

**The Dual Role of Animals in Medieval Hebrew  
Animal Fables: Animals as a Subject and an Object**

Revital Refael-Vivante  
(Bar Ilan University, Israel)

Aristotle, for whom biology and zoology were a source of philosophical inspiration, believed that everything and every action had a purpose. According to him, only philosophy, which is theory, is an end unto itself. Therefore, he believed that plants exist for the use of animals, and animals for the use of man.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle was the first to study biology in a statistical, empirical way, and his research and writings on biology and zoology were based on observation and description. He believed that man was not the grandest thing in the world (Aristotle 2012), and that there was no equality among earth's creatures. Aristotle believed that the male human was at the top of this hierarchy, followed by the elephant, the dolphin, the woman and, further on, slaves and barbarians. At the basis of this Aristotelian conception is the idea that those who are inferior are meant to serve as a means, to be used by the higher ranked creatures, for their own needs (Aristotle 1974). This approach, according to Aristotle, served as justification for killing animals and exploiting them for various purposes (Levy and Levy).

The story of creation in the Bible and in Jewish sources also reflects a clear dichotomy between the world of animal and man. According to Genesis, chapter 1, God gave man power over all other animals: mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians (Gen. 1:26). Hence man is the master of animals and their only purpose is to serve him.<sup>2</sup>

The abovementioned hierarchy was also at the basis of the ethical debate regarding the interaction between man and animal. Ethically, the division is very simple. Humans are 'persons' and all others, including animals, are 'things'. This view is also found in the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity, which at the same time also espouse an awareness of the suffering of animals (Levy and Levy, 21).

Historian Harriet Ritvo referred to the ways in which the term 'animal' is used in the social context.<sup>3</sup> Ritvo explains:

Thus schematized, these discussions of quite different human-animal interactions seem to share at least a general concern about human society. They were more profoundly linked by the way they dealt with their ostensible subjects. The constraints imposed by the animal's biological nature and the practical purposes to which their owners dedicated them turned out to be not very restrictive of human understanding or interpretation. Even the interactions apparently most tightly structured by economics or anatomy, such as the treatment of disease or the production of meat for market, were often influenced by apparently unrelated social concerns. As material animals were at the complete disposal of human beings, so rhetorical animals offered unusual opportunities for manipulation; their positions in

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's conception of man as the pinnacle of creation is presented in his first book of biology, "History of Animals", as well as in his other works on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> This is a very broad philosophical, ethical, and theological issue that is beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>3</sup> Though Ritvo is discussing 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian England, the principle is the same.

the physical world and in the universe of discourse were mutually reinforcing (Ritvo, 5).

An interesting interaction about the relationship between man and animal is found in the *Treatise on Animals*.<sup>4</sup> This scientific work is presented in a belletristic manner, originally written in Arabic around the tenth century and translated into Hebrew by Kalonymus Ben Kalonymus in 1316. The *Treatise on Animals* is the twenty-first part of the essay. It is composed of a literary plot centered on a situation in which animals accuse humans of their enslavement. They denounce human beings for their wickedness and arrogance, and prove that animals are more moral than humans.<sup>5</sup> Kalonymus explains that the purpose of the treatise is to discuss the nature of the animals and their superiority over man. The debate between animal and man is intended to interest the readers and draw them in, so that they may be instructed and taught matters of wisdom and knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

The transition from the socio-realistic level to the literary-artistic level demonstrates a correspondence with these concepts. In literary works, it is quite easy to see that the interaction between man and animal has many facets, reflecting human culture and the specific context of time and place.

### **Animals in the Hebrew Fables**

In much of the literature that focuses on animals, the animals are anthropomorphized and behave as human beings. One of the most interesting techniques we find in medieval Hebrew animal fables is the depiction of the animal as being multi-faceted. On the one hand, the animal is presented as a central figure in the fable, i.e. as a protagonist (as a subject), but on the other hand, the animal is presented as an object. This ambiguous manner of presentation is profoundly meaningful, since there is a close connection between the two roles. Presenting the animal as an object enables it to be seen as a central figure in the fable, and in fact serves as a means of praising or criticizing the character, including its personality, its role in the plot, its actions and its worldview. In addition, the animal's dual character, as both subject and object, serves the author as a means and a conduit for conveying messages, ideas and thoughts that prevailed in his lifetime, including his own worldview on various matters, such as philosophy and science.

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<sup>4</sup> *Treatise on Animals* is part of a large Arab philosophical essay known as the *Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity*, written most probably in the tenth century by an extreme Shiite group who lived in the vicinity of Batzra in Iraq. The treatise is comprised of 51 sections and includes systematic summaries of Arab wisdom, based upon the wisdom of ancient Greece (Stern, 405-428). This work, originally written in Arabic, was familiar to the educated medieval reader, and was also familiar to the Hebrew reader in the Hebrew translation by Kalonymus ben Kalonymus from 1316. The book was very popular, as evidenced by its many print editions. Schirmann wrote about Kalonymus Ben Kalonymus and on his work and translations (Schirmann, 514-517; 520-541); A. M. Habermann reviews the editions of the *Treatise on Animals* and its translations (Kalonymus Ben Kalonymus, 172-181).

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to compare between the *treatise* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

<sup>6</sup> According to Kalonymus, it is possible to learn from the book that not in every case does man have an advantage over animals, and sometimes there is no difference between him and them. The only advantage humans have over animals is only in the mind. In the debate between man and animal, the demons are the judges, for those who are wrong (the authors of the treatise) believe that demons can take any shape and form (of animal or man). Kalonymus declares that he himself does not believe this. He declares that the book is fascinating and contains interesting discoveries about the nature of all kinds of animals.

In the following paper, I will examine the technique of composing a multi-faceted image of an animal, accompanied by examples from *Meshal Haqadmoni*<sup>7</sup> (Ibn Sahula, 1952) by Isaac Ibn Sahula.<sup>8</sup> *Meshal Haqadmoni* is a medieval book of fables, written in rhymed prose. Written in Castile in 1281, it is a book of morals with a deductive and polemic orientation, masquerading as a book intended for mere amusement. In his fables, Ibn Sahula constructed the images of the animals as both central figures and as objects, thus adding another layer to the animal's character while using him to relay his own opinions on different scientific matters, especially medicine. To this end, the animals are often described as a remedy, a medicine or something edible. Medieval literature, both Arab and Christian-European, often combined matters of science and morals in the literary text, as did Hebrew literature.<sup>9</sup>

The author of *Meshal Haqadmoni* establishes a wide berth for scientific discussions on various subjects. This is a book of arguments, morality and good advice, though it seems, at first glance, to be a book meant merely for the amusement of the reader. The book is comprised of five sections, known as five gates, and in each one the critic and the author argue over the pros and cons of one of five virtues: wisdom, repentance, good advice, humility and the fear of God. Both use stories and fables about animals and people to bolster their position and express their worldview. Scientific discussions are intertwined within the debates between the author and the five critics, and in the polemics among the characters in the fables (animals and humans), discussing such topics as health and medicine, nutrition, body care and the body-mind connection.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Sahula, who was well versed in Jewish sources, was also educated in the fields of science, like the Christian and Muslim intellectuals of his time. His extensive knowledge of science is reflected in the book. The scientific discussions in *Meshal Haqadmoni*, especially the astrological discussions and the preoccupation with medical remedies, echo Maimonides' view and support his position on these matters.<sup>11</sup>

In his book, Ibn Sahula includes examples in which the author constructs the animal's image as a subject, a protagonist, describing his character, personality, behavior and actions. At the same time, he combines a description of the animal's medical aspect. Mention of the animal's medicinal properties transforms it into a medical object, i.e. as part of the fable, the animal undergoes a kind of transformation into an inanimate object, a medicine or a food, in its lifetime (Refael-Vivante, 2015a, 701-729). For example:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> All quotes in this article are from the English edition (Loewe).

<sup>8</sup> Isaac Ibn Sahula was born in 1244. He was active during the reign of Alfonso X, king of Castile, known as the 'wise' who was enlightened and educated (a poet, musician and jurist) and the patron of educated men of science and artists, who were very welcome in his courtyard.

<sup>9</sup> The secular Hebrew literature of the Middle Ages, written in Spain, included many works that involve scientific and moral discussions, on such subjects as philosophy, astrology, astronomy, geography, rhetoric, medicine, nutrition, etc.

<sup>10</sup> The book also contains detailed discussions on nature, climate, earth theory, meteorology, lightning, rainbows, philosophy, logic, grammatical and linguistic theory, arithmetic, the history of time and more. The fifth gate also contains an extensive discussion on astronomy and astrology. On astrology and magic in *Meshal Haqadmoni* (Refael-Vivante, 2017, 154-168).

<sup>11</sup> The fifth gate of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, which deals with Astrology vs. the fear of God, includes many more discussions of scientific matters as opposed to the other gates, accompanied by scientific drawings that illustrate the content. This is the first gate in which scientific subjects are included also in the critic's stories.

<sup>12</sup> The animal examples discussed in this paper were also discussed in another article in a different context (Refael-Vivante, 2015a, 704-708).

- A. The dog – recounts his medicinal qualities to the cow.
- B. The fox – details the disadvantages of eating him (his meat) to the lion.
- C. The cock and the partridge – the eagle lists their medicinal qualities while praising them.

In the abovementioned examples, the mention of medicinal qualities is an indirect means of constructing the character's image as good or bad. The author utilizes a special technique while constructing the image of the animals in his stories, by treating them both as a protagonist (a subject) and as an object, while indirectly also taking part in the scientific argument popular at the time, regarding the use of medicinal remedies as either a magical or a medical tool.

### **The dog as object and subject**

Most cultures have an ambivalent attitude towards dogs. On the one hand, they are devoted and loyal to human beings to the point of self-sacrifice. On the other hand, comparing someone to a dog is considered a harsh condemnation and an insult (Menzel).<sup>13</sup> In the Bible, the dog is often mentioned in a derogatory manner,<sup>14</sup> but it also guards the animals in the herd.<sup>15</sup> The post-biblical literature expresses various views on the subject of dogs, but most often the attitude towards them is negative, as they are said to be dangerous.<sup>16</sup> In the Middle Ages, dogs served people (especially members of the aristocratic class) in hunting expeditions and shepherding animals. Small toy dogs were a means of amusement among aristocratic ladies. In Christian literature and art, the dog is usually described in a positive manner, and is the hunter's trustworthy assistant.

The first gate of *Meshal Haqadmoni* includes a story known as "the story of the foolish cow." The story tells of a dog and a cow who work together on the farm of a landowner, in this manner representing grounds caretakers. The cow receives excellent treatment and good food while the dog is rejected and neglected. The dog plots to kill the cow, and convinces her to come and stroll with him outside the yard and even enjoy the fine herbs that lie across the river. At first, the cow debates whether she should accept this offer, and in the conversation between them she speaks against the dog. The dog becomes defensive, and praises himself (Ibn Sahula, 55). At the end of the story, the cow is tempted by the dog's suggestion and joins him. The cow then drowns in the river, and the dog is joyous, praying and thanking God for saving him from his enemies.

The readers are able to learn much about the character of the dog, both from the words of the cow, who speaks about him, and from the manner in which he speaks of himself. In the exposition, the dog is depicted as a bodyguard, loyal to its owner (Ibn Sahula, 49).

Despite his loyalty the dog is not treated fairly by his owner, who ignores him, dismisses him and does not ensure that he is fed and cared for (Ibn Sahula, 50).<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> In the Middle Ages carrying dogs was considered as a humiliating punishment for offenders, and the death penalty by hanging was exacerbated by hanging dogs with the condemned.

<sup>14</sup> For example: Ex. 22:30, 1 Kings 22:38 Jer. 15:3, 2 Sam. 3:8 and more.

<sup>15</sup> Compare to Job 30:1. Rubin wrote about the dog in world and Hebrew literature (Rubin, 36-38).

<sup>16</sup> See for example Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama tractate 83A.

<sup>17</sup> The dog is indeed a loyal guard of man, but receives a low wage that oft leaves him hungry (Waxman, 16-17). The dogs' hunger is reflected in many fables and also in the passage "As a dog that returned to his vomit"

owner's attitude insults the dog and causes him to become jealous of the cow, who is treated warmly and in a friendly manner by the owner. Therefore, the dog plans to kill the beloved cow and thus win the owner's love.

While the cow ponders whether to join the dog, she articulates her fears of him.<sup>18</sup> She attacks his behavior and criticizes him, saying that he is dangerous and that the advice he offers others serves only his own interests. According to her, the dog is devious and manipulative. In fact, she believes that all dogs are problematic, bringing problems wherever they go and causing problems for others. That is why they are often abused. She even quotes a line from the books of the sages: "to rear a house-dog, shuts the gate / on kindness, thereby barred from one's estate." (Ibn Sahula, 52.); (Loewe, vol. I, 118).<sup>19</sup> The dog tries to assuage the cow's wariness by explaining that there are dogs of different breeds, and there are many variations among dogs: There are despicable dogs and honorable ones, big and small, weak and strong, brave and shy, whole and lacking, charitable and thieving, and more (Ibn Sahula, 52). He himself is a unique dog, of high quality and good genealogy, who took part in the redemption of Israel and was well-rewarded<sup>20</sup> for his efforts. He even adds that among his positive qualities is the fact that his skin is used for the writing of important books:

Now I, from God's own hound trace my descent,  
Chosen when Israel forth from Egypt went;  
Of glorious fame, for he it was did use  
Mercy and favour as regards the Jews.  
When through the land god's angle passed, and brought  
Redemption, fame preserves the fair report  
How my first ancestor god's word obeyed,  
Bared not his tongue, nor against Israel bayed.  
In recompense, dog's dung is held most fit  
To tan skin used for texts of holy writ.  
Yea, at that time, when fear all creatures filled,  
And Jews, amazed, saw Egypt's host all killed,  
The dog stood firm. And just as priests may treat  
Some sacrificial parts as their own meat,  
Dog claim the carrion Jews may not eat (Loewe, vol. I, 118-120).

At the end of the story, the dog convinces the cow that he has her best interests at heart, and she joins him on his walk. The dog tempts her to cross the river, and the cow

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(Ps. 26:11). For a discussion of a loyal dog who refuses to eat as he is sad and worried about his dying owner see Oettinger, 168-169, gate 24.

<sup>18</sup> The cow attacks the dog, saying "The cow expostulated: 'nay could I \ go on expedition with thee? Why, all that thou art sends shudders through my frame \ perchance thou proposes is the same \ as all thy counsels – dark. To me are known all brethren of the canine league, thine own \ nearest of kin. Each day, troubles you bring \ some new fracas, and honest folk must ring \ you round and whip you'" (Loewe, vol. I, 118). The cow quotes sayings and phrases from different sources all condemning the dog (Ibn Sahula, 52-53). The motif of enmity between dog and cow appears in Thompson (Thompson, 1955, motif - A2494.10).

<sup>19</sup> See for example Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama tractate 83A.

<sup>20</sup> Ex. 22:30.

drowns. In this manner, the dog removes the cow from the yard where they both lived. Once his plot succeeds, the dog utters a prayer of thanksgiving:

Joyful, the dog declared: my thanksgiving  
 To thee, my rock and dwelling-place, I bring,  
 That my heart's thoughts and scheming are fulfilled:  
 thus, lord, may all thine enemies be killed (Loewe, vol. I, 130).<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the story, the dog conducts a scholarly Talmudic debate<sup>22</sup> with the cow and proves knowledgeable of Jewish sources and science. He gives a long scientific lecture on food preservation (i.e. proper nutrition) in order to explain dogs' appetite (Ibn Sahula, 7). In his words, the dog lists qualities related to dogs, purposefully praising the entire dog species, thus indirectly praising himself, too:

Moreover we, the canine race, have got  
 Natural gifts that other breeds have not.  
 Opinions of the ancients let me cite,  
 Things those most qualified to judge did write.  
*If of dog's liver the lobe be set  
 On one in fever, he relief will get.  
 On one whose soul is seized by dark despair  
 Let there be hung some of a black dog's hair,  
 He's eased a while. Who by the roots has ripped  
 A dog's tongue out, in his own right hand gripped,  
 No snarling dog to bite him bares his tongue.  
 If one has jaundice, let the same be hung  
 About the patient: that effects his cure,  
 Likewise a good complexion will ensure.*  
 They also say dog's excrement helps check  
 Acute discomfort in a swollen neck.  
*A bitch in her first mating, will produce  
 In early pregnancy milk fit for use  
 As a depilatory --- bathe the limbs:  
 It cleans, close as a barber's razor skims.  
 If drunk, it will immunity confer  
 To lethal potions of a sorcerer*  
 Of other assets, too, are we possessed,  
 Great qualities, each for his purpose best (Loewe, vol. I, 124-126).<sup>23</sup>

According to the dog, canines' bodies have seven proven medicinal virtues:

A. A dog's earlobe is a cure for a high fever.

<sup>21</sup> See specially the verse from the end of Deborah the prophet's song, in Judges 31.

<sup>22</sup> Refael-Vivante discussed the argumentation between the dog and the cow (Refael-Vivante, 2017, 187-188, 190-191).

<sup>23</sup> The emphases are in the original text.

- B. Black dog hairs are a remedy against evil spirits.
- C. To prevent a dog from sticking its tongue out, it is recommended to cut it with the right hand.
- D. Hanging a dog's tongue on a person suffering from greensickness, that is, anemia,<sup>24</sup> will cure him and restore his healthy color.
- E. Dog feces are effective for a sore throat.<sup>25</sup>
- F. The milk of a bitch in the first months of pregnancy is a proven means of removing hair.<sup>26</sup>
- G. Whoever drinks from a bitch's milk becomes immune, and drugs and concoctions will not harm him.

The dog lists his species as having medical, cosmetic, psychological and even magical properties. Some seem a bit parodic. For example, if a person has cut out a dog's tongue, with either his right hand or his left, it is clear that the dog would no longer be able to stick it out. The suggestion to drink the milk of a bitch in her first months of pregnancy is puzzling, as it is known that milk is produced after birth or, in certain cases, a few days before birth, but not at the beginning of pregnancy.<sup>27</sup> These dubious "qualities" undermine the credibility of all the other qualities listed by the dog. If the dog intended to praise and glorify himself through his virtues, it is doubtful whether he succeeded. The questions regarding his credibility are answered later in the story, since he causes the cow's death. It is therefore possible that the list of qualities cited by the dog is a mere hint of his true nature. After the success of his plot and the death of the cow, the dog carries a prayer of thanksgiving to God for saving him from his enemies. His proficiency and language fail to deceive the reader. It is precisely the *shibuzim* that expose the author's opinion of dogs, represented by this specific dog, and reinforce the aim of the plot.

This example clearly demonstrates the different elements and stages that the author, Ibn Sahula, used to construct and shape the image of the dog.

### The Fox as Subject and Object

The story known as "The lion and his two companions, the deer and the fox" is found in the first gate of *Meshal Haqadmoni* (Refael-Vivante, 2013). The lion king which most probably alluding to Alfonso X, king of Castile, treats his animal subjects harshly. Two courtiers (tax ministers) work in the king's service, the deer and the fox. The fox's job is to inform the lion of the animals' hiding places, thus making it easier for the lion to find his prey. In other words, he provides the lion with food quickly and comfortably. The animals leave the lion's kingdom and go to the Land of Israel. In the absence of easily accessible meat, the fox unsuccessfully attempts to persuade the lion to switch to

<sup>24</sup> Preuss brought more information on greensickness = anemia (Preuss, 244-247).

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of dog excrement as a remedy for throat infections, compare to Maimonides. See Maimonides, 270, article 22, paragraph 20. On feces-based remedies in the Talmud, including dog excrement, see Preuss, 653-654. There is limited information regarding excrement remedies in the Talmud, in comparison to the use of such remedies in the Greek and Roman cultures, as the cultures of the East rejected anything to do with impurity, filth and lack of esthetics. Dog excrement was still a highly regarded remedy by German doctors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>26</sup> On other cosmetic means of hair removal in the bible and the Talmud, see Preuss, 557-559.

<sup>27</sup> It is possible the author was referring to the milk of a bitch who had whelped her first litter.

vegetarianism. The two possible meals left to the king in the kingdom are the flesh of the fox or that of the deer. The cunning fox cleverly tries to convince the lion that the deer meat is preferable, in order to save his own skin. Knowing that the lion believes in medicinal remedies, he offers him his own flesh with exaggerated heroism. He begs the lion to ignore the ancient doctors, who regarded fox flesh as having many shortcomings and as a proven cause of serious diseases, including digestion problems, weakness, diminished liver function, calf pain, weakness in the arms and hands, ringing in the ears, impaired vision, confusion etc. In general, fox meat is bad food. And so the fox says to the lion:

Reck naught of what quack doctors said of old  
 (we still my hear it, by our fathers told)  
 That fox's flash is moist, and it consists  
 Of sinews close-grained, that it resists  
 Digestion, quicly passed as waste, no use  
 At all as food, since it dose but reduce  
 The energy, increasing flatulence,  
 Ruins the liver, unhygienic, whence  
 Derive all types of virulent disease---  
 Gout, palsy, painful stiffness of the knees,  
 Incessant ringing in the ears, and scales  
 That irritate the teeth, eyesight that fails,  
 Sciatica, softening of the brain,  
 And general lassitude, all strength to drain,  
 On top of which a quite extensive list  
 Of illnesses, known to the specialist (Loewe, vol. I, 78-80).

This sounds like somewhat of a threat. Whomever shall dare to eat the flesh of a fox, will be cursed. The lion's response confirms this assumption, as he becomes fearful, and like any other hypochondriac refuses to risk himself by eating the fox's flesh. The fox continues to implement his plan, and offers the lion another option: deer meat. He uses the same tactic that served to save him, listing the advantages of deer meat, describing it as high quality meat, easy to digest and healthy:

"Well", Reynard said, "our friend the Hart stand there  
 Out in the field: well paunched, his flesh is fair,  
 Smooth-tasting, like some oil which, for all ill  
 A panacea, itching pustules stills:  
 It tones the stomach muscles, and delays  
 Senility, adds to the skin a glaze  
 Of fine complexion --- of the body's needs  
 No single one it lacks. In short, it feeds  
 The blood, leaving it filtered, purified (Loewe, vol. I, 80).

It can thus be seen that the author uses medical properties as a means of shaping the manipulative figure of the fox. The properties associated with proper nutrition reveal

the lion king's weakness, which is used in this book to reflect the image of Alfonso X.<sup>28</sup> The lion is indeed a strong and cruel king, but his weakness is expressed in his tendency to listen to qualities related to nutrition in a non-selective manner. At the end of the story, the lion does not fall into the trap that the fox has set. After examining and investigating the matter, he discovers the fox's treachery. The deer's life is saved and the scheming fox is tried and sentenced to death as a traitor. The fox takes advantage of a scientific subject that was popular in his time, thus saving his life. During the Middle Ages there was much talk regarding abstinence from meat and the choice of a vegetarian lifestyle, and the pros and cons of meat eating were discussed often by doctors.

An interesting discussion on this subject can be found in *The Book of Delight*, written by Joseph Ben Meir Ibn Zabara (Barcelona, c. 1140 – c. 1200). In the eighth chapter, Enan invites Zabara to a meal at his home (Zabara, 81-100). He serves his guest unleavened bread, lettuce, and a bowl of vinegar. Zabara complains about the frugal hospitality and inedible food, and Enan commands his servant to bring meat to the table. While waiting for the meat to be served, Enan and Zabara argue about healthy eating and especially about eating meat. Though the slave brings the meat, Enan does not let Zabara touch it. He warns Zabara of eating meat, saying, "Be careful of eating meat, as Abukrat<sup>29</sup> said, 'Be careful not to eat meat, and do not make your stomachs into graves for animals.'<sup>30</sup> And Galinus said: 'There is no greater fool than a man filling his stomach with everything he finds (Zabara, 95).

During the lengthy debate, Zabara is relentless. The slave serves him the meat of a bullock, while Enan continues his attempts to dissuade him, using words similar to those of the fox in *Meshal Haqadmoni*: "Beware of the bullock's flesh, for it is the source of all pain and produces all pain in the arms and legs... and stops the bowels (Zabara, 99). Thus, both the fox and Enan enlist science in a manipulative manner in order to advance their own agenda. In this way, science indirectly assists in constructing each of their characters.

### The Cock and the Partridge

In the author's reply in the second gate of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, he tells the story of "the arrogant falcon, the wild cock and the partridge who lives in the hills." The falcon is the minister of taxes, who treats the bird kingdom harshly and preys on them mercilessly. The cock and the partridge are God-fearing, loyal scholars, who unsuccessfully attempt to convince the falcon to cease his hurtful behavior, as the falcon continues to behave in a cruel and arrogant manner towards the other birds. The cock and the partridge finally overpower the falcon and bring him to trial in front of the eagle, who promptly sentences him to death. The eagle then praises the two loyal birds:<sup>31</sup>

[...] but, aside

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<sup>28</sup> Doron dealt with the erratic behavior of King Alfonso X and his complicated attitude towards the Jews (Doron, 25-29).

<sup>29</sup> Abukrat is the Arabic name for the famous Greek doctor, Hippocrates.

<sup>30</sup> Compare to *Fables of Arabia to Isaac*, gate 28, 368: "And the ancient sages said that much flesh will cause bad afflictions and maladies" (Zabara, 95, note 1).

<sup>31</sup> As opposed to the two previous stories (the dog speaking of dog qualities and the fox speaking of fox qualities), In this story it is the Eagle who praises the cock and partridge and speaks of their qualities.

From their fine intellect, theirs is a wide  
 Renown, as benefactors, both endowed  
 With qualities of which they can feel proud,  
 Since as a touchstone these that would assay  
 Use them ---choice ornaments, indeed, are they,  
 Like pomegranates and bells broidered in gold.  
 Their virtues by tradition are extolled:  
 The liver of partridge (or a grouse)  
 Dried, and thereafter crushed, if one then souse  
 In rain-water, well pounded, benefits  
 One suffering from epileptic fits.  
 A daily dose thereof will guarantee  
 His cure. 'Tis said, of such a high degree  
 This bird is, that great value is enshrined  
 Within his gall: the foaming bile, combined  
 With olive oil and honey, each of these  
 Proportionate, will yield a slave to ease  
 Glaucoma--- cured the eye, and once more bright,  
 The darkness it confronted turned to light.  
 'Tis said, his roasted flesh invigorates  
 Weakened intestines and, as treatment, rates  
 High against colic which debilitates.  
 As for the Cock's unquity, a screed  
 Recites his praise, and this is what we read:  
 'For one who has the falling sickness, use  
 A cock's neck: charred, it will a smoke diffuse  
 Whereof the odour will relax its grip  
 And save him from his terrors. Let him sip  
 A broth, brewed from the pebbles that are found  
 In cock's belly, for 'twill make him sound,  
 Cured of his trouble. Further, the inside  
 Scale of the crop, peeled and thereafter dried,  
 Then soaked, and drunk, will cure a stomach-ache,  
 Whilst soup made of an aged cock will make  
 The belly loose, its solid charge unlocks:  
 The flesh, as costive, diarrhea blocks.  
 Apart from this, the cock serves us right well  
 And sometimes saves, as all the world can tell.  
 At night, he wakes the guilty from their sleep  
 And those, by folly drugged, who slumber deep;  
 The sinner, roused, for penitence he wins  
 To fling in ocean's vast abyss his sins  
 Rising, his follies and his wickedness  
 (so soon he hears the cock's crow) to confess' (Loewe, 2004, vol. I, 320-322).

From this text, we learn that the three medicinal qualities of the partridge are:

- A. A powder made of a partridge liver mixed with rainwater is beneficial to a patient with epilepsy.<sup>32</sup> Regular use of this medicine will cure the illness.
- B. The partridges' bile mixed with olive oil and honey at an exact dosage is a cure for blindness.<sup>33</sup>
- C. Roast partridge meat might help with intestinal diarrhea.<sup>34</sup>

As we can see, the cock too has medicinal qualities:

- A. A charred cock's neck will cure a person with epilepsy.
- B. Another remedy for epilepsy: drinking a potion made from the stones in the cock's stomach.
- C. Drinking a potion made from the dried scale of a cocks' gizzard will cure a stomachache.<sup>35</sup>
- D. Soup made from the meat of an old cock is useful for constipation.<sup>36</sup>

Besides these, the cock has additional useful quality, as the cock's crow encourages sinners to repent.

Examining the descriptions of the animals' medicinal qualities as part of the scientific discussions in *Meshal Haqadmoni*, it is obvious that the writer is proficient in the professional jargon of the field. Moreover, these qualities are quoted in the text by an unnamed third party, as was common in the Middle Ages: "they said," "they say." This form of writing allows for fictitious quotations, and thus this text presents a combination of common medicinal qualities that are in use and others that are not, that are fictitious or refuted.

In the beginning of the list of qualities in the examples cited above, a statement appears informing readers that the remedy has been tested, and in the language of the text: "tested by testers." In other words, it is known from experience, that the use of the remedy has great significance.<sup>37</sup> From these examples, we learn that the mention of experiencing the remedy's healing qualities plays a part in constructing a character, giving it either validity and credibility, or criticizing or condemning it. However, the fictitious "experience" is ridiculous and contradictory, as this casts doubt on the nature and reliability of the remedy and the character itself.<sup>38</sup> The explicit statement that the medicine / remedy has been examined empirically is reminiscent of arguments presented by Maimonides, and we can therefore conclude that the polemic trends expressed in *Meshal Haqadmoni* also refer to the debate over Maimonides' writings. Ibn Sahula seems to support Maimonides' position, and in the epilogue of the book mentions his name explicitly (Ibn Sahula, 304).

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<sup>32</sup> On Epilepsy see Preuss, 267-270.

<sup>33</sup> On using fish bile to cure blindness in ben Zabara's *The Book of Delight*, see Refael-Vivante, 2015a, 721-722. See also Preuss, 410-422. Three types of remedies are mentioned in the Talmud for eye maladies: liquids, ointments and non-medicinal means (Preuss, 422-427). There is no remedy for blindness except by the hand of God (Preuss, 417).

<sup>34</sup> On maladies of the digestive system and diarrhea, see Preuss, 267-270.

<sup>35</sup> Compare to Maimonides, 22: X. For more exceptional remedies see also Ibn Munqidh, 198-199; 194-199.

<sup>36</sup> Compare to Maimonides, 272, article 22, paragraph 31: Chicken soup as a remedy for a stomachache.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Schwartz, 107.

<sup>38</sup> As in the stories of the dog and the fox.

## Summary and Conclusions

The examples presented throughout this paper demonstrate that the folk remedies are utilized as an indirect means of constructing a character's nature. The author constructs the animal's character in a unique manner, both as a protagonist (a subject) and an object - either as a folk remedy or as edible food. I have also demonstrated that the integration of scientific or pseudo-scientific matters into the text is used for literary-artistic purposes, enabling the author to construct the characters as either positive or negative, according to the manner in which the scientific issue is manifested in the words of the character or its behavior. This literary methodology results in a parody and, at times, is even ironic, as the animal's body parts, and even his excrement, are empowered.<sup>39</sup>

This technique also allows the author to indirectly participate in the scientific discussion of his time regarding the use of medicinal remedies as magical or medical tools. The integration of science in literary text was also a means of passing on pseud-scientific information regarding the health of both body and soul. Many authors who were also involved in the practice of medicine, such as Isaac Ibn Sahula and Joseph Ibn Zabara, employed their creations in order to teach their readers how to practice a healthy life style, and as a means of passing on wisdom and general knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that the idea of objectifying an animal and turning it into an object, a tool for healing, reflects the approach that animals may be enslaved to humans for social or medical purposes. However, in the wider context of the fable, the anthropomorphized animal is used as an artistic means of teaching morals and appropriate behavior. Therefore, the characterization of animals in the moral is exploited twice, both materialistically and spiritually.

This discussion is best summed up by the words of Ritvo:

And in the rhetorical sphere they were less potent still. If the power of discourse lies in its inevitable restructuring and re-creation of reality, the ability of human beings to offer counter interpretations places inevitable limits on the exercise of that power. Animals, however, never talk back.” Animal fables pose a form of philosophical question. They are characterized in fables as subjective, anthropomorphized with the viewpoint of a human subject, but on the realistic level they are merely exploited objects (Ritvo, 5).

This dual role of animals in the fables of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, as both object and subject, demonstrates the medieval attitude towards animals as objects. However, this approach is presented in an amusing manner, bordering on the ridiculous, thus enabling the author to pass his views on morality while simultaneously amusing the reader.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In the medieval context, this is reminiscent of the worship of Christian saints' remains. It is unclear if the author is hinting at this phenomenon or condemning it. See Refael-Vivante, 2015b.

<sup>40</sup> On the role of the discussions in the secular literature and in *Meshal Haqadmoni*, see Refael-Vivante, 2017, 154-168.

<sup>41</sup> *Meshal Haqadmoni* was written in the genre of Spanish Maqama.

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