently in contradiction to Christian faith.[16] This gave rise to the central question, discussed especially in the 1270s, of whether or not philosophy, when

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[14] Thierry of Chartres, *Tractatus de sex dierum operibus* n. 3 (*Commentaries on Boethius*, pp. 556–7).

[15] William of St. Thierry, *Disputatio adversus Petrum Abaelardum*, ch. 5 (*Opuscula adversus Petrum Abaelardum*, pp. 36–8).

[16] See, for instance, Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum*, chs. 1–3.

it adheres to its own principles, necessarily runs into opposition to faith and thus to theology. Generally, in the course of this debate, the accuracy of revealed truth was never questioned. Rather, faith had an impact on how scholars assessed philosophy and the place of Aristotle. Some, for example Bonaventure, Peter of John Olivi and Francis of Meyronnes, concluded that Aristotle cannot be identi- fied as the exemplar of human reason, on the grounds that human reason cannot contradict faith. Francis, for instance, in his *Passus super universalia*, corrected the philosophical claims of the Aristotelian Organon by showing that the Organon is much better understood if one reads it from the perspective of Christian faith.[17] The crucial phrase in this work was a passage from 2 Corinthians 10:5 stating that one should fight human imagination and bring every thought to the obedience of Christ. This passage echoed the famous condemnation of 1277 in which the Parisian bishop Stephen Tempier censured 219 philosophical statements (see Chapter 8). Among these was the claim that the resurrection of the body, an article of faith as confessed in the creed, could not be argued for in philosophy, drawing on this same scriptural text to justify the condemnation.[18]

There were, moreover, still other reactions to the challenges of Aristotle. Although even those who were mainly targeted by Bishop Tempier, namely Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, did not question the truth of faith, they did have a different understanding of its relation to philosophy. Boethius of Dacia, for instance, in his *De aeternitate mundi*, argued that the philosophical view regarding the eternity of the world leaves the tenet of faith untouched, as both depend on different principles and have different ends (*Opera* 6.2: 335–6). Later Parisian thinkers like John Buridan and Marsilius of Inghen would also argue that at some points philosophy comes to different conclusions from Christian faith, for example concerning the nature of the human soul.[19] Unlike Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, these philosophers would not say that there is a har- mony between philosophy and theology in the sense that all theological claims are in agreement with human reason. According to Marsilius, for example, the notion that God created the world from nothing contradicts the basic principle of philosophical reasoning that nothing comes from nothing (*Sent.* II.1.2). For him, this contradiction shows the fallibility of human reason, which needs rev- elation to find truth. However, being convinced that philosophy should follow

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[17] See Hannes Möhle, "Transzendentale Begriffe und wahre Philosophie: ein Beitrag zu den logischen Schriften des Franciscus de Mayronis," in M. Pickavé (ed.) *Die Logik des Transzendentalen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003) 304–19.

[18] For the text of the condemnation, see David Piché, *La Condamnation parisienne de 1277* (Paris: Vrin, 1999), n. 18 (216).

[19] See Olaf Pluta, *Kritiker der Unsterblichkeitsdoktrin in Mittelalter und Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1986), pp. 84–5, 100.

its own principles, in his commentaries on Aristotle he argued strictly from sense experience and self-evident principles, whereas in his theological writings he accepted the principles of faith and corrected the views of natural reason. Even though this strategy safeguarded the proper nature of philosophical discourse in the arts faculty, eventually it placed philosophy under the tutelage of theology. The reason for this was simple. Theology revealed that philosophy was unable to find truth itself, at least in those points that were crucial for Christian faith. It was a historical consequence of this development that in 1513 the Fifth Lateran Council – in the bull *Apostolici Regiminis* – declared that all philosophical statements contradicting the Christian faith should be considered false, since truth cannot contradict truth, and therefore such statements must not be defended.[20] A similar sentiment can be found in Martin Luther's *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*, where he argues that theology is incompatible with Aristotle and that therefore theologians can do without his philosophy (*Werke* I: 226).

LATER PERSPECTIVES

Statements like those of the Fifth Lateran Council and Martin Luther must be placed against the background of the debates between the different schools of thought as they were waged towards the end of the Middle Ages, specifically between the defenders of the "via moderna" (nominalism) and the "via antiqua" (realism). At stake was the correct interpretation of Aristotle and the question of how philosophy should relate to theology. Each side accused the other of teaching a reading of Aristotle that provoked heresies and contradicted the faith. The defenders of the "via antiqua" blamed the masters of the "via moderna," who followed the line of Marsilius of Inghen, for separating philosophy and theology. The latter replied that the masters of the "via antiqua" introduced philosophical theories into theology in ways that provoked heresies, such as their theory of divine ideas.[21] In retrospect, it was the defenders of the "via antiqua," and especially the followers of Thomas Aquinas, who were victorious. More and more universities accepted the "via antiqua," even ones that had previously adopted the "via moderna." The prestige of Thomas Aquinas was an important factor here. He was canonized in 1323, and his writings were recommended in the bull *Laudabilis Deus*, which Urban V had addressed to the archbishop and University of Toulouse in 1368. With this in the background, the defenders of the "via antiqua" could argue that the way Thomas Aquinas

[20] Heinrich Denzinger (ed.) *Enchiridion symbolorum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), n. 1441.
[21] See Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, "Nominalism in Cologne," in S. E. Young (ed.) *Crossing Boundaries at Medieval Universities* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 85–144.

had used Aristotle's philosophy in his theology was the best guarantee against doctrinal errors. The reading of Aristotle *secundum viam Thomae* thus became the hallmark of a philosophy that helped students and professors keep on the right track of Christian faith. In the early modern period, Thomas Aquinas continued to be used as a model, especially within the Dominican and Jesuit orders, which had a huge influence on university education.[22] Later, Aquinas provided the ideal for the Neo-Scholastic movement invoked in 1879 by Leo XIII in his bull *Aeterni Patris*, which accepted Aquinas's defense of the harmony between philosophy and theology, in its battle against Kantians and Marxists.

Looking at the medieval debates from these later perspectives, it may seem that philosophy in the Middle Ages was guided by theology, even when arguing strictly rationally. From a modern scholarly perspective, however, it would be more appropriate to interpret the Christian religious convictions as absolute presuppositions in the way defined by R. G. Collingwood in his *An Essay on Metaphysics*.[23] Unquestioned themselves, they set the agenda for millions of other questions to which medieval philosophy tried to find answers using logical and conceptual tools that were not necessarily based on the Christian religion itself. Modern research disentangles this complex of tools and presuppositions, questions and answers, deciphering the genetic code of medieval philosophy, which in its dependence on absolute presuppositions is just as exciting as the complex of our modern intellectual go- and no-go-areas. In an exemplary way it reveals the dynamics of humanity's perennial philosophical concerns and thus may foster a better understanding of what philosophy actually is.

ISLAM (WISNOVSKY)

One of the main axes of Islamic intellectual culture in the Middle Ages was the relationship between *kalām* (the Arabic term for *speech* or *discourse*, but usually taken to mean simply *theology*) and *falsafa* (the Arabic transliteration of the Greek *philosophia*). The present chapter will argue that, far from being wholly distinct categories, *kalām* and *falsafa* were less oppositional than is generally assumed. It appears in fact that both *kalām* and *falsafa* fall on one side of a larger distinction in Islamic thought, the distinction between knowledge that arises from *intellect* and knowledge that arises from *transmission*; and even this distinction is not hard and fast.

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[22] See Charles H. Lohr, "The Social Situation of the Study of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," in C. Leijenhorst *et al.* (eds.) *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 343–8.

[23] R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940) 21–48, 213–27.

The tendency toward taxonomy

Writing in the late fourteenth century, the North African historian Ibn Khaldūn grumbled that unlike the good old days, when *kalām* and *falsafa* were discrete enterprises, "among these moderns the two methods have become so intermingled and the problems of *kalām* have become so conflated with the problems of *falsafa* that the one discipline is indistinguishable from the other."[24] Ibn Khaldūn's statement is worth citing not just for what it says about the changing relationship between *kalām* and *falsafa*. Their increasing synthesis is a plain fact about medieval Islamic civilization, a development that is clear to anyone who reads the works of post-classical (that is, post-1050) Muslim thinkers.[25] What is more striking is Ibn Khaldūn's acknowledgment that their relationship had changed, and with that an implicit recognition that intellectual activity, like any other human activity, is not static but evolutionary. As obvious as such a notion may seem, it flies in the face of how Islamic thought has generally been conceived. The tendency to treat *kalām* and *falsafa* as unchanging categories is detectable in the works of medieval Muslim doxographers, writers who concerned themselves with cataloguing the many different Muslim schools and sects. And since their works have served for the past two centuries as the primary textual sources for Western scholars of Islamic intellectual history, these supposedly rigid categories have permeated modern scholarship as well. In other words, the Muslim doxographers, and the Western scholars who swallowed their taxonomies of thought, viewed *kalām* and *falsafa* much as a Neoplatonizing Aristotelian philosopher viewed the species we find in the world: as stable and natural, with each possessing a specific *differentia* that could always be relied on to distinguish one species from another of the same genus. Thus a doxographer could distinguish the Muʿtazilī species of *kalām* from the Sunnī species of *kalām* by appealing to the fact that the Muʿtazilīs had always held (and presumably always will hold) that the Quran was created; the Sunnīs, by contrast, held that the Quran was uncreated.[26] (Their position on human free will was also used as a

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[24] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, ed. 1961, I: 837.2–4; cf. I: 836.6–8 and, more generally, I: 921.8–923.12.

[25] Recent work on this synthesis and on the relationship between *kalām* and *falsafa* include Jean Michot, "La pandémie avicennienne," *Arabica* 40 (1993) 287–344; Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into Ashʿarite Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004) 101–44; Robert Wisnovsky, "One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004) 65–100, and "Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition," in P. Adamson and R. Taylor (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 92–136.

[26] The best concise discussion of this debate remains Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," in J. M. Barral (ed.) *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dicata* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 504–25. For a more detailed philosophical survey see Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

distinguishing feature, with the Muʿtazilīs tending towards greater human auton-
omy and the Sunnīs tending towards less.) The Shīʿīs could then be differentiated
from the Sunnīs by appealing to the fact that the Shīʿīs held that the imamate, or
religio-political leadership of the Muslim community, had passed directly from
Muhammad to his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī following the Prophet's death in
632. The Sunnīs, by contrast, believed that ʿAlī's claim to leadership reflected
the historical order in which the Rightly Guided Caliphs actually succeeded the
Prophet. (The Muʿtazilites held varying positions on the imamate, with some
leaning toward the Sunnī position and others toward the Shīʿīs.)

  As is the case in the Neoplatonists' natural world, each of these three great
species of *kalām* – the Muʿtazilīs, the Sunnīs, and the Shīʿīs – can in its turn be
construed as a genus containing species. The genus of Muʿtazilism comprised
two main species, the Baghdādīs and the Baṣrans, differentiated by the doxogra-
phers on the basis of the answers each sect gave to the question, "Is God under
an obligation to do what is best (*al-aṣlaḥ*) for his creatures?" The Baghdādīs
answered yes and the Baṣrans no. The Sunnī genus itself comprised the species
Ashʿarism, Māturīdism and Ḥanbalism. The Ashʿarīs and the Māturīdīs were dif-
ferentiated from each other by their position on the divine attributes. Attributes
such as "creating" and "providing sustenance," which necessarily implied the
existence of creatures, were labeled by the *mutakallimūn* (the practitioners of
kalām) "attributes of action" (*ṣifāt al-fiʿl*); these attributes were distinct from
God's "attributes of self" (*ṣifāt al-dhāt* or *ṣifāt al-nafs*), such as "knowing" and
"being powerful", which did not necessarily imply the existence of creatures.
The Ashʿarīs held that while God's attributes of self were eternal, God's attributes
of action came into existence at the moment of creation; to maintain other-
wise could imply that creatures – the objects of those attributes of action –
were similarly eternal, which is untenable. The Māturīdīs, by contrast, held that
God's attributes of action were eternal just as God's attributes of self were; to
maintain otherwise could imply that God underwent change at the moment
of creation, which is untenable. Standing aloof from their Sunnī colleagues,
the Ḥanbalīs would in fact have regarded themselves as *muḥaddithūn* – scholars
of Hadith, the transmitted accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's words and
deeds – and not as *mutakallimūn*. Nevertheless, many Ḥanbalīs were actively
engaged in debates over central issues in *kalām*. In particular, the Ḥanbalīs held
that they alone were the true "upholders of the divine attributes." This is
because the Ḥanbalīs insisted on a literal understanding of Quranic references

Press, 1976) pp. 235–303. The most up-to-date and comprehensive discussion is now Josef van
Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiosen Denkens
im fruhen Islam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991–97) IV: 179–227 and 625–30 (analysis), and VI: 402–27
(translations).

to divine actions such as God's rising up on his throne, actions that the more rationalist Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs held were understandable only through allegorical interpretation. Similarly, the Shīʿīs can be seen as a genus of *kalām* comprising the species Zaydīs (or "Fivers"), Ismāʿīlīs (or "Seveners") and Ithnā-ʿAsharīs ("Twelvers"), each distinguished from the other by the essential differentiating characteristic of which particular imam or descendant of ʿAlī – the fifth, the seventh, or the twelfth – they believed went into a state of occultation until the end times, when that imam will reappear on earth as the Mahdī.

This taxonomic approach rests on the assumption that any given species of thought is stable over time and can reliably be differentiated from another species of thought by appealing to its essential doctrinal characteristic. The problem here is that these different schools of *kalām* underwent major evolutions during the twelve centuries of classical and post-classical Islamic intellectual history. Although the Muʿtazilīs in most respects ceased to exist as a school after the thirteenth century, some key Muʿtazilī doctrines were taken over by the Ithnā-ʿAsharī Shīʿīs and others were taken over by the Zaydī Shīʿīs. The Ashʿarīs and the Māturīdīs, two Sunnī schools of *kalām*, themselves underwent a period of synthesis in the fourteenth century, with the result that prominent Ashʿarī *mutakallimūn* such as al-Taftāzānī took over the Māturīdī doctrine of the eternality of the divine attributes of action.[27]

What about the larger distinction between the genus *kalām* and the genus *falsafa*? As was the case with the different *kalām* schools, whose members sometimes advanced the taxonomies of the doxographers for the rhetorical purpose of hardening their own school's sense of identity, so too did the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa* often promote the idea that *kalām* and *falsafa* were irreducibly distinct. There were certainly doctrinal differences between the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa*, the most comprehensive of which was the *mutakallimūn*'s adherence to the atomistic doctrine that the universe was composed of tiny, discontinuous parts, in contrast to the *falāsifa*'s Aristotelian belief in the continuity of matter and their rejection of the void – that is, the empty "space" between the *mutakallimūn*'s atoms. Not even this distinction was watertight, however, since the ninth-century Muʿtazilī *mutakallim* al-Naẓẓām did not hold an atomistic worldview, while the slightly later *faylasūf* and doctor Abū Bakr al-Rāzī did. Even if it were watertight, this doctrinal difference is in itself not sufficient to justify calling *kalām* "theology" and *falsafa* "philosophy."[28] If that were the case, a number of important ancient thinkers – Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus

[27] Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid al-nasafiyya* (*Commentary on Nasafī's Creed*), ed. 1916, pp. 308.3–324.10 (top-inside box); tr. Elder, pp. 67–73.
[28] On this now see A. I. Sabra, "*Kalām* Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing *falsafa*," in J. Montgomery (ed.) *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006) 199–272.

and their followers – would similarly have to be labeled theologians rather
than philosophers. What about the three crucial doctrines of the *falāsifa* that,
according to the Ashʿarī *mutakallim* al-Ghazālī in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*
(*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), warranted an accusation of unbelief (*takfīr*): their belief in
the world's co-eternity with God, their denial of God's knowledge of particular
things and their denial of bodily resurrection?[29] Surely these doctrines of the
falāsifa were stable enough to provide the kind of perpetual differentiating char-
acteristic the doxographers were searching for. Yet two centuries earlier we find
al-Kindī, the first great Muslim *faylasūf*, promoting the world's createdness-in-
time, and in the fourteenth century we find the Ḥanbalī thinker Ibn Taymiyya
advocating a version of the co-eternity position.[30] And in the fifteenth century,
we find the Ashʿarī *mutakallim* al-Dawwānī advocating a nuanced and sym-
pathetic reading of Avicenna's denial of bodily resurrection and the doctrine
that God knows particulars in a general way.[31] Although it is true that some
doxographers allowed for a distinction between earlier generations (*ṭabaqāt*) of a
school and later generations, the doctrinal *differentiae* they relied on made their
taxonomies hopelessly brittle.

 By contrast, the *falāsifa* themselves suggested an epistemological rather than
a doctrinal basis on which to draw the distinction between themselves and
the *mutakallimūn*: while the *falāsifa* employed demonstrative syllogisms – that
is, syllogisms that produce a scientific understanding of a thing – in their
discussions, the *mutakallimūn* employed only dialectic, and in particular dialectic
that employed theorems specific to the Islamic religion and which thus produced
conclusions without universal applicability[32] (see Chapter 26). But this too is
a mischaracterization of the difference between *falsafa* and *kalām*. For whatever
the *falāsifa* may have said about the role of demonstration in their epistemology,
the fact remains that in much if not most of their work it is dialectical methods
rather than demonstrative syllogistic that they use. In this respect the *falāsifa* were
in fact following Aristotle, who himself employed dialectic widely, often starting
his investigations by listing puzzles (*aporiai*), for example, rather than starting

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[29] Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, passim.

[30] On Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of the Ashʿarīs, which verges on an advocacy of the eternity of the
world construed as an infinite series of temporally originated events, and on his appropriation of
Avicennian cosmological positions, see Jon Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God:
Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of the World," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15
(2004) 287–329, and "Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan Theologian: A Muslim Approach to God's
Self-Sufficiency," *Theological Review* 27 (2006) 34–46.

[31] Specifically, in his *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīdat al-ʿAdudiyya* (*Commentary on al-Ījī's Creed*), ed. in S. Dunyā, *Al-
Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh bayna al-falāsifa wa-al-kalāmiyyīn* (Cairo: ʿĪsa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1958) pp.
339ff. and 606ff.

[32] This position is set out in Dimitri Gutas, "The Logic of Theology (*kalām*) in Avicenna," in D. Perler
and U. Rudolph (eds.) *Logik und Theologie: das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter*
(Leiden: Brill, 2005) 59–72.

from the necessarily true first principles required in demonstrative syllogisms. Indeed the role of dialectic in arriving at those same first principles appears to have been a crucial element of Aristotelian epistemology. For better or worse dialectic was the primary mode of argumentation in Islamic thought just as it was in Aristotelian thought, as Aristotle scholars have begun recognizing since the 1960s.[33] Similarly, the entire post-classical Islamic discipline of "ground-rules of research" (*ādāb al-baḥth*) presupposes the universal applicability of dialectic. A major work of this discipline, by al-Samarqandī, contains case-studies of dialectic's applicability not just to classic problems of *kalām* and Islamic law (*fiqh*), but also to those of *falsafa* – although *falsafa* is now referred to by the less foreign-sounding *ḥikma*, the Arabic translation of the Greek *sophia*.[34] The most that could be said in this regard is perhaps that the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa* appropriated different goals from the ideals of the exact sciences. With the *falāsifa*, what was taken from the exact sciences was the ideal of mathematical proof, the kind of proof that exhibited necessity both in the premises of an argument and in the way the conclusion inexorably emerged from those necessary premises. With the *mutakallimūn*, it was the idea of precision: just as the mathematical astronomers aimed at greater and greater precision in their models, so too the *mutakallimūn* aimed at greater and greater precision in the dogmatic formulas they painstakingly constructed. Nevertheless, both *mutakallimūn* and *falāsifa* shared the goal of achieving a state of impregnability in their arguments.

So much for doctrines and epistemology; could the subject matter of *falsafa* and *kalām* serve to distinguish the two? There was doubtless a set of problems specific to the Islamic religion, problems that works of *kalām* normally included but which did not find a home in *falsafa* books, such as the question of whether or not a dead sinner feels pain in the grave (in anticipation of the punishments that will follow the Day of Judgment). And yet the *falāsifa* and the *mutakallimūn* shared so many core interests, including logic and philosophy of language, general metaphysics (i.e. ontology) and special metaphysics (i.e. theology), natural philosophy and cosmology, philosophy of mind, and epistemology, that the non-overlapping topics such as punishment in the grave appear quite marginal.

[33] The classic articulation of this corrective to the medieval view that demonstration lay at the heart of Aristotelian epistemology is G. E. L. Owen, "*Tithenai ta phainomena*," in J. Barnes *et al.* (eds.) *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. I: *Science* (London: Duckworth, 1975) 113–26.

[34] See L. B. Miller, "Islamic Disputation Theory: A Study of the Development of Dialectic in Islam from the Tenth through Fourteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton University, 1984) pp. 234–5; for a list of commentaries on al-Samarqandī's work, see Robert Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (*ca.* 1100–1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," in P. Adamson *et al.* (eds.) *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 2004) II: 169–70.

Even the periodization that Ibn Khaldūn mentioned above – the modern (*al-mutaʾakhkhirūn*, lit. "those who come later") Muslim thinkers as opposed to the classical (*al-mutaqaddimūn*, lit. "those who come before") Muslim thinkers – was itself an unstable distinction that various writers applied differently across disciplines. Avicenna, for instance, whom we regard as a classical Muslim thinker, often used the term 'moderns' to refer to himself and his philosophical contemporaries and thereby distinguish them from their ancient and late antique Greek forebears such as Plato, Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and John Philoponus, who were called the "ancients."[35] The Muʿtazilīs themselves distinguished between the founding generations of their school (*al-qudamāʾ* or *al-salaf min aṣḥābinā*) in the eighth and ninth centuries and subsequent generations. The distinction between ancients and moderns was also standard in medieval Arabic literature, with the sinewy power of classical pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab poetry (late sixth to the mid-eighth century) contrasted with the effete and ornate new poetry of the Abbasid period (late eighth to tenth century).[36]

Actors' categories and historians' categories

Given all these counterexamples, which make hard distinctions between species of Islamic thought impossible to maintain, what can we say in general about how the intellectual trends that correspond to the Western labels 'philosophy' and 'theology' played out in the Islamic context? Contemporary historians of early modern European science are committed to narratives that foreground "actors' categories": that is, the conceptual scheme in use among the historical protagonists themselves. But are the actors' categories employed by the Muslim doxographers so hopelessly embedded in rigid Neoplatonic and Aristotelian notions of what it means to be a species that they are useless to us when we try to describe a dynamic intellectual scene? It may well be true that the categories *philosophy* and *theology*, which arose and were deployed in a specific medieval European institutional context, cannot be imported and applied directly to *falsafa* (or its later version, *ḥikma*) and *kalām*.[37] It may also be true that the

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[35] See, e.g., *Kitāb al-shifʾ/Ilāhiyyāt (2)*, ed. Mūsā *et al.*, p. 399.10 (= *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina V-X*, ed. Van Riet, pp. 472.57–473.58).

[36] See Daniel Gimaret, "Muʿtazila," in P. Bearman *et al.* (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn (Leiden: Brill, 1993) VII: 783–93, and G. J. H. van Gelder, "Ancients and Moderns," in G. Krämer *et al.* (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edn (Leiden: Brill Online, 2008).

[37] For an interesting recent discussion of how an analogous Western distinction came to be imported into and naturalized in the Japanese context, see G. C. Godart, "'Philosophy' or 'Religion'? The Confrontation with Foreign Categories in Late Nineteenth-Century Japan," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 (2008) 71–91.

firm boundaries drawn by the doxographers and by the thinkers themselves – boundaries drawn on the basis of doctrine, epistemology, subject matter, and periodization – turn out to be so tenuous that the various strands of Islamic thought can be said to be intertwined in an irreducibly complex way. But this in itself does not mean that historians should resist foregrounding all such actors' categories when analyzing Islamic intellectual history.

Instead, we can apply the overarching distinction that was favored by the majority of Muslim thinkers themselves: that between knowledge that arises from the "intellect" (*ʿaql*) and knowledge that arises from "transmission" (*naql*, sometimes referred to as *samʿ*, meaning *audition* or *hearing* – that is, hearing a report from someone else). This distinction referred at its most basic level to the two different ways that Muslim scholars and thinkers understood how one arrives at the truth with certainty. For those tending towards an intellectualist, *ʿaqlī*, position, truth was construed rationalistically, as a function of logical valid-ity, as the product of sound argumentation – argumentation that started with axioms or from generally accepted opinions and proceeded according to the rules of syllogistic or dialectic towards a necessary conclusion. By contrast, those tending towards a transmission-based, *naqlī*, position, saw truth historiograph-ically, as a function of the truthfulness of individuals, as the product of sound chains of trustworthy transmitters who could be verified, through historical research, as having been at the right age in the right place at the right time, and having been in possession of a sufficiently upright character to pass along accurately the utterance each had received from his predecessor in the chain – a chain that passed through the Prophet's Companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*), whose righ-teousness was very great, and stretched ultimately to the Prophet Muhammad himself, whose truthfulness is unimpeachable. These two actors' categories, *ʿaql* and *naql*, are elastic enough to contain both *falsafa* and *kalām* in the category of "rational sciences" (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya*), and thus be useful to the historian of Islamic thought. In other words, the hard distinction between *falsafa* and *kalām* should be set aside as a rhetorical artifact of the multiple processes of school formation that occurred in Islamic intellectual history, and replaced by the larger distinction between *ʿaql* and *naql*. With *falsafa* and *kalām* both included in the broad category of rational as opposed to transmitted sciences, the historian of Islamic thought can give proper attention to the common set of conceptual tools employed by both the *falāsifa* and the *mutakallimūn*, and avoid falling into the trap of assuming that the differences between a *faylasūf* and a *mutakallim* will necessarily override their similarities.

Having said all this, many Muslim thinkers regarded even these two distinct ways of viewing the truth – *ʿaql* and *naql* – as complementary rather than in competition, and they would employ *ʿaqlī* and *naqlī* methods alternately,

sometimes arguing and other times citing authority, depending on their audience and opponent. Even the Ḥanbalī theologian and jurisprudent Ibn Taymiyya, whom the Wahhābīs of the modern era regard as their intellectual grandfather, was extremely well read in *falsafa* and *kalām*, and composed a long work entitled *Rejecting the "Contradiction" between Intellect and Transmission (Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-al-naql)*.

Coming back to Ibn Khaldūn's statement, what then can be said about the relationship between philosophy and theology in the Islamic context? To start with, it is obvious that *falsafa* cannot be reduced to "philosophy" and *kalām* to "theology." There were many texts and sections of texts written by the *falāsifa* (as was the case with Aristotle himself) that they themselves labeled as theology (*ilāhiyyāt*, lit. "divine matters"), and which treated not only traditional topics in metaphysics such as ontology and causality, but also the nature of God and the relation between the divine self and the divine attributes, the question of determinism, and so on. Similarly, the *mutakallimūn* squarely addressed issues that are usually labeled philosophical: the primary components of matter, the different types of existence, and so on. Furthermore, in discussing these topics the *falāsifa* and the *mutakallimūn* shared and traded technical vocabulary, concepts, examples, distinctions, and arguments. So although *falsafa* and *kalām* were not co-extensive – although there were topics and terms and distinctions and arguments that were unique to one or the other group – they largely overlapped and were both contained within the larger *ʿaqlī* tradition in Islamic thought. Apart from their admittedly real differences, part of what has made *falsafa* and *kalām* appear to be distinct enterprises has been our own scholarly tendency to reproduce the doxographers' taxonomies. Another significant factor has been our tendency to focus on the earliest period of Islamic intellectual history – the "classical" period between 700 and 1050 – during which time *falsafa* and *kalām* overlapped the least, and then to assume that this classical distinctiveness expresses something natural in Islamic intellectual history. In other words, the classical period is viewed as the model Islamic disciplinary arrangement, with subsequent developments seen as pale reflections or decadent versions of the pristine, "true" relationship between *falsafa* and *kalām*. More historically justifiable would be to determine the nature of the relationship between *falsafa* and *kalām* on the basis of evidence contained in texts produced during the longest segment of Islamic intellectual history. In the broader context of Islamic thought, where the 850-year span between 1050 and 1900 is taken as the defining period, rather than the classical era that preceded it or the era of European-style modernity that followed it, *falsafa* and *kalām* come across as a single hybrid enterprise.