

Commentary on Maimonides'  
Twenty-Five Premises

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*Provides the fully established texts of both Isaac ben Natan's translation and the anonymous translation. This digital edition features critical apparatus and comprehensive textual notes.*

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Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī

# Commentary on Maimonides' Twenty-Five Premises

A New English Translation of  
the Reconstructed Source alongside  
the Edited Hebrew Rendering  
by Rabbi Isaac ben Natan

Edited by Daniel Levin



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# Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	vii
Commentary on the Twenty-Five Premises.....	1
The First Premise.....	14
The Second Premise.....	46
The Third Premise.....	48
The Fourth Premise.....	56
The Fifth Premise.....	68
The Sixth Premise.....	72
The Seventh Premise.....	78
The Eighth Premise.....	88
The Ninth Premise.....	90
The Tenth Premise.....	92
The Eleventh Premise.....	100
The Twelfth Premise.....	106
The Thirteenth Premise.....	114
The Fourteenth Premise.....	120
The Fifteenth Premise.....	126
The Sixteenth Premise.....	138
The Seventeenth Premise.....	142
The Eighteenth Premise.....	150
The Nineteenth Premise.....	158
The Twentieth Premise.....	162
The Twenty-First Premise.....	166
The Twenty-Second Premise.....	168
The Twenty-Third Premise.....	186
The Twenty-Fourth Premise.....	196
The Twenty-Fifth Premise.....	202



# Introduction

The thirteenth-century commentary by Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī<sup>1</sup> on the twenty-five premises of Rabbi Moses Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* offers a unique perspective into the transmission of philosophical doctrines between Muslim and Jewish thinkers. The work, written before 1278, is a demonstrative treatise that bridges the Aristotelian foundations of Maimonidean theology with the verification methods of the Eastern Islamic philosophical tradition. By offering a systematic, lemma-by-lemma exposition of the proofs that Maimonides intentionally omitted, al-Tabrīzī transformed the bare premises of the *Guide* into a fully articulated system. His commentary, heavily influenced by the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), introduced a subtle shift into the physical and metaphysical content of this system. This commentary circulated widely throughout the Jewish world in both Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew. It was used by Rabbi Moses Narboni and provided the framework for Rabbi Hasdai Crescas' systematic dismantling of Aristotelian science.

Despite its significance, access to al-Tabrīzī's commentary

1. No biographical details regarding al-Tabrīzī are known, with his origins in Tabriz being a deduction from his *nisba*.

has been hindered by the absence of a modern edition. This volume addresses that deficiency by presenting a new edition of the work's medieval Hebrew translation, alongside its first English translation. This translation offers a rendering of the reconstructed source text that was arrived at by cross-examination of both the Arabic printed edition and the early Hebrew translations.

### **The Twenty-Five Premises and Al-Tabrīzī's Commentary**

Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*, completed around 1190, became one of the central points of reference in medieval and early modern Jewish thought. One of the most influential—and, at the same time, most technically demanding—features of the *Guide* is the set of twenty-five premises presented at the beginning of Book II. These propositions serve as the scientific foundation upon which Maimonides later builds his demonstrations of God's existence, unity, and incorporeality.

The premises outline a strictly finite, causal universe governed by motion and change. Several principles govern this system. First, the denial of actual infinity: no infinite physical magnitude can exist, and no infinite causal chain is possible. Second, the mechanics of change: whatever moves or changes must be brought from potentiality to actuality by something other than itself. Third, the necessity of a terminus: because an infinite regress of causes is impossible, any chain of motion must ultimately terminate in a prime, uncaused cause. Once the mechanics of motion, the impossibility of infinite regress, and the fundamental distinction between potential and actual existence are conceded, the existence of a singular, incorporeal Prime Mover becomes an inescapable conclusion. Maimonides presents the premises in highly compressed form, indicating that their proofs had already been supplied by Aristotle and his successors.

Al-Tabrīzī's commentary aims to fill the void left by

Maimonides' omission of verifiable proofs for these premises, which became more acute as the *Guide* gained wider circulation. In his introduction, al-Tabrīzī declares his intent to assume the role of the verifier (*muḥaqqiq*), taking it upon himself to supply this missing argumentation. He then proceeds by quoting each of Maimonides' twenty-five premises and offering his own analysis. Al-Tabrīzī's method is pedagogical and demonstrative. He frequently subdivides his analyses into enumerated "investigations" or "claims" to deal with complex propositions systematically. He anticipates counterarguments and potential logical flaws in his proofs, which he then systematically resolves. Al-Tabrīzī's commentary positions Maimonides' premises within the broader landscape of medieval science, engaging with Greek authorities, such as Aristotle and Democritus, and the competing doctrines of Islamic theologians (*mutakallimūn*). It can be read as a self-contained philosophical treatise that bridges the gaps left by Maimonides through engagement with the wider scientific discourse.

At the same time, al-Tabrīzī's explanations are not philosophically neutral. While Maimonides considered Aristotle the ultimate authority, for al-Tabrīzī, it was the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā that reigned supreme. His commentary thus shifts the philosophical content of the premises to that of the Avicennian school of thought.

An example of this shift can be found in al-Tabrīzī's treatment of the twenty-first premise, which he reframes on the basis of Ibn Sīnā's distinction between a thing's "essence" and its "existence." In doing so, al-Tabrīzī changes the thrust of the premise: instead of simply denying the necessary existence of any composite thing, it proves the lack of composition of the Necessary Existent.<sup>1</sup>

1. Lukas Muehlethaler, "Al-Tabrīzī's Kommentar zu Maimonides' 'Führer der Unschlüssigen'. Zur Maimonidesrezeption in der islamisch-arabischen Philosophie", *"Höre die Wahrheit, wer sie auch spricht"* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014) pp. 54–63.

## Reception and Circulation

Two figures stand out in the history of reception of al-Tabrīzī's commentary. The first is R. Moses of Narbonne, a radical Averroist commentator of the *Guide*; the second is R. Hasdai Crescas, a philosopher rooted in Jewish tradition who sought to provide an alternative to the Maimonidean synthesis.

R. Moses of Narbonne, or simply Narboni (d. after 1362), holds the distinction of being one of the most polarizing commentators of the *Guide*. As a dedicated follower of Averroes, he sought to portray Maimonides as a secret follower of that philosopher, and as one who resorted to an esoteric writing style to conceal his true views from the general public. In his commentary, Narboni relied on the Hebrew translation of al-Tabrīzī's commentary—specifically the version by Rabbi Isaac ben Natan—in the scientific discussion of the twenty-five premises.<sup>1</sup> Both Narboni's reading of al-Tabrīzī and the Hebrew translation of it by Isaac ben Natan were later used by R. Hasdai Crescas in his systematic attack on the scientific basis of Maimonidean theology.

R. Hasdai Crescas (1340–1410) relied heavily on Isaac ben Natan's Hebrew translation of al-Tabrīzī's commentary in his work *Light of the Lord*. R. Crescas departed from it either when he found al-Tabrīzī's arguments insufficient or when they did not align with his own purposes.<sup>2</sup> R. Crescas' use of the commentary was fundamentally destructive, as he lacked an interest in developing a viable, systematic alternative to Aristotelian physics.

1. Maurice Hayoun, "Moses Maimonides und Muhammad al-Tabrīsi; Ausgabe der hebraeischen [anonymen] Uebersetzung des Kommentars al-Tabrīsi zu den XXV Leitsätzen des Maimonides im II. Teil des *Moreh Nebuchim (Fuehrer der Verwirrten)*", *Trumah*, 1995, vol. 5, pp. 201–245.
2. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*, (Harvard University Press, 1929) p. 23; Y. Tzvi Langermann, "No Reagent, No Reaction: the Barren Transmission of Avicennan Dynamics to Hasdai Crescas," *Aleph*, 12 (2012) (in Honor of Ruth Glasner) pp. 161–188.

We can judge the extent of the circulation of al-Tabrīzī's commentary based on the versions of this work that survive to this day. Several manuscript fragments in the original Arabic written in Hebrew characters testify to its readership among Jews in Arabic-speaking countries as late as the 17th century. In the Christian lands, its Hebrew translations circulated widely in manuscript and later in print during the medieval and early modern periods.

The most influential of these was the translation completed by R. Isaac ben Natan of Cordoba in Majorca around 1347.<sup>1</sup> Ben Natan's translation is representative of a literal approach similar to that of the Tibbonid family, resulting in a text that often reads as a dense imitation of the Arabic source. The second full Hebrew translation, completed before 1331 by an anonymous author, survives both in a complete and in an abridged form. It is less rigidly literal than Ben Natan's translation and often seeks to clarify the logic and terminology of the original for a Hebrew reader. The existence of a condensed version implies that it addressed a genuine need. A third, partial translation, attributed to Moses ibn Tibbon, survives only as a fragment and appears to be based on a defective Arabic source and abandoned mid-course.<sup>2</sup>

While the Hebrew translations of al-Tabrīzī's commentary enjoyed a wide circulation, the Arabic original remained largely inaccessible. It gained exposure in the Islamic world in the later part of the twentieth century due to the involvement of an influential Islamic scholar Muḥammad Zahid al-Kawtharī (1879–1952).<sup>3</sup> Al-Kawtharī edited a critical edition of the single surviving manuscript of the Arabic source of al-Tabrīzī's

1. Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin, 1893) p. 362.
2. Steinschneider, pp. 362–363.
3. Amir Mazor, "Maimonides as Muslim Theologian: Al-Kawtharī's Edition of al-Tabrīzī's Commentary on Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*," *Zutot*, 19(1), pp. 93–102.

commentary. The first edition was published in 1950<sup>1</sup> and has since been reproduced in facsimile several times. It was also integrated in its entirety as a running footnote commentary within a 1972 Ankara edition of the *Guide to the Perplexed*, printed in Arabic script.<sup>2</sup> In 1981, a Persian translation of al-Kawtharī's edition was published in Iran along with the original Arabic.<sup>3</sup>

The colophon reproduced in the Arabic printed edition states that the manuscript it is based upon was copied in 1278 from an authorized exemplar.<sup>4</sup> This latter claim, however, is most certainly false in light of the significant number of scribal errors and lacunae present in it.

### This Edition

This volume presents an English translation of al-Tabrizī's commentary in parallel to Ben Natan's Hebrew translation. The accompanying Hebrew text follows my critical edition of Ben Natan's work with notes tailored for this bilingual edition. The English translation strives to convey the intent of the original work, independent of the scribal errors that plague the individual surviving branches, by presenting the reader with a rendering of a reconstructed source text. While the printed Arabic edition by al-Kawtharī supplied a lexical baseline, the substance of the text was cross-examined and corrected on the basis of the two Hebrew translations. The major instances where the Arabic source was amended on the

1. Muḥammad al-Kawtharī, ed., Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Tabrizī, *Sharḥ al-muqaddamāt al-khamas wa-l-‘ishrūn, min Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn, ta’līf Abī ‘Umrān Mūsā b. Maymūn* (Cairo, 1369/1950).
2. Hussein Atay, ed., Moses Maimonides, *Dalalat Al-Ha’irin* (Ankara University, 1972).
3. M. Mohaghegh, ed., S. J. Sajjadi, trans., Muḥammad al-Tabrizī, *Sharḥ-i bīst-u-panj muqqadama dar ithbāt-i bārī ta’ālā* (University of Tehran-McGill University, 1981).
4. al-Kawtharī, pp. 24, 101.

basis of the Hebrew translations are noted in the English text. The style of the English translation pays homage to Shlomo Pines's approach. An effort was made to preserve consistency in terminology and to remain faithful to al-Tabrīzī's medieval manner. While this results in a less fluent text, it makes it easier to follow the linguistic and structural parallels in Ben Natan's rendering of al-Tabrīzī's work.

By resolving the textual corruptions that have accumulated over centuries, this volume offers a dependable reading of al-Tabrīzī's commentary. It allows the commentary to be read as a substantive work that influenced the trajectory of medieval Jewish thought, providing the conceptual framework for philosophers such as R. Moses Narboni and R. Hasdai Crescas.

## Conventions and Abbreviations

### Editorial Conventions

⟨ ⟩: Editorial emendations or reconstructed text.

### Abbreviations in English Footnotes

Ar: The Arabic source text.

Ar(ed): The Arabic text as edited by al-Kawtharī (1950).

Ar(ms): Manuscript readings recorded, but rejected, in al-Kawtharī's edition.

He: The consensus reading of both medieval Hebrew translations.

He(BN): Isaac ben Natan's translation.

He(an): The anonymous translation.

### Abbreviations in Hebrew Footnotes

ע"ר: The Arabic source.

ב"נ: Isaac ben Natan's translation.

אנו': The anonymous translation.

Commentary on  
the Twenty-Five Premises

Praise be to God, the One whose existence has never ceased, the One whose generosity knows no end. To Him belongs the eternal power by which He governs the world of omnipotence,<sup>1</sup> and the primordial wisdom by which He orders the world of dominion and sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> The necks of all beings have submitted to the compulsion of His grasp, and the quiddities<sup>3</sup> of possible things have humbled themselves in awe of His majesty. He manifested His light upon the pure souls and the clear intellects and illuminated them, and He cast the fire of longing into the essences of the celestial bodies and set them in motion. The lower, earthly souls are bewildered in apprehending His knowledge, and the high, celestial intellects revolve in attaining the rank of the fruits of His command and His will. Every prepared thing is supported by His support, and every perfect thing is perfected by Him after its preparation. He is the originator of causes, the creator of the first motions. From Him is the beginning and to Him is the return, in the hereafter and in the first life. Blessed be God, Lord of the Worlds. His prayers and His bounties be upon those chosen for His message, the possessors of the scriptures, and upon their goodly families and companions.

1. *‘ālam al-jabarūt.*
2. *‘ālam al-malak wa-al-malakūt.*
3. *māhiyyāt.*

השבח לאל אשר לא סר מציאותו, האחד אשר לא יכלה טובו. לו היכולת הנצחי אשר ישפוט בה על עולם העצמה והחכמה הנצחית אשר בה תסודר ידיעת<sup>1</sup> המלך והמלכות. הושפלו לתגבורת שפעו ציורי ההווה, ונכנעו לאימתו רוב מהויות האפשריות. נראה באורו על הנפשות הטהורות והשכלים הזכים הבהירים והמחשבות הנקיות ביצירה, והשליך אש התשוקה בהויות הגלגליות, וסבבם, ובנפשות השפלות, ושמם דוהרות. ולהשיג אמתת ידיעתו הלבבות נבוכות, והשכלים העליונים השמימיים בהגעת אל מדרגת מצותו ורצונו מסבבים. וכל מוכן הנה הוא מתפשט מהתפשטותו, וכל שלם הנה שלמותו הוא אחר הכנתו. הוא התחלת העלות, משפיע טובו באומות והדתות,<sup>2</sup> ומצמיח התנועות הראשונות. | ממנו התחלה ואליו התשובה באחרית.<sup>3</sup> יתברך האל הראשון אדון היודעים.<sup>4</sup> תפלתו<sup>5</sup> על האוהבים<sup>6</sup> לשליחותו, בעלי הספרים, ועל כתותם<sup>7</sup> ורעייהם הטובים.

1. ידיעת [ ער': «علم» [=עולם].
2. משפיע טובו באומות והדתות [ לא קיים בער'.
3. באחרית [ ער': «في الآخرة والأولى» [=באחרית ובראשית].
4. היודעים [ בערבית, «עולמים» ו"יודעים" נכתבים בצורה זהה.
5. תפלתו [ ער': «وصلواته وخبراته» [=ותפלתו וברכתו/טובו].
6. האוהבים [ ער': «المصطفين» [=הנבחרים].
7. כתותם [ ער': «ألهم» [=משפחותיהם].

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī said:

This is the part arranged by the chief master,<sup>1</sup> the singular scholar, the perfect, virtuous one, Abū 'Imrān Mūsā, son of the servant of God,<sup>2</sup> the Israelite of Cordova, from the book which we are in the process of commenting upon and clarifying, which is the book entitled: *The Guide to the Perplexed*,<sup>3</sup> [concerning] the trodden paths that lead to the verification of the knowledge of the most noble parts of higher wisdom and First Philosophy, which are its ultimate end and furthest goal. When the human soul reaches it, the substance of its self becomes similar to the angelic substances, and its spirit becomes close in rank to the celestial spirits, as the verification of this will come to you in the body of this book, if God Almighty wills.

So he began with it and said:

*The premises needed to establish the existence of God, may He be exalted, and for the proof that He is not a body, nor a force in a body, and that He, may His name be glorified, is one, are twenty-five premises. All of them are demonstrated, with no doubt in any of them. Aristotle and the Peripatetics after him have provided a proof for each one of them. One premise we grant them by way of concession, because by it our own aims are demonstrated, as I will explain, and that premise is the eternity of the world.*

*The Commentary:*

Know that this passage alludes to the clarification of two matters. The first of them is the questions intended as the primary objective, which are the goals. The second of them is the inquiries that facilitate the arrival at those goals, which are the premises. As for the goals, he has made them three questions:

1. *al-shaykh al-ra'īs.*
2. *ibn 'ubayd Allāh.*
3. The title of the book is added in parenthesis by Ar(ed) and is apparently missing in Ar(ms).

אמר עבד האלה מחמד אבובכר בן מחמד אל-תבריוזי:

זה החלק אשר סדר בו הזקן הנכבד, השר, הראש<sup>1</sup> משה בן עבד האלהים הישראלי הקורטובי מהספר אשר נחשוב לבארו ולגלותו, והוא הספר הרשום בהוראת הנבוכים הדרכים<sup>2</sup> הדרוכים המישרים אל האמתת ידיעת הנכבד שבחלקי החכמה העליונה והפילוסופיא הראשונה, והוא תכלית האחרון והמכוון התכליתי ממנה. אשר כאשר הגיעו הנפשות האנושיות אליו, שב עצם נפשו דומה בעצמים המלאכיים, ורוחו קרובה במדרגה מהרוחות הגלגליות, כמו שיבואר בזה הספר אמתתו, ואם ירצה האל ית'.

והתחיל בו ואמר: [גב]

ההקדמות המצטרך אליהם בקיום מציאות האל יתבר' והמופת על היותו לא גשם, ולא כח בגשם, ושהוא, יתברך שמו, אחד – חמש ועשרים הקדמות. כלם מבוארות במופת, אין ספק בדבר מהם. כבר הביא ארסטו, ומי שבא אחריו מן המשאין, מופת על כל אחת מהם. והקדמה אחת נודה להם הודאה, כי בזה יתבארו במופת דרושינו, כאשר אבאר, ואותה ההקדמה היא קדמות העולם.

הביאור:

דע שזה הדבור רמז אל ביאור שני ענינים. אחד מהם – השאלות המכוונות בכוונה הראשונה, והמה המכוון. והשני – החקירות המקילות להגעה אל אותו המכוון, והם ההקדמות. וכבר שמם שלש שאלות. אחת מהם – קיום

1. הראש [ ער' «الرئيس العالم الأوحد الفاضل الكامل» [=הראש, החכם היחיד, הנכבד השלם].

2. הרשום בהוראת הנבוכים הדרכים [ ער': «الموسوم الطرق» [=הנקרא הדרכים].

the first is to establish the existence of God, may He be exalted; the second is to establish that He is not a body, nor a force in a body; and the third is His being one. Let us summarize the claim in these questions.

We say: As for the first question, the objective is to establish an existent who is the Necessary Existent in Himself;<sup>1</sup> whose existence cannot be from another, but rather every existent overflows from His existence, with or without an intermediary. His existence is not for the sake of another; rather, every existent thing is for His sake, such that He is the absolute final cause<sup>2</sup> of all existents. He is the one who perfects others, bringing every existent thing to its end. It follows from this that every existent thing naturally longs for Him, as He is the one who manifests its existence, granting it perfection and permanence. This is the explication of the name of God, may He be exalted.

As for the second question, the objective is to clarify that He, may He be exalted, is not a body, nor a force in a body. I will explain the terms “body”<sup>3</sup> and “force.”<sup>4</sup>

As for “body,” in their technical vocabulary it is an expression for a substance that occupies space,<sup>5</sup> meaning that to which one can point and say by sense-perception “it is here,” and which subsists by itself, not dependent on another, and in which it is possible to posit three dimensions intersecting at right angles, which are the three diameters, namely length, width, and depth.

As for “force,” it is a term shared between active force<sup>6</sup> and passive force.<sup>7</sup> Active force is an expression for that which is a principle of change from one thing in another, insofar as it

1. *wājib al-wujūd li-dhātih.*

2. *ghāyah.*

3. *jism.*

4. *qūwah.*

5. *al-jawhar al-mutaḥayyiz.*

6. *al-qūwah al-fi'liyyah.*

7. *al-qūwah al-infi'aliyyah.*

מציאות האל ית'. ושנית מהן – קיום שהוא אינו גשם ולא כח בגשם. ושלישית מהמה – היותו אחד. ונבאר המליצה באלה השאלות.

ונאמר: אולם השאלה הראשונה המכוון ממנה קיום נמצא הוא מחויב המציאות לעצמותו, אי אפשר שיהיה מציאותו מזולתו, אבל כל נמצא הוא מושפע ממציאותו, באמצעי או בבלתי אמצעי. ואין מציאותו לזולתו, אבל כל נמצא הוא לו, עד יהיה הוא התכלית המשולחת לנמצאות כלם. והוא המשלים לזולתו, המגיע כל נמצא אל תכליתו. וימשך זה שיהיה כל נמצא משתוקק אליו בטבע, אחר שהוא המגלה למציאותו, הנותן לו השלמות וההשארות. זה ביאור שם האל ית'.

ואולם השאלה השנית. הנה המכוון ממנה ביאור "שהוא ית' אינו גשם ולא כח בגשם". ונבאר מלת "הגשם" ו"הכח".

אולם "הגשם" הוא בהסכמתם מליצה מהעצם בעל המקום, ר"ל אשר אפשר שיורמז אליו בחוש שהוא הנה או שם, בעצמותו, ולא בהמשכות זולתו, ואפשר שנניח בו מרחקים שלשה חתוכים על זויות נצבות, והם הקטרים השלשה, רצוני האורך והרוחב והעומק.

ואולם "הכח" הנה הוא מליצה משותפת בין הכח הפועל והכח המתפעל. אולם "הכח הפועל" הוא מליצה ממה שיהיה התחלה לשנוי מאחד לאחד, מצד שהוא | אחר. וענינו – שהדבר החל בגשם כאשר סודר ממנו רושם בגשם אחר, יאמר לאותו הדבר שהוא כח, כמו החום המגיע בגשם. כי הוא כאשר פגש בגשם אחר מוכן לקבלת החום, חממו, ויאמר שהוא כח בבחינת הגעת זה הרושם. והוא כח כבר

is another. The meaning is that when a thing subsisting in a body produces an effect in another body, that thing is called a "force," like the heat present in a body; when it encounters another body prepared to receive heat, it heats it, so it is said to be a force on account of that effect proceeding from it. That force may be an accident<sup>1</sup> in a substrate, or it may be a form<sup>2</sup> in matter.<sup>3</sup> The difference between them is that the accident is constituted by its substrate, which is the subject, and the subject constitutes it, while the form is the reverse of this; that is, the form constitutes its substrate, which is the matter, and the substrate is constituted by it. Thus, form is a substance, not an accident. The name "force" includes them all. An example of a force that is an accident is heat and cold; an example of a force that is a form is the form of fire, air, water, and earth, as well as the celestial forms, which are called specific forms,<sup>4</sup> since by them created things are differentiated into species after sharing in the fact that they are bodies.

Passive force is an expression for the quality by which a thing becomes receptive to something else, as is said of moisture or dryness, that it is a passive force because it makes the body such that it is changed by an external impetus, either with ease, like moisture, or with difficulty, like dryness.

So the meaning of the statement "He is not a body, nor a force in a body" is that He, may He be exalted, does not exist with the attribute we have described for the meaning of "body" and "force." He is thus transcendent of being in a direction or place, or of subsisting in that which is in a direction or place.

As for the third question, the objective is to clarify that He, may He be exalted, is one. Know that the term "one"<sup>5</sup> has many meanings, but we intend three of them in this place.

The first: He is one in the sense that His essence is not

1. *‘araḍ.*
2. *ṣūrah.*
3. *hayūlā.*
4. *ṣuwar naw‘iyyah.*
5. *wāḥid.*

יהיה מקרה בנושא, וכבר יהיה צורה בהיולי. וההבדל בין שניהם שהמקרה עומד במשכנו, אשר הוא הנושא, והמשכן מעמידו; והצורה בהפך מזה, ר"ל שהצורה תהיה מעמדת משכנה, אשר הוא ההיולי, והמשכן עומד בה. הנה הצורה מהעצמים לא מהמקרים. ושם "הכח" יקבצם יחד. ומשל הכח אשר יהיה צורה—הצורה האשיית, והמימיית, והאוריית, והארציית, והצורות הגלגיות. והם אשר יאמר להם "הצורות המיניות", כי בהם יהיו ההויות מינים אחר השתוף בהיותם גשמים.

ואולם "הכח המתפעל" הוא מליצה מהתאר אשר בו יהיה הדבר מקבל לדבר אחר, כמו שיאמר ללחות או היושב שהוא כח מתפעל, כי הוא ישים הגשם בצד ילחץ מהדוחה, אם בקלות, כלחות, או בקושי, כיושב.

הנה הנרצה מאמרו "שהוא אינו גשם ולא כח בגשם" הוא שהוא ית' אינו נמצא בתאר אשר תארנוהו בענין "הגשם" ו"הכח". והוא מתעלה משיהיה בצד והמקום, או חל במה שיהיה בצד והמקום.

ואולם השאלה השלישית, הנה המכוון ממנה באור שהוא ית' אחד. ודע שמלת "אחד" לה ענינים רבים, אלא שאנחנו נרצה בזה המקום שלשה מהם.

susceptible to division, as He has no parts that combine to constitute His essence; not quantitative parts, nor conceptual parts, whether they be like matter and form, or like genus and specific difference. In sum, [He is not divisible] in any way such that the parts of the statement that explains the meaning of His name would each indicate something that in existence is other than the other.

The second: He is one in His species,<sup>1</sup> meaning His reality is not possessed by another.

The third: He is one in the necessity of His existence,<sup>2</sup> meaning there is no other existent in existence besides Him that is necessary in itself. Rather, there is not and cannot be another existent in the rank of His existence, which is the rank of necessity. The Necessary Existent in Himself is He and no other. Everything other than Him is possible in itself.<sup>3</sup>

This is a summary of the mere claim in these matters, and its verification and proof will come, God willing.

As for the twenty-five premises, they are the means to verifying these objectives. And we will come to explain them with their demonstrations, for the author of the book has presented them without proof, since that was not his purpose; rather, his purpose was what he mentioned in this book, as will become clear.

As for the Twenty-Sixth Premise—which is the eternity of the world<sup>4</sup>—he has granted it to them by way of hypothesis and concession, not by way of believing its reality, so that the proof for the existence of God and His attributes, may He be exalted, may become manifest, even if we posit the world as eternal. For many people think that the doctrine of the eternity of the world contradicts the soundness of these three objectives, but the matter is not as they have thought and imagined. Nevertheless, we shall show that the doctrine of the

1. *nawʿ*.
2. *wujūb al-wujūd*.
3. *mumkin li-dhātih*.
4. *azaliyyat al-ʿālam*.

והראשון, שהוא ית' אחד בענין שעצמותו לא תקבל החלוקה, אחר שאין לו חלקים יתקבצו ויעמוד בם עצמותו, לא חלקי הכמות, ולא חלקי עניין, שזה יהיו כחומר וצורה, או כסוג והבדל. ובכלל, על אופן יהיו חלקי המאמר המבאר לענין שמו יורה כל אחד מהם על דבר הוא במציאות בלתי האחר.

השני, שהוא ית' אחד במינו, ר"ל אין אמתתו מגעת לזולתו.

השלישי, שהוא ית' אחד בחיוב המציאות, ר"ל אין במציאות נמצא אחר זולתו היה מחויב [דא] לעצמותו. אבל אי אפשר שיהיה נמצא אחר במדרגת מציאותו, והיא מדרגת החיוב. הנה המחויב המציאות הוא לא זולתו. וכל אשר זולתו הוא אפשר לעצמותו.

הנה זה ביאור מופשט המליצה באלה השאלות, ויגיע אמותם והמופת עליהם, אם ירצה האל ית'.

ואולם ההקדמות החמש ועשרים הם המגיעות אל אמתת אלה הדרושים. ונביא על ביאורם מופת, כי סדרם בעל הספר בסתם, כי לא היתה כוונתו זה, אלא מה שכוונו ומה שזכרו בזה הספר, כמו שיבא.

ואולם ההקדמה השש ועשרי'—והיא נצחות העולם— כבר הודה אותה להם על דרך ההנחה, לא על דרך ההאמנ' לאמתתה, כדי שיראה המופת על מציאות האל ותארו ית', ואם הנחתנו העולם קדום. כי רבים מהאנשים חושבים שהמאמר בקדמות העולם מגיע באמתת הדרושים השלשה, ואין הענין כאשר דמו או חשבו, לפי שאנחנו נבאר שהמאמר בקדמות העולם מאמר בטל, ושאין מופת לארסטו עליו. ומי שחשב מהנמשכים אליו ומבארי ספריו

eternity of the world is a false doctrine, and that Aristotle has no proof for it. Whoever among his followers and the commentators on his books thinks that the arguments he mentioned are demonstrations is mistaken, either from ignorance of the conditions of a proof or from neglecting to observe those conditions due to his good opinion of Aristotle, imagining that everything he says or believes is demonstrative. It is not so, for it was Aristotle who taught us in logic the conditions of a proof, and we see that those conditions are missing from the arguments he mentioned for establishing the eternity of the world, as will come later, if God Almighty wills.

שהפנים אשר זכרם הם מופתים הוא טועה, אם לסכלותו בתנאי המופת או בעזיבת עיון אותם התנאים לטוב מחשבתו בארסטו שכל אשר אמרו או האמינו הוא מופת. ואינו כן, כי ארסטו הוא אשר למדנו בהגיון תנאי המופת, ואנחנו נראה אותם התנאים חסרים באופנים אשר זכרם בקיום הקדמות העולם, כמו שיבא אחר זה ברצון האל.

## The Eighteenth Premise

*That everything that is brought out from potentiality to actuality, its bringer-out is something other than it, and is a thing external to it, by necessity. Because if the bringer-out were in it and there were no obstacle, it would not be found in potentiality for any time at all, but would always be in actuality. And if its bringer-out were in it and it had an obstacle that was removed, there is no doubt that the remover of the obstacle is that which brought that potentiality out to actuality. So understand this.*

*The Commentary:*

This is a noble premise of great benefit, containing subtle secrets and precise meanings, so let us elaborate on it. We say: Everything that is brought out from potentiality to actuality is of three ranks:

The first of them is that the thing is non-existent and then becomes existent, such as heat being non-existent in water but being capable of existing. When the agent brings it into existence, it becomes existent in it, and it is said that it has been brought out from potentiality to actuality.

The second is that the thing is existent in actuality in its essence, and it is possible for it to have some attribute, either a form or an accident, but it is not existent in it. That actually existing thing is said, with respect to the possibility of that attribute's being in it, to be "potentially thus-and-such." When that attribute is found in it, it is said that "it has become [thus-and-such] in actuality." For example, water is existent in actuality in its essence, and it is possible for it to be described by heat. Before the existence of heat in it, it is said that "the water is hot in potentiality." When [heat] is found in it, it is said that "it has become hot in actuality."

The third is that the thing is existent in actuality, complete in its essence, and perfect in its attributes, and it is possible for another thing to be brought into being from it, not existing

## י"ח

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אמר: ההקדמה השמונה עשרה שכל מה שיצא מן הכח אל הפועל, מוציאו זולתו, והוא חוץ ממנו, בהכרח, כי לו היה מוציאו בו ולא יהיה שם מונע, לא נמצא בכח עת אחת, אבל היה בפועל תמיד. ואם היה מוציאו בו והיה לו מונע וסולק, אין ספק שמסיר המונע הוא אשר הוציא אותו הכח אל הפועל. והבן זה.

### הביאור:

דע שזאת ההקדמה נכבדת, גדולת המעלה, תחתיה סודות דקים ועניינים חריפים, ונחזיק לדבר במ.

ונאמר: אמנם מה שיצא מן הכח אל הפועל יהיה על שלש מדרגות: הראשונה מהם, שיהיה אותו הדבר נעדר וישוב נמצא, כמו שהחמימות נעדרת במים אבל היא מקבלת המציאות. וכאשר המציאה הפועל, שבה נמצאת בו, ויאמר שהיא יצאה מן הכח אל הפועל.

והשנית – שיהיה הדבר נמצא בפועל בעצמות, ואפשר שיהיה לו תאר־מה, אם צורה ואם מקרה, אבל היא לא תהיה נמצאת. ויאמר לאותו הדבר הנמצא בפועל, כפי אפשרות הגעת אותו התאר לו, שהוא בכח כך, וכאשר נמצא לו אותו התאר, יאמר שהוא שב בפועל, כמו המים שהם נמצאים בפועל בעצמותם ואפשר שיתוארו בחמימות, וקודם מציאותה להם יאמר שהמים חמים בכח, וכאשר נמצאה לו, יאמר שהוא שב חם בפועל.

והמדרגה השלישית, שיהיה הדבר נמצא בפועל, שלם

in it but separate from it. Before its being brought into being from it, it is said of that existent that it is a “doer of the other thing in potentiality.” When [the other thing] is brought into being from it, it is said that “it has become a doer of it in actuality.”

This category is of very great importance, and the discussion on it is long, and the disagreement on it is great, and many of the fundamental questions are built upon it, such as the createdness of the world and its eternity.

So let us first speak of the first two categories, then allude to the third in a manner befitting this place, and we will mention its completion in the coming premises, if God Almighty wills.

We say: Everything that is brought out from potentiality to actuality in the first two ways has a bringer-out that brings it out from potentiality to actuality. This is because that thing is possible in itself and for its locus, so the relation of existence and non-existence to it is equal, and it needs a preponderator to make its existence preponderate over its non-existence. The preponderator of a thing's existence over its non-existence is that which brings it out from potentiality, by necessity. This preponderating bringer-out may be external to the essence of that thing which is in potentiality, like fire in relation to water, or it may be internal to it and pervading it, like the natural ⟨ripening⟩ forces subsisting ⟨in fruits.⟩<sup>1</sup>

The second type, [the agent] whose effect does not cease, such that it sustains the thing in which it exists in actuality always, thus its locus is not in potentiality at any time. And our discussion is about that which is at some time in potentiality and then is brought out to actuality. And if its effect does cease, such that what is in it is not brought out from potentiality to actuality, there is no doubt that this cessation is either due to the presence of an obstacle or the absence of a condition.

1. ⟨ripening... in fruits⟩: so He and infra (p. 154); Ar reads “natural forces subsisting in it” (*al-quwā al-ṭabī‘iyya al-kāmina fihā*).

העצמות, תמים התארים, ואפשר שיחודש ממנו דבר אחר, לא נמצא בו אבל נפרד ממנו. ולפני חדושו ממנו, יאמר לאותו הנמצא שהוא פועל לדבר האחר בכח. וכאשר חודש ממנו, יאמר לו: "שב פועלו בפועל".

וזה החלק [טו א] גדול הדרך<sup>1</sup> מאד, והדבור בו ארוך, והחלוק בו רב, ויבנו עליו הרבה מהשאלות הגדולות, כמו חדוש העולם וקדמותו.

ונדבר ראשונה בשני החלקים הראשונים, אחר נבאר השלישי ביאור ראוי בזה המקום, ונזכור שלמותו בהקדמות הבאות, בג"ה.

ונאמר: כל מה שיצא מן הכח אל הפועל על השני פנים הראשונים – לו מוציא יוציאהו מן הכח אל הפעל, לפי שאותו הדבר אפשר בעצמותו ולמשכנו, ויחס המציאות וההעדר אליו על השווי, ויצטרך אל מכריע יכריע מציאותו על העדרו. ומכריע מציאות הדבר על העדרו מוציאו מן הכח אל הפועל, בלי ספק. וזה המכריע המוציא כבר יהיה חוץ מעצמות אותו הדבר אשר הוא בכח, כאש ביחס אל המים, וכבר יהיה בתוכו מקיף, כמו הכח הטבעי המבשל לפירות, ההוות בו.

והחלק השני, שלא יתחלף ממנו פועלו, בשיעמיד מה שהוא נמצא בו בפעל תמיד, ולא יהיה משכנו בכח בעת מן העתים. ודברינו במה שיהיה בעת־מה בכח אחר כן יצא אל הפעל. ואם נתחלף ממנו פועלו, בשלא יצא מה שהוא בו מן הכח אל הפעל, אין ספק שיהיה אותו החלוק אם להקש

1. הדרך [ ער': «الشأن» [=החשיבות], וכן באנו': "המעלה".

Thus, it needs something external to it to remove that obstacle or to bring about that condition. So the external remover of the obstacle or bringer-about of the condition is what brings out that bringer-out which is in the thing in its effect from potentiality to actuality. An example is the natural ripening forces subsisting in fruits; if that ripening does not occur from them, it is either due to the presence of an obstacle, like a cold that arrests ripening,<sup>1</sup> or due to the absence of a condition, like the heat of the air. So whatever removes that obstacle or brings about this condition—like the sun when it aids it by heating the air—is what brings out the natural forces in their effect from potentiality to actuality. Thus, the original bringer-out is that external thing. Therefore, the bringer-out of a thing, absolutely, from potentiality to actuality is always external to it. This is what he alluded to with his statement: “and it is a thing external to it, by necessity.”

As for the third type—which is that the thing is an existent in its essence, complete in its attributes, and an effect comes to be from it in actuality after it was in potentiality—that effect is either in matter, like the forms and accidents inhering in it, or connected to it in some way, like the rational souls, or it is not in matter nor connected to it, like the separate intellects. The first two categories are possible, if a preparer prepares that matter, so that it becomes prepared to receive the emanation<sup>2</sup> from that Agent, and that effect then comes to be in it. An example from nature is that the sun is existent in actuality, emanating light, with no deficiency or prevention on its part in giving light. If something is not illuminated by it, it is due to a deficiency in its own preparation, such as its not being receptive to color, or not being opposite it, or there being a barrier between it and the sun. When a preparer prepares it by bringing about these conditions and removing the obstacles from it, the light emanates from the sun upon it, without delay or

1. “arrests ripening”: so Ar(ed) and He; Ar(ms) *kabir mufahḥih*.

2. *faḍl*.

מונע או לחסרון תנאי. ויצטרך אל ענין חוץ ממנו יסיר אותו המונע או יגיע אותו התנאי. ומסיר המונע או מגיע התנאי שהוא חוץ ממנו—מוציא לזה שהוא חוץ<sup>1</sup> אשר הוא בדבר בפועלו מהכח אל הפעל, ככח הטבעי המבשל הפירות, ההוות בו; כאשר לא יגיע ממנו אותו הבשול, אם להקש בו מונע, כקוד משים אותם נאים, בלתי מבושלים, או להפקד תנאי, כחמום האויר. וכל עת סר המונע ההוא או הגיע זה התנאי—כשמש כאשר התפשטה בחמום האויר—הנה הוא מוציא הכח הטבעי בפועלו מן הכח אל הפעל. ולפי זה, יהיה המוציא השרשי אותו שהוא חוץ. ואם כן, המוציא לדבר, על השלות, מן הכח אל הפעל יהיה חוץ ממנו תמיד. וזה הוא אשר רמז אליו באמרו: | "והוא חוץ ממנו, בהכרח".

ואולם האופן השלישי, והוא שיהיה אותו הדבר נמצא העצמות, שלם התארים, ויתחדש ממנו רושם בפעל אחר שהיה בכח, ואותו הרושם אם שיהיה בחומה, כצורות והמקרים החלים בו, (או)<sup>2</sup> במין מההתלות, כנפשות המדברות, או לא יהיה בחומר ואין התלות בו, כשכלים הנפרדים. והשני חלקים הראשונים—אפשריים, כאשר הכין אותו החומר מכין, ויוכן להגעת השפע מאותו הפועל, ויחדש בו אותו הרושם. משלו מן הטבעיות: שהשמש נמצאת בפעל השפעתו לאוה, אין קצור בו ולא מונע מצדו בנתינת האוה. וכאשר לא יאיר ממנה דבר, הוא לקצור בהכנתו, כשלא יהיה בעל מראה, או לא יהיה לנכחו, או יהיה בינה ובינו מסך. וכאשר הכינו מכין בשיגיעו לו אלה התנאים ויסוד ממנו (המונע),<sup>3</sup> הנה יושפע אור השמש עליו

1. לזה שהוא חוץ [ ער': «مخرجاً لذلك المخرج» [=לאותו המוציא], וכן באנו': "לאותו המוציא".

2. השלמה על פי ער' ואנו'.

3. השלמה על פי ער' ואנו'.

cessation. But this does not necessitate a change in the agent, because that cessation was not due to the lack of some matter in the agent, such that a change could be attributed to it, but rather to a deficiency in the recipients. The coming-to-be of forms and accidents in the sublunary matter—nay, the rational souls are ⟨by⟩<sup>1</sup> God and His angels<sup>2</sup>—is only in this way. For the primary motions prepare this matter to receive those things, and they come to be from them in it, according to what is befitting each recipient, without any change in the agent at all, since what was withheld was only withheld due to a deficiency in the recipient, not due to the lack of some attribute in the agent.

As for the third category—which is that the emergent thing is not in matter nor connected to it, while it is also not correct to say that a change occurs to the Agent who is an existent in its essence, complete in its attributes—is this possible or not? Some of what has preceded from us in the previous premises, and what will come in the following premises, will assist you in knowing the ruling on this category and the completion of the first two categories.

1. ⟨by⟩: so He; Ar(ms) reads “as” (*ka-al-bāri*), likely a scribal error.
2. “nay... angels”: so Ar(ms) and He(BN); cf. He(an). Ar(ed) om. in footnote. Likely an early marginal gloss interpolated into the archetype.

מבלתי עמידה ולא חלוף. אבל זה לא יחייב שנוי בפועל, כי אותו החלוף לא יהיה לחסרון ענין בפועל, עד ייחס אליו שנוי, אבל לחסרון במקבל. וחדוש הצורות והמקרים בחומר השפל—אבל הנפשות המדברות מהבורא ומלאכיו<sup>1</sup>—אינו אלא על זה האופן. כי התנועות העליונות<sup>2</sup> יכינו זה החומר לקבלת אותם הדברים, ויחודש מהם במ, כפי כל מקבל מה שראוי בו, מבלתי שנוי בפועל כלל, אחר שלא יתחלף מה שיתחלף אלא לקצור במקבל, לא לחסרון תאר בפועל.

ואולם החלק השלישי—והוא, שלא יהיה אותו המחודש בחומר ואין התלות לו בו, עם שלא יתאמת השנוי על אותו הפועל הנמצא העצמות, שלם התארים—אם אפשר זה או אי אפשר? הנה קצת מה שקדם ממנו בהקדמות הקודמות, ומה שיבא בהקדמות הבאות, יעזרך להשקיף על משפט זה החלק ושלמות השני חלקים הראשונים.

1. אבל... ומלאכיו [ ער': «بل النفوس الناطقة كالبارئ وملائكته». אנו': "כנפשות המדברות מהשם ומלאכיו".  
 2. העליונות [ ער': «الأولية» [=הראשוניות]. אנו': "פלכיות".