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TOLEDAN ONTOLOGIES: GUNDISSALINUS, IBN DAUD, AND THE PROBLEM OF GABIROLIAN HYLOMORPHISM

Dominicus Gundissalinus (ca. 1115-post 1190) is one of the most prominent figures of the Toledan translation movement¹. In collaboration with Abraham Ibn Daud and Johannes Hispanus², he translated over twenty Arabic works into Latin³. A peculiarity of Gundissalinus's activity is that these translations are used as main sources for his own philosophical speculation, concretized in five treatises⁴ dealing with psychology, epistemology, metaphysics, and cosmology. These treatises, based on Gundissalinus's conviction of the strong coherence between the Christian, Islamic and Jewish philosophical traditions, are the first works to analyze and receive some of the Arabic and Hebrew doctrines that will constitute the theoretical basis for the Latin speculation in the thirteenth century.

This contribution will focus on a particular branch of Gundissalinus's production, namely ontology, and a peculiar feature of his reflection: the

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¹ An updated biography of Dominicus Gundissalinus can be found in N. POLLONI, «Elementi per una biografia di Dominicus Gundisalvi», *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 82 (2015) 7-22.

² See Ch. BURNETT, «Euclid and al-Farabi in ms. Vatican, Reg. Lat. 1268», in R. ARNZEN – J. THIELMANN (eds.), *Words, Texts and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea. Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Dudley 2004, pp. 411-436; and A. BERTOLACCI, «A Community of Translators: The Latin Medieval Versions of Avicenna's *Book of the Cure*», in C. J. MEWS – J. N. CROSSLEY (eds.), *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe 1100-1500*, Brepols, Turnhout 2011, pp. 37-54.

³ See D. N. HASSE, «Twelfth-Century Latin Translations of Arabic Philosophical Texts on the Iberian Peninsula», Villa Vigoni, June 27th 2013.

⁴ Gundissalinus's authorship of *De immortalitate animae* has been put in doubt by many scholars, instead ascribing the treatise to William of Auvergne. See B. ALLARD, «Nouvelles additions et corrections au *Répertoire* de Glorieux: à propos de Guillaume d'Auvergne», *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*, 10-12 (1958-1960) 79-80; B. ALLARD, «Note sur le *De immortalitate animae* de Guillaume d'Auvergne», *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*, 18 (1976) 68-71.

progressive problematization of his doctrine of hylomorphism. I will analyze the sources that influenced Gundissalinus's mature discussion of ontological composition, underscoring the changes introduced by the Toledan philosopher to his previous doctrinal positions regarding the status of hylomorphic components and their cosmogonic causation. In order to do so, I will briefly examine the opposing theories elaborated by Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Sīnā, doctrines merged together by Gundissalinus in his final metaphysical reflection. Eventually, I will put forward a hypothesis about a possible *medium* of both Gundissalinus's change of position and his doctrinal synthesis – i.e., Ibn Daud's philosophical influence on Gundissalinus.

Ibn Gabirol's Universal Hylomorphism

Written as a dialogue between *magister* and *discipulus*⁵, Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*⁶ deals with many aspects of cosmology, ontology, and theology. Throughout the five books of which it is composed, the author analyses the various conjunctions of matter and form – the principles of every created being⁷. These hylomorphic junctions constitute, on the one hand, different levels of reality and, on the other hand, provide an origin to the emanative series that causes the sensible world.

Following the Latin translation of the text by Dominicus Gundissalinus and Johannes Hispanus, the two theories most widely received among the Latins were the doctrine of divine will and the theory of universal hylomorphism. These theories are tightly bound together. Since the ontological homogeneity of creatural being is provided by the universal

⁵ See J. SCHLANGER, «Le maître et le disciple du *Fons Vitae*», *Revue des études juives*, 127 (1968) 393-397.

⁶ Two critical editions of the Latin text of the *Fons vitae* have been produced. Cf. Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. C. BAEUMKER, Aschendorff, Münster i. W. 1892-1895 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, 1/2-4); and Ibn Gabirol, *Fonte della vita*, ed. and transl. M. BENEDETTO, Bompiani, Milano 2007. To these critical editions, one should add the recent English translation by Laumakis. Cf. Ibn Gabirol, *The Font of Life*, transl. J. A. LAUMAKIS, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 2014.

⁷ See Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 9,24-10,22; ed. BENEDETTO, pp. 220-222.

presence of matter and form in every creature, the union of these two principles, themselves radically opposed to each other, must be the result of a voluntary action of the first cause – a divine act of will that joins together matter and form, and thus starts the causal emanative chain that will establish the different layers of reality⁸.

Ibn Gabirol's universal hylomorphism is based on the position of matter and form as principles of created being in general. Since they are principles, a definition of matter and form is impossible⁹, and they can be imagined as the extreme limits of things. Matter is in fact the spiritual potency bearing everything, while first form constitutes the essence of everything¹⁰. Thus, matter and form are different and in opposition by many points of view, mainly due to matter's role in bearing form, and form's necessity to be borne by matter¹¹.

In order to be the bearer of form, matter has in itself a certain degree of being, and since matter is one for everything that exists, it has one essence, in which the differences expressed by the forms find their generic substrate. By this, Ibn Gabirol states that one should assume matter as the principle which gives its name and essence to everything¹², a problematic

⁸ For a long time, the doctrine of divine will has been read as utterly opposed to any recognition of an emanative scheme in Ibn Gabirol's work. A presence of this process of gradual emanation in the *Fons vitae* is nevertheless quite undeniable, and recently S. Pessin provided some new data regarding the correct hermeneutics through which the Gabirolian doctrine can and should be interpreted. Pessin also put forward a different hermeneutical hypothesis regarding the hylomorphism of the *Fons vitae*, which in her opinion should be considered as resulting from Gundissalinus's misunderstanding of the Neoplatonic horizon on which Ibn Gabirol based his speculation. This is not the place where this important contribution can be duly discussed, but one should note the relevance of this hypothesis in order to understand Gundissalinus's role on the critical transfer of texts and doctrines to the subsequent Latin philosophical debate. See S. PESSIN, *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire. Matter and Method in Jewish Medieval Neoplatonism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, and her contribution in this volume.

⁹ Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 298,10-21; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 628.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 262,18-263,9; ed. BENEDETTO, pp. 582-584.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 299,16-20; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 630.

¹² *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 13,14-14,5; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 228: «Si una est materia universalis omnium rerum, hae proprietates adhaerent ei: scilicet quod sit per se existens, unius essentiae, sustinens diversitatem, dans omnibus essentiam suam et nomen. [...] Materia debet habere esse, quia quod non est ei quod est materia esse non potest. Sed dicitur subsistens per se, ideo ne ratio eat in infinitum, si materia existerit

point, which is resolved by the consideration of the particular essence of one thing as resulting from the gradual stratification of forms on matter. The essential contribution of the latter is therefore an «essentia occulta» – a «possibility of essence» as potential substrate on which every essence is realized through the formal inherence¹³. The key role played by matter is, thus, developed by providing the «ontological homogeneity» – i.e., the consistency of being – among creatures from both an ontic perspective and an essential consideration¹⁴.

If homogeneity, on the one hand, is the key feature expressed by matter, diversity, on the other hand, is the main characteristic expressed by form. We have seen that Ibn Gabirol claims that form always requires a substrate in which it can subsist; the result of this formal inherence is the ontological perfection of the hylomorphic compound (and of matter), since form specifies and determines the essence and existence of every (created) being¹⁵. Even if Ibn Gabirol's discussion of matter and form is wider and

non in se. Unius autem essentiae, ideo quia non quaesivimus nisi unam materiam omnium rerum. Sustinens diversitatem, quia diversitas non est nisi ex formis et formae non sunt existentes per se. Dans omnibus essentiam suam et nomen, ideo quia, cum sit sustinens omnia, necesse est ut sit in omnibus, et cum fuerit existens in omnibus, necesse est ut det essentiam suam et nomen omnibus».

¹³ See *ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 15,15-23; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 230: «Hoc non potest esse ut essentia materiae sit aliud ab essentia eorum quae sunt, sed ea quae sunt, facta sunt aliud a materia per formas quae adveniunt ei, scilicet differentias quae dividunt eam. Unde diversitas quae est inter ea, quae sunt, manifesta non advenit nisi per formas manifestas; similiter diversitas quae est inter ea, quae sunt, occulta non accedit nisi per formas occultas. Ergo diversitas non contingit nisi per formas eorum quae sunt; sed essentia occulta quae suscipit formas, haec est materia prima universalis una non habens diversitatem». This reading of Ibn Gabirol's essential dynamic between matter and form, where the former is the essential possibility «filled» and determined by progressive formal specifications seems to be the best possible hermeneutics in order to guarantee a certain degree of consistency on Ibn Gabirol's ontological theory.

¹⁴ In other words, in the *Fons vitae*, matter is the principle that guarantees, on the one hand, that every created being actually existing (ontic perspective) is homogeneous regarding its composition with every and each other created being. On the other hand, this same commonality is expressed, regarding their essences, by the consideration of matter as the «essentia occulta» and possibility of essential determination, i.e., as the «genus generalissimum» progressively specified by forms in different species of beings.

¹⁵ Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 15,9-18; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 232: «Attende similiter proprietates formae universalis, quae sunt scilicet subsistere in alio

more complex, one can summarize the main characteristics expressed by the two hylomorphic partners as the complementary opposition¹⁶ between:

- ontological homogeneity, commonality, and incipency expressed by matter in its role of «genus generalissimum» and bearer partner;
- ontic diversity, determination, and perfection/completeness expressed by form in its role of «species» (till the final degree of «species specialissima») and borne partner¹⁷.

The theoretical horizon of this opposition between complementary characteristics is an onto-epistemic diarchy between occult and manifest, on the basis of which form is always a manifestation of the occult characters of matter:

Materia est sustentatrix et forma sustentata; et etiam materia est occulta, et forma manifesta; et etiam materia perficitur ex forma, et forma est perficiens essentiam materiae; et etiam materia est designata, et forma designans; et etiam materia est discreta, et forma discernens¹⁸.

Once the viewpoint passes from the consideration of matter and form in themselves to the analysis of their ontogenic dynamic, these oppositions are resolved through the recognition of the intrinsic potential state of both the hylomorphic principles before their union. This doctrine constitutes the theoretical core of Ibn Gabirol's ontology: matter and form in themselves

et perficere essentiam illius in quo est et dare ei esse. Si inveneris has proprietates in formis eorum quae sunt, iam invenisti formam universalem. [...] Sustineri necesse est formae, quia si non sustinetur, sustinebit; et sic forma erit materia et habebit intellectum materiae. Perficere autem essentiam in qua est et dare ei esse convenit formae, ideo quia res esse sicut est non habet nisi per formam». It is clear that the overall theory on which this discussion is based is provided by the doctrine of plurality of substantial forms, as M. Benedetto will expose in following pages. See Marienza Benedetto's chapter in the present volume.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 260,12-20; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 580.

¹⁷ Regarding the bearer/borne dynamic, see *ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 259,25-260,11; ed. BENEDETTO, pp. 578-580: «Materia differt a forma in eo quod altera est sustinens et altera sustentatum. [...] Postquam materia non est sustinens se ipsam, et forma non est sustentata a se ipsa, sed materia est sustinens respectu formae quae sustinetur in ea, et forma similiter non est sustentata nisi respectu materiae quae eam sustinet: scies per hoc quod materia et forma non discernuntur hac differentia, nisi cum consideratur esse composita, non cum consideratur essentia cuiuslibet illarum».

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 299,16-20; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 630.

have a mere potential being, that is actualized only by their union into the hylomorphic compound. By this view, even if they eternally exist in God's wisdom and essence¹⁹, by an ontic perspective matter and form begin to be together:

Quod dicimus de unitate, hoc idem intelligimus de forma, quia unitas est forma, et materia non meruit habere esse nisi propter unitatem quae sustinetur in ea; et haec est quae attribuit ei esse, quia materia absque unitate non habebat esse, sed materia et unitas coeperunt esse simul, quia materia non fuit apta esse nisi propter unitatem, sicut non fuit coaptabilis proprietati unitatis et formae nisi propter unitatem et formam²⁰.

When the divine will joins the form to matter, the resulting compound is unified due to the unity expressed by the same form, and as a result, matter retains its implicit tendency to dispersion²¹. Concomitantly to this dynamic, both matter and form pass from a potential to an actual existence²².

The existence and the priority of matter and form are demonstrated by Ibn Gabirol through the application of a twofold procedure: the common universal and the particular proper methods²³. Taking into account the forms of the four elements, the results of this procedure demonstrate the existence of a substrate – matter – for every property that can be detected on

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 333,3-6; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 672: «De materia hoc idem dicitur quod de forma, scilicet quod materia est creata ab essentia, et forma est a proprietate essentiae, id est sapientia et unitate, etsi essentia non sit appropriata proprietate ab ea extrinseca».

²⁰ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 272,18-25; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 596. One could suppose that in their intrinsic potentiality, matter and form are equal in existence, and their actuality depends on an external cause. This, however, is not the case. Ibn Gabirol, indeed, repeatedly states that, notwithstanding their homogeneous potential being, it is form that causes the existence of matter, and not the other way around. This assertion of a primacy of form over matter – in base of which form is said to be nobler than matter – is due to an overall analysis of the role of form toward the actualization of the compound, whose apex is the recognition of an implicit link between form and metaphysical unity expressed by the form. See *ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 234,29-235,4, 272,25-273,3 and 299,21-26; ed. BENEDETTO, pp. 544, 596 and 630.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 274,19-275,3; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 598.

²² *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 314,20-22; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 648.

²³ See J. SCHLANGER, *La philosophie de Salomon Ibn Gabirol*, Brill, Leiden 1968, pp. 110-174 and pp. 203-209.

a particular being²⁴. In fact, the opposition between different qualities (i.e., forms) requires a «commonality» in which that opposition is exceeded and resolved. This common aspect derives from their substrate, and in the case of elemental forms, the substrate – their *matter* – is the body²⁵. The latter expresses the ontological homogeneity from which develops and in which is resolved the difference between corporeal forms. By this point of view, the body is correctly called ‘matter’ of corporeal forms, since it is the substrate bearing them and the occultness manifested by the forms. Nevertheless, the same body has some peculiar properties showing that it is not just a mere substrate, but a specification of something ontologically precedent. For being a determination, it should be admitted that the body is also the form of something²⁶, and thus it requires a previous matter – specifically, the universal spiritual matter – that is able to sustain the form of the body.

This is the key point of Ibn Gabirol’s cosmogony: the application of the principle by which every determination has a substrate leads to the admission of different levels of reality, each one of them is composed of matter and form. This procedure shows a cosmogonic development where ontological homogeneity among the different levels of reality is expressed by the hylomorphic concatenation of one level to the previous and the subsequent ones, where the form of the lower is the matter of the higher. Thus, Ibn Gabirol coherently claims that universal spiritual matter, mirroring what we have just seen about corporeal matter/form of corporeity, is at the same time matter for the form of corporeity *and* form of an even more foregoing and occult matter²⁷. From this level of reality, which constitutes the limit between the corporeal and spiritual realms, the *Fons vitae* continues its ascending analysis exposing a hypostatical

²⁴ In fact, each property expresses a specification of being that is caused by form: since every form must have a substrate, one has to admit the existence of a matter bearing these different forms. Regarding this point, Ibn Gabirol develops his line of reasoning from the consideration of the elements. Elemental forms are in themselves accidental, and opposed to each other for the different qualities they have. All the same, by considering this formal opposition, one can easily understand that the forms of elements have a common substrate, since they all exist together in sensible things.

²⁵ Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 19,4-5; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 236.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 20,2-4; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 238: «similiter et corpus quod subiectum est his formis universalibus erit quemadmodum elementa sunt subiecta his formis particularibus».

²⁷ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 25,8-26,10; ed. BENEDETTO, pp. 248-250

articulation into nature²⁸, vegetative, sensible, and intellectual souls, and based on the metaphysical principle by which the upper hypostasis is the matter and cause of the subsequent and contains, in a higher degree, what is manifested through the latter²⁹.

Ibn Gabirol's emanative scheme is based on the explicit thematization of the hylomorphic principles as occult substrate (matter) and manifest determination (form). Each level of reality is composed of these two principles and causes the subsequent, but the causation process does not entail any kind of ontological leap between the two levels, for there is always an element of continuity in both the levels that performs the role of matter in the upper one and of form in the lower:

Et secundum hoc corporeitas mundi, quae est materia manifesta sustinens formam quae sustinetur in illa, debet esse forma sustentata in materia occulta de qua tractamus; et secundum hanc considerationem erit haec materia forma ad id quod sequitur, donec veniemus ad materiam primam quae continet omnia³⁰.

Matter is always and primarily what bears, while form is always what is borne by matter, and by this, the form is always the extrinsic manifestation of the intrinsic occultness of matter. Ibn Gabirol's emanative process is, thus, based on what we could call the 'circular functionality' of matter and form, in which at every level of reality one and the same being³¹ is matter in one level, and form in the following level.

This progressive ontogenic progression corresponds to the gradual specification of being and to the overall and progressive manifestation of what is occult³². There is no need to point out the improper use of

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, pp. 184,12-185,26; ed. BENEDETTO, pp. 472-474.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 211,13-14; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 512.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 24,10-14; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 248.

³¹ There is no need to specify that for «being» here one should understand the ontologic component of the hylomorphic compound. In order to give more clarity to this line of reasoning, I choose to use the term «being» rather than «ontologic component».

³² This problem can be plainly expressed by the example provided by the body. As we have seen, the body is the substrate of corporeal forms – the matter by which they are borne. Nevertheless, the body is also the form of corporeity – the form which is borne by the universal spiritual matter. In this way, a single being – the body – is at the same time matter and form: matter for the corporeal forms, and form for the universal

the terms «matter» and «form» on which this doctrine of circular functionality is based. This usage is one of the most eminent cases of the Aristotelian hermeneutics Gundissalinus and Johannes Hispanus give to the Latin translation of Ibn Gabirol's text, a text that in itself seems to require a different semantic horizon³³. All the same, the improper use of the terms implies an important doctrinal consequence. Since one and same being is matter and form in two different levels of reality, the determination of matter and form cannot be intrinsic, instead resulting from the external examination of the ontological function developed in a particular moment by the considered being. In other words, Ibn Gabirol's circular functionality implies an *extrinsic functional determination* of the hylomorphic constituents, a functionality mainly expressed by their logical, of not ontological, characterizations as bearing and borne components. This is the only perspective through which the being can *be* both matter and form, i.e., can serve as matter *and* form depending on the different consideration it is subject to.

The problems related to this peculiar determination of the principles of being are evident, since an extrinsic determination entails that the object of the *Fons vitae* are beings pursuing the function of «materiality» and «formality» rather than matter and form in themselves. Possibly Ibn Gabirol would have never accepted a similar outcome in his original speculation; nevertheless, the Aristotelian reading to which the Latin text of the *Fons vitae* is exposed – and read by the Latin philosophers – reaches such a paradoxical position, that indeed will not be received, or at least not in these terms, by the Christian supporters of universal hylomorphism.

Thus, one should not be surprised by Gundissalinus's critical approach toward this doctrinal position. Gundissalinus's reception of the *Fons vitae* is precocious and wide, even if it is focused almost exclusively on the theoretical features of universal hylomorphism. Aspects of this doctrine can be detected in every discussion Gundissalinus dedicates to ontology, although his attitude changes through a progressive problematization of his positions, especially in *De processione mundi*.

spiritual matter. The same remarks can be made for every level of reality between corporeal forms and hypostatic intelligence.

³³ This is the main supposition presented by the study by PESSIN, *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire*.

Although its focus is the examination of the metaphysical concept of unity, *De unitate et uno*³⁴ – one of Gundissalinus's earliest writings – presents universal hylomorphism as the main explanation of ontological being³⁵. There, this doctrine is accompanied by many influences from Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, especially regarding the question about the relation between caused and divine unity³⁶ and the cosmogonic progression articulated in the aforementioned hypostases of intelligence, soul (rational, sensitive, and vegetative), and nature, whose being, as Gundissalinus remarks, is composed of matter and form³⁷.

A similar scenario can be found in Gundissalinus's *De anima*³⁸. As suggested by the title, this writing deals mainly with psychology, and its discussion is based almost completely on Ibn Sīnā's *De*

³⁴ Three critical editions of Gundissalinus's *De unitate* have been prepared: P. CORRENS, *Die dem Boethius fälschlich zugeschriebene Abhandlung des Dominicus Gundisalvi 'De unitate'*, Aschendorff, Münster i. W. 1891 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, 1/1); M. ALONSO ALONSO, «El Liber de unitate et uno», *Pensamiento*, 12 (1956) 179-202; M. J. SOTO BRUNA – C. ALONSO DEL REAL, *De unitate et uno de Dominicus Gundissalinus*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2015.

³⁵ For example, see Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De unitate et uno*, ed. CORRENS, p. 3,11-15: «Esse igitur est nonnisi ex coniunctione formae cum materia. Unde philosophi sic describunt illud dicentes: esse est existentia formae cum materia. Cum autem forma materiae unitur, ex coniunctione utriusque necessario aliquid unum constituitur».

³⁶ This issue is strongly related to the link bonding unity and form, that will be properly dealt with in *De processione mundi*, but which is also presented in *De unitate*. See Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De unitate et uno*, ed. CORRENS, p. 6,19-26: «Sed quia unitas subsistens in materia intelligentiae est unitas simplicitatis, ideo necessario unitas subsistens in materia animae, quia infra eam est, crescit et multiplicatur et accidit ei mutatio et diversitas, et sic paulatim descendendo a superiore per unumquemque gradum materiae inferior unitas augetur et multiplicatur, quousque pervenitur ad materiam, quae sustinet quantitatem, scilicet substantiam huius mundi».

³⁷ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De unitate et uno*, ed. CORRENS, p. 8,1-6: «Quia igitur materia in supremis formata est forma intelligentiae, deinde forma rationalis animae, postea vero forma sensibilis animae, deinde inferius forma animae vegetabilis, deinde forma naturae, ad ultimum autem in infimis forma corporis: hoc non accidit ex diversitate virtutis agentis, sed ex aptitudine materiae suscipientis».

³⁸ Dominicus Gundissalinus's treatise *De anima* is available in two critical edition: J. T. MUCKLE, «The Treatise *De anima* of Dominicus Gundissalinus», *Mediaeval Studies*, 2 (1940) 23-103; M. J. SOTO BRUNA – C. ALONSO DEL REAL, *El 'Tractatus de anima' atribuido a Dominicus Gundi[s]salinus*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2009.

*anima*³⁹. Nevertheless, before examining the intellectual faculties of the soul, Gundissalinus has to deal with the problem of the composition of the soul, a simple substance that in Avicennian terms cannot admit a material component. The Toledan philosopher has a completely different answer, for he states that the spiritual substances also have a hylomorphic composition, and in order to integrate this theory into the Ibn Sīnā-based discussion, Gundissalinus must demonstrate that spiritual substances are composed of matter and form in the same way as bodies are. The bases for this demonstration are again provided by Ibn Gabirol. In fact, chapter seven of *De anima*⁴⁰ is completely dedicated to demonstrating spiritual hylomorphism through the discussion exposed in the fourth book of the *Fons vitae* and through the use of many Gabirolian doctrinal points, such as the necessary hylomorphism which is intrinsic to the definition of substance⁴¹, the causative link between form and diversity⁴², and the divine will as active composer of matter and form⁴³. These arguments show the relational value of the simplicity ascribed to spiritual substances, which are not simple in themselves, but in comparison to what follows them⁴⁴, because, like bodies, the spiritual substances are also composed of matter and form:

Quamvis enim anima sit simplex, videtur tamen constare ex materia et forma. Cui enim advenit forma corporeitatis ut fiat corporea substantia, eidem prorsus advenit forma spiritualitatis ut fiat incorporea substantia. Unde corporea et incorporea substantia in substantia quidem nullatenus differunt, sed potius substantialiter conveniunt. Immo in substantia unum sunt cum nomen et ratio substantiae aequae omnibus conveniat⁴⁵.

³⁹ For an overall examination of Ibn Sīnā's influences on Gundissalinus's psychology, see D. N. HASSE, *Avicenna's 'De anima' in the Latin West*, The Warburg Institute, London 2000, pp. 13-18.

⁴⁰ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De anima*, ed. SOTO BRUNA – ALONSO DEL REAL, pp. 142,2-164,22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142,1-8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 142,8-12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 146,5-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 162,20-164,1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142,2-8.

The explanation of the universal composition of matter and form is founded by Gundissalinus on the doctrine of circular functionality in the *Fons vitae*. Everything has an hylomorphic composition because both spiritual and composed being are derived from the causal concatenation of matter and form through which, as we have seen, the world is created:

Et notandum quia post primam universalem id quod est materia posteriorum, forma est priorum et quod est manifestius, forma est occulti, quia materia quo propinquior est sensui est similior formae, et ideo fit manifestior propter evidentiam formae et occultationem materiae, quamvis sit materia formae sensibilis⁴⁶.

This passage from *De anima* is a direct quotation of Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, where the Jewish philosopher states:

Et secundum hoc corporeitas mundi, quae est materia manifesta sustinens formam quae sustinetur in illa, debet esse forma sustentata in materia occulta de qua tractamus; et secundum hanc considerationem erit haec materia forma ad id quod sequitur, donec veniemus ad materiam primam quae continet omnia⁴⁷.

By quoting this passage, Gundissalinus accepts the circular functionality of matter and form and, implicitly, their functional and extrinsic logical determination. Both doctrines are strongly linked to the dynamic of progressive manifestation of occultness, and to Ibn Gabirol's emanative scheme, as we have seen before. Through the recognition of universal hylomorphism as the sole explanation of spiritual ontology⁴⁸, and the acceptance of the theory of circular functionality, the framework exposed in *De anima* must be considered Gundissalinus's most radical adherence to Ibn Gabirol's ontology. Nevertheless, this apex begins a descending turnabout, and at least two doctrinal points derived from the *Fons vitae* – i.e., hypostatic cosmology and circular functionality – are abandoned

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144,10-14.

⁴⁷ Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 24,10-14; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 248.

⁴⁸ In *De anima*, Gabirolian hylomorphism is the only feature used by Gundissalinus for his discussion on ontology and spiritual composition. This fact is meaningful. Indeed, the *De processione* presents a wider number of sources and doctrinal references, both Latin and Arabic, which are completely absent from the ontological discussion of *De anima*.

by Gundissalinus in his mature metaphysical reflection in *De processione mundi*, where new factors and new sources strongly influence his discussion of being and cosmogony, beginning with Ibn Sīnā's modal ontology.

Ibn Sīnā's Necessary and Possible Being

The specific theme of Gundissalinus's *De processione mundi*⁴⁹ is the examination of the cosmogonic dynamic from God's act of creation to the causality of the secondary cause. The structure of the work follows al-Fārābī's metaphysical programme as adopted by Gundissalinus in his *De scientiis* and *De divisione philosophiae*⁵⁰. In many respects, *De processione* marks a shift in Gundissalinus's ontological and cosmological reflection. The doctrines exposed in this treatise are connected with different traditions, both Arabic and Latin, and the overall ontological discussion receives a wide development due to the important reception of Avicennian and Chartrean themes⁵¹.

In *De processione*, the theoretical core of Gundissalinus's ontology is provided again by Ibn Gabirol's universal hylomorphism. The treatise is grounded on a dense scheme of textual references to the *Fons vitae*, quotations through which the Toledan philosopher explains the hylomorphic composition of bodies and spiritual substances. As principles of every caused being, matter and form are the first effects of divine causation, i.e., the results of God's *creatio* that, by a logical point of view, precedes the composition of matter and form together⁵² (*primaria compositio*), operated by God. Gundissalinus states that the two ontological principles

⁴⁹ There are two critical editions of Gundissalinus's metaphysical writing: G. BÜLOW, *Des Dominicus Gundissalinus Schrift 'Von dem Hervorgange der Welt'*, Aschendorff, Münster i. W. 1925 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, 24/3); M. J. SOTO BRUNA – C. ALONSO DEL REAL, *De processione mundi. Estudio y edición crítica del tratado de D. Gundisalvo*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1999.

⁵⁰ See N. POLLONI, «Gundissalinus and the Application of al-Fārābī's Metaphysical Programme. A Case of Philosophical Transfer», *Mediterranea. International Journal on the Transfer of Knowledge*, 1 (2016) 70-106.

⁵¹ See ID., «Thierry of Chartres and Gundissalinus on Spiritual Substance: The Problem of Hylomorphic Composition», *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*, 57 (2015) 35-57.

⁵² Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, pp. 19,14-20,6.

eternally exist in God's wisdom⁵³, and their exiting from God's simplicity corresponds to an ontological indigence, intrinsically characteristic of both of them before their mutual union⁵⁴. In fact, matter and form have in themselves a potential being that is actualized only by their composition into the hylomorphic compound:

Unde sciendum est, quod esse duobus modis dicitur: est enim esse in potentia, quod est proprium essentiae uniuscuiusque materiae per se et uniuscuiusque formae per se, et est esse in actu, quod est proprium materiae et formae simul coniunctarum. Impossibile est enim, quod materia vel forma per se sic dicatur esse, sicut dicitur esse, cum una coniungitur alii⁵⁵.

On the one hand, universal hylomorphism in *De processione* continues to be the key explanation for creatural being, whose primary and most eminent characteristic is expressed by its ontological composition. On the other hand, one must underscore that this key feature is accompanied by a new ontological framework and a different cosmological perspective, derived from Ibn Sīnā and Hermann of Carinthia, new theories that supersede Ibn Gabirol's *auctoritas*. This theoretical shift can be noted in many points Gundissalinus addresses, but the most evident effect is surely provided by the abandonment of two doctrines accepted in *De unitate* and *De anima*: the cosmological derivation scheme exposed by Ibn Gabirol and the circular functionality of matter and form throughout the various levels of reality.

Gundissalinus substitutes Ibn Gabirol's emanative progression with a peculiar description of cosmogonic causation inspired by Hermann of Carinthia's *De essentiis*⁵⁶, and articulated by the Toledan philosopher in four modalities of causation⁵⁷ (creation, primary and secondary composition, and generation) and two causative actors (God as primary cause, and angels, planets, and elements/nature as secondary cause⁵⁸).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27,20-28,1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22,1-9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22,25-23,5.

⁵⁶ Hermann of Carinthia, *De essentiis*, ed. CH. BURNETT, Brill, Leiden 1982, p. 110,15-23.

⁵⁷ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, pp. 19,14-20,2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51,13-23.

The abandonment of the theory of circular functionality – with its implied functional logical determination of matter and form – corresponds to a substantial problematization of Gundissalinus's ontology.

Abandoning circular functionality, matter and form are now intrinsically determined by a logical point of view; their predication is univocal and is no longer expressible as a function of the ontological component under two different considerations. The characterization of matter and form as «what bears» and «what is borne» is still accepted, but Gundissalinus's perspective is now based on the admission of only one matter receiving a plurality of forms, an account that is still wholly Gabirolian, but refined by the encounter with other ontological perspectives.

The resulting cosmogonic progression finds a different articulation from Gundissalinus's previous writings; the first act of creation of matter and form is followed by the divine composition of matter with the forms of unity and substantiality, which gives birth to the first substance⁵⁹. This unspecified substance is then distinguished into spiritual and corporeal substances⁶⁰, from which the secondary cause arises, founding the sensible world. It is clear that such a cosmogonic scheme supersedes the problem of circular functionality through the application of Porphyry's tree, whose roots are the unicity of matter, the plurality of substantial forms, and the intrinsic determination of both of them.

As previously mentioned, the reappraisal of this fundamental cosmological and ontological feature is due to the insertion of new Arabic and Latin sources, which are not used as authoritative texts in Gundissalinus's previous discussions of this problem. The most important of these «new» sources is certainly Ibn Sīnā's *Liber de philosophia prima*. The ontology presented in *De processione* can be read, in fact, as the result of a synthesis – perhaps reached, assuredly attempted – between Ibn Sīnā's and Ibn Gabirol's metaphysics. The range of Ibn Sīnā's presence in the text of *De processione mundi* can be easily recognized by the vast quotation⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41,10-42,7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 42,8-43,7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5,19-17,1. This quotation shows some interesting textual modifications with regard to the version of Ibn Sīnā's text previously translated by Gundissalinus. See N. POLLONI, «Gundissalinus on Necessary Being: Textual and Doctrinal Alterations in the Exposition of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*», *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 26/1 (2016) 129-160.

from *Liber de philosophia prima* I, 6-7⁶². In these two chapters, Ibn Sīnā deals with the demonstration, through five arguments, of the unrelated uniqueness of the necessary Existent, which is the first discussion on necessary and possible being one can find in the *Liber the philosophia prima*. Even if Ibn Sīnā's modal ontology is well-known⁶³, a brief summary of its main features may be useful at this point.

The core of this doctrine lies in the notable distinction between essence and existence⁶⁴, and its related demonstration of an efficient cause that leads every existing thing to be. That being whose existence is implied by its essential predication is the necessary Existent, the existence of which cannot be logically denied without entailing a contradiction in terms. The logical implication of existence results, by an ontological point of view, in the intrinsic necessity, that is, self-sufficiency, of the existential cause of every caused being. This causative dynamic is acted upon by the possibility of existence of the yet-not-caused being. This is the possible being, whose existential possibility is expressed by the neutral alternative between being and not-being. The effect of the necessary Existent's causation upon the possible being is the existence or inexistence of the latter; if the causative process has a positive outcome, its ontological status passes from a mere existential possibility to a conditioned necessity – «necesse esse per aliud», in the Latin text – whose condition is expressed by its intrinsic requirement of an external efficient cause in order to be. That cause is, thus, the necessary Existent, the only being avoiding the ontological requirement of a previous existential cause.

This doctrinal ensemble is exposed by Ibn Sīnā in the chapters of the *Liber de philosophia prima* that Gundissalinus quotes in his *De processione mundi*. The doctrine of necessary and possible being is developed through

⁶² Ibn Sīnā, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. VAN RIET, 2 vols., Peeters, Louvain 1977-1980, vol. I, pp. 43,21-55,55.

⁶³ For an overall synthesis, see G. SMITH, «Avicenna and the Possibles», *The New Scholasticism*, 17 (1943) 340-357.

⁶⁴ Ibn Sīnā, *Liber de philosophia prima*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 34,50-36,83. See A. BERTOLACCI, «The Distinction of Essence and Existence in Avicenna's Metaphysics: The Text and Its Context», in F. OPWIS – D. C. REISMAN (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, Brill, Leiden 2012, pp. 257-288; A. BÄCK, «Avicenna on Existence», *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 25 (1987) 351-367; and O. LIZZINI, «Wugud-Mawgud/Existence-Existent in Avicenna. A Key Ontological Notion of Arabic Philosophy», *Quaestio*, 3 (2003) 111-138.

the contextual demonstrations of the unrelated uniqueness of the necessary Existent, and the Toledan philosopher uses the Avicennian arguments for the specific discussion of God's being, following al-Fārābī's metaphysical programme⁶⁵. One can recognize the fundamental relevance of this doctrinal foundation at the end of Gundissalinus's discussion on God's being. Here, the Toledan philosopher directly and explicitly bonds the unrelated uniqueness and unity of the necessary Existent to the implicit duplicity of the principles of caused being:

Constat ergo, quod necesse esse neque est relativum, neque est mutabile, nec multiplex, sed solitarium, cum nihil aliud participat in suo esse, quod est ei proprium; et hoc non est nisi solus deus, qui est prima causa et primum principium omnium, quod unum tantum necesse est intelligi, non duo vel plura. Unum enim duobus prius est; omne enim illud prius est alio, quod destructum destruit et positum non ponit. Nisi autem praecedat unum, non erunt duo; aut si duo fuerint, necesse est unum esse. Sed non convertitur: si unum est, duo sunt, duo esse necesse est. Duo igitur principia esse non possunt. Dicitur utrumque prius esse laborans, neutrum neutri principalem sedem relinquit. Nisi enim alterutrum alterutro prius esset, nequaquam primum omnium existeret. Unum igitur est principium, una est causa efficiens omnium⁶⁶.

The arithmetical implication expressed by the assertion «si unum est, duo sunt, duo esse necesse est» shows a direct reference to matter and form as principles of creation on which the world is instituted, the first duplicity that characterized creatural being as opposed to divine simplicity⁶⁷. The priority of matter and form is grounded on a logico-arithmetical basis,

⁶⁵ See POLLONI, «Gundissalinus and the Application». According to this consideration, this quotation plays a key role in the economy of *De processione mundi*. On the one hand, the discussion of God's necessary existence constitutes the highest point of the ascending/descending articulation on which *De processione mundi* is based. On the other hand, the exposition of this doctrine responds to a precise theoretical demand, since the thematization of the caused being as characterized by complete existential possibility provides Gundissalinus the best possible framework to ground the ontological potency of the principles of being, i.e., matter and form.

⁶⁶ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BULOW, pp. 16,23-17,10.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 54,9-18.

claiming that from the unity, the first multiplicity expressed by duality must derive from a progressive complication of the world⁶⁸.

Thus, the possibility to be, i.e., the possible being, corresponds to the intrinsic potency of both matter and form before their conjunction. It is only through the hylomorphic union that matter, form, and their compound receive an actual being, in virtue of which the composed being can be said to be existing⁶⁹ as a necessary existent *per aliud*. The value of this line of reasoning is universal, for every caused being is the actualization of a previous potency and existential possibility:

nihil fit, nisi quod possibile est esse; sed omne, quod possibile est esse, dum fit, de potentia exit ad effectum. Ergo omne, quod fit, de potentia exit ad effectum⁷⁰.

The theoretical merging between Ibn Sīnā's modal ontology and Ibn Gabirol's universal hylomorphism is based on a threefold doctrinal junction among the theories of 1) necessary and possible being; 2) act and potency; 3) matter and form. The identification scheme on which Gundissalinus's elaboration is based can be summarized as follows:

necessary Existent <i>per se</i>	act without potency	God's being
possible being <i>per se</i>	potency	form without matter
possible being <i>per se</i>	potency	matter without form
necessary existent <i>per aliud</i>	act	corporeal substances: matter + form
necessary existent <i>per aliud</i>	act	spiritual substances: matter + form

⁶⁸ The importance Gundissalinus ascribes to the use of the arithmological method in metaphysics is probably inspired by Thierry of Chartres. See Polloni, «Thierry of Chartres and Gundissalinus on Spiritual Substance».

⁶⁹ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, p. 23,12-15: «Esse enim uniuscuiusque istarum per se est esse in potentia; esse vero illarum simul coniunctarum est esse in actu. Unde ante coniunctionem utraque habet esse in potentia. Sed cum altera alteri coniungitur, utraque de potentia producit ad effectum».

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35,17-19.

By some degree, traces of the identification between possible/necessary being *per aliud* and potency/act can be already detected in Ibn Sīnā's *Liber de philosophia prima*, but never as explicit assertions by the Persian philosopher. However, the third branch of this identification scheme is utterly different from Ibn Sīnā: the hylomorphism he elaborates is limited to corporeal substances only, and his formalism – by which form is always act⁷¹, and is the *causa media* of matter⁷² – makes it impossible to suppose a potential state of form and matter before their union. One should note that Gundissalinus was certainly aware of these theoretical divergences. Indeed, the Toledan philosopher had access to Ibn Sīnā's discussion on physics, since he is the translator of the first three books of the Avicennian *Physica*⁷³ that appear among the sources used in *De processione mundi*⁷⁴. Thus, it seems that this unlikely theoretical merging is the result of Gundissalinus's necessity to amend some of the outcomes previously accepted: a reappraisal toward which the Toledan philosopher probably received some theoretical impulses from an «Avicennian» philosopher who was very close to him: Abraham Ibn Daud.

Abraham Ibn Daud's Rejection of Ibn Gabirol's Ontology

Abraham Ibn Daud and Dominicus Gundissalinus are very close to each other in many respects. Both are original philosophers, active in Toledo in the second half of the twelfth century⁷⁵, and both collaborate on many translations into Latin, beginning with Ibn Sīnā's *De anima*. This convergence among interests and works makes an active interchange of

⁷¹ Ibn Sīnā, *Liber de philosophia prima*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 101,10-102,16.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 101,98-4.

⁷³ See HASSE, «Twelfth-Century Latin Translations of Arabic Philosophical Texts on the Iberian Peninsula».

⁷⁴ For example, Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, pp. 31,3-16, quoting Ibn Sīnā, *Liber primus naturalium. Tractatus primus de causis et principiis naturalium*, ed. S. VAN RIET, Peeters, Louvain – Leiden 1992, pp. 21,60-22,72.

⁷⁵ Regarding the identification of Avendauth with Abraham Ibn Daud, see the seminal article by M.-Th. D'ALVERNY, «Avendauth?», in *Homenaje a Millás Vallicrosa*, vol. I, CSIC, Barcelona 1954, pp. 19-43.

views, doctrines, and texts between Ibn Daud and Gundissalinus very likely – a possibility which can be crucial in order to clarify the change of perspective we have detected in the latter’s speculation.

Ibn Daud’s production deals with two major topics: history and philosophy. While his reflection on the former is exposed in his famous *Dorot ‘Olam*⁷⁶, philosophy and its coherence with Jewish theology constitute the key feature of the *Emunah Ramah*⁷⁷. This work is very interesting. Here, Ibn Daud presents his metaphysics, mainly based on Ibn Sīnā’s and al-Ghazālī’s theories⁷⁸, and sharply criticizes the ontology of Ibn Gabirol, diffusely attacked for his overall misunderstanding of philosophy. The compresence of these two relevant features – i.e, the discussion of Ibn Sīnā’s and Ibn Gabirol’s metaphysics – makes Ibn Daud a good candidate to have exerted an influence on Gundissalinus’s «new» theoretical perspective.

Ibn Daud’s ontology, as well as his cosmology, is deeply rooted in Ibn Sīnā’s theories, and by this, his hylomorphism is «limited» to the corporeal substances. Matter and forms can be detected only in the bodies, thus, their interactions correspond to the study proper of physics. Matter is caused by the planets, and particularly by the outer sphere⁷⁹, while the forms are caused and joined to matter due to the key role played by the active intellect⁸⁰. All the same, matter is characterized by a mere potential being, as undetermined possibility from which every body can arise⁸¹, and as substrate of every form⁸².

As previously mentioned, Ibn Daud’s «limited» hylomorphism implies that this kind of composition can be attributed only to corporeal

⁷⁶ K. VEHLow, *Abraham Ibn Daud’s ‘Dorot ‘Olam’ (Generation of the Ages). A Critical Edition and Translation of ‘Zikhron Divrey Romi’, ‘Divrey Yisra’el’ and the ‘Midrash on Zechariah’*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2013.

⁷⁷ The original Arabic text of Ibn Daud’s writing is no longer extant. Only a Hebrew translation of the text survives. See Ibn Daud, *The Exalted Faith*, ed. and transl. N. SAMUELSON, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Cranbury NJ 1987.

⁷⁸ On the sources of Ibn Daud’s philosophy see R. FONTAINE, *In Defense of Judaism: Abraham Ibn Daud. Sources and Structure of ‘ha-Emunah ha-Ramah’*, Van Gorcum, Assen – Maastricht 1990.

⁷⁹ Ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah*, op. cit., p. 174,153b4-153b6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113,103b4-103b6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62,26b16-26b17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 63,27b15-27b20.

substances⁸³, whose principles are, indeed, matter, form, and privation⁸⁴. On the contrary, spiritual substances have no matter, and to admit their hylomorphic composition would entail an inadmissible ontological complexity in them:

However, what Ibn Gabirol argued about the matter and the form existing in angels necessitates that the simple has complexity, but this is absurd. Rather, the truth is that [angels] have possibility of existence from their essence, and from God, may He be exalted, they have necessity of existence, according to what we shall explain in this book, but this [existence] in no way is from the matter and the form⁸⁵.

Spiritual substances are not absolutely simple. For Ibn Daud and Gundissalinus, simplicity is an exclusive attribute of only God, and every caused being always has a certain degree of multiplicity, structural of its own being. Nevertheless, the sole kind of composition one can affirm regarding spiritual substances is their intrinsic duplicity of necessary and possible being⁸⁶, a solution derived from Ibn Sīnā's discussion on the causation of the first intelligence and the causative dynamic developed by the necessary Existent. The spiritual composition is explicable through the intrinsic tension between possible and necessary being only; for Ibn Daud it is clear that Ibn Gabirol has completely misunderstood the ontological terms composing spiritual being. Accordingly, matter is indeed the exclusive characteristic of bodies. Ibn Daud further clarifies this point, presenting Ibn Gabirol's equivocal hermeneutics as follows:

Rather, the dependence of [the intellect's] existence on something else indicates that it does not have in itself what is necessary of existence. Rather, [it has] what is possible of existence. Thus, in its substance [there is] what is complex for the intellect and it is like a composite of matter and form. [The reason for this is] that what it has from its substance is like matter, that is, possibility, and what it has from something else is like form. The thing that it contains is what it is, that is, necessity. Of the many substances that contains

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 63,28b10-28b13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63,29b4-29b5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63,29b9-26b12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141,128b8-128b15.

this attribute, some are ordered by others of them in order. They are [the entities] for whom Ibn Gabirol, may he be remembered for a blessing, tried to establish the existence of *hyle* and form in the fifth book of his treatise. He did not explain that [what] they have is [some]thing like *hyle* and [some]thing like form. Rather, he ordained that they have matter and form, and when he tried to establish this, he could not [do it]⁸⁷.

This passage is crucial. Stating that matter has a potential being while form is the act that causes (and actualizes) the compound, Ibn Daud follows and develops Ibn Sīnā, admitting a direct link between the doctrine of matter and form, and that of act and potency. Nevertheless, in this passage Ibn Daud proceeds with a further theoretical step, of the utmost importance. While the composition of bodies is a «pure» composition of matter and form, that of spiritual substances is a duplicity of possible and necessary being – as we have seen – that can be interpreted as something *like* matter and something *like* form. Ibn Gabirol's error, in Ibn Daud's perspective, is the misunderstanding of the metaphoric value of this comparison; spiritual substances are not hylomorphic compounds, but are compositions similar to them, since they are realized by the union of the aspects of mere possibility and existential (but mediated) necessity, specular to the potency of matter and the actuality of form, but not identifiable with matter and form.

This peculiar interpretation merges together the doctrines of modal ontology, act and potency, and hylomorphism, the same theoretical merging we have encountered in Gundissalinus's *De processione mundi*. However, one can easily note that the outcomes of this doctrinal development are opposing; while Gundissalinus grounds on this identification his doctrine of universal hylomorphism, Ibn Daud explicitly uses it to reject the very same doctrine.

The source of Ibn Daud's passage is al-Ghazālī's *Summa theoricæ philosophiæ*:

Omne vero esse quod non est necesse esse, est accidentale quiditati. Unde opus est quiditate ad hoc ut esse sit ei accidentale. Igitur secundum consideracionem quiditatis erit possibile essendi, et secundum consideracionem cause, erit necesse essendi eo quod

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.174,152b14-153a9.

ostensum est quod quicquid possibile est in se, necesse est propter aliud a se; habet igitur duo iudicia scilicet, necessitatem uno modo, et possibilitatem alio modo. Ipsum igitur secundum quod est possibile, est in potencia, et secundum quod est necesse, est in effectū; possibilitas vero est ei ex se, et necessitas ex alio a se; est igitur in eo multitudo unius quidem quod est simile materie et alterius quod est simile forme. Quod autem est simile materie est possibilitas, et quod est simile forme est necessitas, que est ei ex alio a se⁸⁸.

Al-Ghazālī precisely states the threefold identification among, on the one hand, necessity, act, and form, and on the other hand, possibility, potency, and matter. Moreover, in this passage the metaphorical hylomorphic composition of spiritual substances is clearly stated, thus there is no doubt that this passage is Ibn Daud’s source. The *Summa theoricæ* has been translated into Latin by Gundissalinus and quoted by him in *De processione*⁸⁹. By this, one could suppose that al-Ghazālī is the main source also for Gundissalinus’s hermeneutics. Nevertheless, there are at least three main points suggesting that the source influencing Gundissalinus is Ibn Daud.

Firstly, Ibn Daud’s doctrines are spread throughout *De processione mundi*, dealing with different aspects, from the role of nature to the daily creation of souls by angels⁹⁰, while the textual quotation of al-Ghazālī’s *Summa* is not accompanied by any meaningful theoretical development. Secondly, the recognition of at least one direct quotation from al-Ghazālī’s text and none from Ibn Daud’s does not seem to be sufficient to state a major influence of the former on Gundissalinus. In fact, the absence of any direct quotations from Ibn Daud’s writings can be explained by underscoring that the «doctrinal» influence of Ibn Daud is most likely the result of the daily dialogue between the two philosophers. In this way, the verbal access Gundissalinus had to Ibn Daud’s positions explains the absence of textual excerpts of his works in *De processione*.

Nevertheless, a third point seems to be the most relevant. Ibn Daud has no hesitation in criticizing Ibn Gabirol’s philosophy, and the *Emunah*

⁸⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Metaphysica*, critical edition by J. T. MUCKLE, *Algazel’s Metaphysics. A Medieval Translation*, PIMS, Toronto 1933, p. 120,9-23.

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 44,6-13; and Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, p. 33,14-19.

⁹⁰ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, p. 51,24-25.

Ramah offers many passages where he strongly attacks the *Fons vitae*. Among those passages, one in particular is very sharp in rejecting universal hylomorphism, and Ibn Daud's line of reasoning is developed by a direct quotation from the *Fons vitae*:

When Ibn Gabirol wanted to describe [prime matter], he said [the following] in book I of *The Source of Life*: "If all things have a universal element, it necessarily follows that [the universal element] has some properties, [namely] that it exists, it persists by itself, it is essentially one, it is a subject of changes, [and] it gives to each thing its essence and its name".⁹¹

In Ibn Daud's opinion, this passage is based on six major mistakes made by Ibn Gabirol in his speculation on matter:

Thus, [Ibn Gabirol] committed six errors at the beginning of his discourse. [He erred] because prime matter does not exist, since existence is said [only] of what actually exists. Aristotle said in [his] explanation [of this claim] that what does not exist is said [only] of three things: [namely], of absolute privation, of the privation of the opposite of a certain form, and of matter. Furthermore, [Ibn Gabirol erred] because [prime matter] does not persist by itself. Furthermore, [he erred] because [prime matter] is neither one nor many, since what does not have existence has neither number nor unity. Furthermore, [he erred] because [prime matter] is not a subject of changes, since changes are accidents and matter is not a subject of accidents, because accidents extend [only] to existence of what has complete existence. However, [prime matter] is a subject of what changes, that is, of bodies that change. Furthermore, [Ibn Gabirol erred] because [prime matter] does not give to [any]thing its definition and its name. However, the form does do this. Furthermore, [he erred] because [prime matter] need not have properties, since properties are accidents that necessarily are joined to an actual existent. All of his discourse in *The Source of Life* is of this kind⁹².

The main theme bonding together the six errors listed by Ibn Daud – first matter exists; first matter subsists in itself; first matter is essentially

⁹¹ Ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah*, op. cit., p. 62,26b17-27b1.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 62, 27b1-27b14.

one; first matter is subject to change; first matter gives name and definition to the thing; first matter has properties – is the impossibility of predicating accidents and change of matter⁹³. Matter is just the substrate of possibility, and its mere potential state avoids any substantial predication of it.

It is very interesting to note that in *De processione mundi* Gundissalinus seems to make explicit reference to this point, trying to answer to Ibn Daud's criticisms:

Et tamen philosophi, cum describunt primam materiam et formam, dicunt: Materia est prima substantia per se existens, sustentatrix diversitatis, una numero. Item: materia prima est substantia receptibilis omnium formarum. Forma vero prima est substantia constituens essentiam omnium formarum. Quamvis autem per hoc ostendatur una differre ab alia, omnis autem differentia forma est, non tamen dicendum est, quod una differat ab alia per aliquid aliud a se diversum. Immo per se ipsam unaquaeque differt ab alia, non per differentiam, quae est convenientium, sed quae est oppositionis et verae contrarietatis, quoniam unaquaeque illarum aliud est ab alia⁹⁴.

At first, one must observe that Gundissalinus's discussion is a collection of four excerpts from Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, and the second of them [b.] is the same passage quoted by Ibn Daud:

[a.] Sed descriptio formae universalis haec est, scilicet quod est substantia constituens essentiam omnium formarum.⁹⁵

[b.] Ergo descriptio materiae primae, quae sumpta est ex eius proprietate, haec est, scilicet quod est substantia existens per se, sustentatrix diversitatis, una numero; et iterum describitur sic, quod est substantia receptibilis omnium formarum.⁹⁶

[c.] Et ipsae omnes [formae] conveniunt in intellectu formae, et diversitas et divisio quae accidit formis non est propter formam in se ipsa, sed propter materiam, quae eas sustinens.⁹⁷

⁹³ See FONTAINE, *In Defense of Judaism*, pp. 13-22.

⁹⁴ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De processione mundi*, ed. BÜLOW, p. 30,4-14.

⁹⁵ Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 298,17-21; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 628

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 298,13-17; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 628.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 242,9-12; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 554.

[d.] D. In quo differt materia a forma, cum consideratur essentia cuiusque illarum? M. Unaquaeque illarum differt ab alia per se ipsam. Et non intelligo hic differentiam convenientium, sed intelligo differentiam oppositionis et verae contrarietatis, scilicet quia non est aliquid super illas in quo conveniunt. D. Quomodo scietur quod materia differt per se ipsam? M. Per differentiam earum apud intelligentiam, et quia una earum est sustinens et altera sustentatum.⁹⁸

Here, Gundissalinus seems willing to clarify some aspects of his – and Ibn Gabirol’s – theory of matter, and the features to be clarified mirror Ibn Daud’s criticisms of Ibn Gabirol. In fact, Gundissalinus claims that matter is one and existent in itself – as we have seen, matter is eternally existing in God’s mind – and is one and the same for every existing being. Matter is also the bearer of diversity as potentiality of receiving every form. And this is the point where Gundissalinus seems to respond directly to Ibn Daud, stating that matter’s properties do not derive from external accidents (nor by change), but primarily belong to matter itself, even if they can be articulated only after matter’s junction with form. Finally, Gundissalinus clarifies that the essence is given to the being by the form rather than by matter. The latter, in fact, gives to every being a kind of possibility-of-essence, i.e., a para-semantic essential field that will be filled by the reception of the forms following the specifications of Porphyry’s tree.

From these considerations, it seems very plausible that this passage is a direct response to Ibn Daud’s interpretation of the *Fons vitae* and to his sharp criticism. The «defensive stance» of this passage is also corroborated by the dense weave of textual reference to the *Fons vitae*, clearly expressing Gundissalinus’s desire to clarify Ibn Gabirol through Ibn Gabirol. In doing this, however, the Toledan philosopher is already changing many of his previous metaphysical perspectives inherited from Ibn Gabirol, through the adhesion to some «Daudian» features – duly revised – in ontology and cosmology.

By this point of view, the abandonment of Ibn Gabirol’s circular functionality and the implied extrinsic and functional logical determination of matter and form also seems to be related to this reassessment of the problem of being, resulting from the confrontation with Ibn Daud. In fact, the «new» ontology proposed in *De processione mundi*, now improved and well-grounded on the ontological difference between God’s and

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, ed. BAEUMKER, p. 260,12-20; ed. BENEDETTO, p. 580.

creatures' being in terms of modality and hylomorphism, had to be polished from controversial features that risked tearing down the metaphysical speculation proposed by Gundissalinus. The first step to build this speculative development had to be an intrinsic logical determination of matter and form, inspired by the Ibn Sīnā's and Ibn Daud's outcomes, and "intrinsically" justified as improvement of Ibn Gabirol's universal hylomorphism.

Conclusions

These remarks on Gundissalinus's metaphysical discussion and his use of Arabic sources show that the Toledan philosopher had a proactive approach to the texts he translated. Gundissalinus receives and develops different – and in many occasions opposing – features from Ibn Gabirol's and Ibn Sīnā's writings, as well as from the Chartrean authors, in order to provide a comprehensive reflection with the purpose of «renovating» the Latin philosophical debate. The range of this attitude is made more obvious by the recognition of Gundissalinus's progressive problematization of his own metaphysical perspective. The appraisals of the question of hylomorphism are one of the most meaningful aspects showing the author's will to produce a coherent and updated metaphysical perspective. The importance of this new perspective lies firstly in the reception of al-Fārābī's discussion of metaphysical science and in the bleak state of philosophy claimed by Gundissalinus at the beginning of his *De scientiis*⁹⁹. And the doctrinal polishing Gundissalinus applies to his metaphysical speculation shows something even more deeply grounded on the Toledan milieu: a fruitful debate among philosophers – Gundissalinus and Ibn Daud, and perhaps others – that seems to crucially influence Gundissalinus's production and reflection, as we have seen regarding the discussion of universal hylomorphism in *De processione mundi*.

Recently, scholars like A. Bertolacci¹⁰⁰ and G. Freudenthal¹⁰¹ casted new light on Ibn Daud's presence in Toledo. On the one hand, one

⁹⁹ Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De scientiis*, ed. M. ALONSO ALONSO, CSIC, Madrid – Granada 1954, p. 55,2-56,4.

¹⁰⁰ BERTOLACCI, «A Community of Translators».

¹⁰¹ G. FREUDENTHAL, «Abraham Ibn Daud, Avendauth, Dominicus Gundissalinus and Practical Mathematics in Mid-Twelfth-Century Toledo», *Aleph*, 16/1 (2016) 61-106.

must recognize the fundamental role he played for the establishment of a translation team working on Ibn Sīnā's writings, a team that required Gundissalinus's transfer from Segovia to Toledo. On the other hand, the recent discovery of new writings produced in the Castilian capital, which are deeply bound to Ibn Daud's and Gundissalinus's translations and original productions, indicates the existence of a «circle» of philosophers and translators working on many philosophical and scientific issues, from metaphysics to mathematics. One can easily see how that circle was open-minded and dynamic regarding both religious and philosophical approaches, with a Jewish and a Christian philosopher¹⁰², working mainly on Islamic writings and characterized by many opposing points of view regarding ontology and philosophy in general.

From this perspective, Gundissalinus's production, especially *De processione mundi*, acquires a new horizon of meaning. Many doctrinal features derived from the insertion of Ibn Sīnā's theories in a Gabirol-based ontology seem to be directly linked to a personal debate with the other members of his team, and Ibn Daud in particular, as can be seen by Gundissalinus's response to Ibn Daud's criticism. At the same time, Ibn Daud's redundancy in attacking Ibn Gabirol's ontology should also receive some new relevance, if we suppose a lively philosophical debate between him and Gundissalinus. In fact, one should consider that one of the most convinced authors in receiving Ibn Gabirol's universal hylomorphism was Gundissalinus, who was at the same time the closest one to Ibn Daud. The impact of the debate between these two philosophers has already been noted by G. Freudenthal¹⁰³ regarding mathematics, and I am confident that further research on Ibn Daud's and Gundissalinus's works, especially after the important contributions by S. Pessin¹⁰⁴ and K. Szilágyi¹⁰⁵, will cast more light on their philosophical production and the activities of the Toledan translation movement.

¹⁰² See A. FIDORA, «Abraham Ibn Daud und Dominicus Gundissalinus: Philosophie und religiöse Toleranz im Toledo des 12. Jh.», in M. LUTZ-BACHMANN – A. FIDORA (eds.), *Juden, Christen und Muslime. Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2004, pp. 10-26.

¹⁰³ FREUDENTHAL, «Abraham Ibn Daud, Avendauth, Dominicus Gundissalinus».

¹⁰⁴ PESSIN, *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire*.

¹⁰⁵ K. SZILÁGYI, «A Fragment of a Book of Physics from the David Kaufmann Genizah Collection (Budapest) and the Identity of Ibn Daud with Avendauth», *Aleph*, 16/1 (2016) 11-31.

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