

JEWISH STUDIES

犹太研究

第26辑

Sources of Knowledge:

Between a Prophecy and a Philosophy in Medieval Jewish Thought

Racheli Haliva Tr. SHEN Jianyu

Abstract: Isaac Polqar, the Jewish Averroist from the fourteenth century, is perceived to be one of the most radical defenders of Averroes, oftentimes directly criticizing Maimonides. One topic in which he deviates from his two teachers, Averroes and Maimonides, is the way he perceives the dichotomy between the character traits of philosopher and the character traits of the prophet. According to the Maimonidean, Averroist, and Avicennian view, the prophet attains the highest intellectual level, for he receives emanations from the Active Intellect onto both his intellectual faculty and his power of imagination. In this sense, for both, Averroes and Maimonides, every prophet is necessarily a philosopher. Polqar, who anticipates Spinoza's distinction between a philosopher and a prophet, separates the realm of philosophy from the realm of prophecy; while the philosopher receives the emanation from the Active Intellect directly onto his intellectual faculty, the prophet, on the other hand, receives the emanation onto his power of imagination, "skipping" his intellectual faculty. This dichotomy between a philosopher and a prophet would imply that the ultimate man, the philosopher, in Polqar's view, who is engaged in the theoretical sciences and conjoins with the Active Intellect, unlike the prophet, is governed.

Key Words: Avicenna, Emanation, Isaac Polqar, Maimonides, Moses, Prophecy