

**The Judeo-Arabic Source of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Passage in Jiménez de Rada's
Dialogue on the Book of Life (1214)**

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A Pseudo-Aristotelian Passage in Jiménez de Rada

Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (ca. 1170-1247), who served as archbishop of Toledo between the dates of 1209 and his death, is a major figure in the shaping of thirteenth-century Castilian culture. His impressive range of activities exceeds what one might expect from an archbishop: he energetically promoted the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) against the Muslim Almohads, which would tip over the process of the Reconquista in favor of the Christian coalition; he authored historical works on the Iberian Peninsula, and, most significantly, the first history of the Arabs composed in Latin (his *Historia Arabum*), and sponsored the translation, among other Islamic works, of the Quran into Latin. In addition, he composed a polemical treatise against Judaism entitled *Dialogus libri vitae* (1214), which was for the first time identified and ascribed to Rodrigo in 1962 (Marcos Rodríguez). As Lucy Pick has convincingly argued in her monograph *Conflict and Coexistence. Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain*, Rodrigo's varied endeavors, including the writing of his religious polemic, are part and parcel of a unified plan: "Rodrigo used the writing of religious polemic directed against Jews together with conquest and settlement of Muslim-held lands and scholarly patronage and literary creation as different facets of a single program of activity" (Pick 2004, X). The ultimate goal of the archbishop, according to this interpretation, consisted in the unification of Iberia under his own rule as ecclesiastical primate of Hispania, with Muslims and Jews living under Christian hegemony.

Pick's thesis is that, in this context, the genre of religious polemic, rather than aiming at the conversion of non-Christians, fulfills the role of fostering "convivencia" by clearly delineating the limits among the different religions (Pick 2004, 71-72). The *Dialogus* constitutes an original take on the genre of religious polemic that emphasizes the situation of internal strife among the Jews; particularly, it foregrounds the varying Jewish interpretations of messianism and the end of days. In this regard, the treatise is quite unique, and, Pick argues, responds to the de facto situation in Toledo at the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the controversy about issues of eschatology in the philosophy of Maimonides shook the intellectual life of many southern European Jewish communities (Pick 2004, 168). Toledo took on a central role in this controversy when its well-renowned rabbi and community leader, Rabbi Meir Halevi Abulafia, sent a letter to the communities in Provence in 1204 cautioning against what he perceived as a denial of the tenet of bodily resurrection in Maimonides' work *Mishneh Torah* (Septimus 1982). Partisans of Maimonides reacted heatedly against this condemnation of the great master, and Jewish communities rifted apart both in Castile and in Provence. Rodrigo's *Dialogus* was composed in 1214, about ten years after the explosion of the controversy about eschatology in Maimonidean thought involving R. Meir Abulafia.

In his *Dialogus*, Rodrigo uses some tropes about Judaism that were already present in previous Christian polemicists, but he stands out on account of his "very early use of Jewish sources in a polemical work by someone not born a Jew" (Pick 2004, 139). Among

the sources found in his work that do not stem from earlier Christian exegetes is a passage ascribed to Aristotle that, according to Rodrigo, the Jews employ to support one of their (conflicting) conceptions of the messianic era —i.e., the naturalistic or rationalist notion of messianism. The passage is included in the section dedicated to “The Fables of the Jews and their Diversity of Opinions Regarding the Messiah” (*Dialogus V*). In the fifth chapter of this section, the opinion is ascribed to Aristotle that the future messianic era will take place in human affairs (*in rebus hominum euenturum*) (Rodericii Ximenii de Rada, 308). On the basis of this passage, what we would call a naturalistic interpretation of the messianic condition is attributed to Aristotle.

Rodrigo introduces the citation noting that the passage, found in an epistle by Aristotle to Alexander, is not extant in Latin, neither in the series of works of Aristotle, nor outside of it (*apud latinos in serie librorum Aristotilis nec exteracium non habebitur*) (Rodericii Ximenii de Rada, 308). It is, thus, a text ascribed to Aristotle and transmitted externally to any Latin tradition. Given the context, the clear implication is that it has been transmitted through Jewish sources.

The passage reads as follows:

You will know the new happiness (*felicitatem nouam*) to come in future times. And there will be the same union of years, and one will, and one king, and to this end all the people will be united and domination and wars will cease, men will take care to provide for the common good, and they will agree to one faith and one law. And it says, ‘They will divide half their life in utility and study and they will dedicate half to bodily pleasures. They will act so that he who possesses knowledge will keep vigil in order to preserve it, and he who is without knowledge will ask the wise (*pertransibunt ut qui scientiam est adeptus vigilet ut conseruet, et qui ignorant interroget sapientes*).’ And I would wish, O Alexander, if I could, to live until that time, and if I am unable to behold the height of felicity, I would look upon at least a part of it. And if I am not able to come to it, because of my old age, I hope that my sons, nephews, and loved ones would arrive at the pre-eminence of that time. (Ximenii de Rada, 308; English translation in Pick 2004, 150)

Pick indicates that this passage originates in a letter pseudo-epigraphically ascribed to Aristotle, and addressed to Alexander the Great, sometimes titled *Epistle On the Governance of Cities* (*Risālat Aristūtālīs ‘ilā ‘l-Iskandar fī siyāsāt al-mudun*).¹ The complete extant Arabic text with a French translation is provided by Bielawski & Plezia (1970); the abovementioned passage is also edited in Arabic with English translation in Stern (1968). Collections of such epistles ascribed to Aristotle circulated widely in the late antique and medieval periods, and fragments of the letters were liberally quoted, oftentimes in compilations of ethical materials, such as the Arabic collections of proverbs by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (809-873 c.e.) and Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik (11th century c.e.) (Peters, 59).

While recognizing that fragments of this letter appear in compilations that were known in medieval Iberia, Pick did not identify the source from which Rodrigo could have known this text:

¹ The title varies according to the different manuscripts; for a review of all variants, see Bielawski & Plezia, 24-25. For the sake of convenience, I have decided to use the most specific and concise title of *On the Governance of Cities*.

How did this Arabic text come to Rodrigo's attention? Fragments of the larger letter from which this extract was taken were included in the *Bocados de Oro*, a 13th-century Castilian translation of an 11th-century Arabic work by al-Mubashshir on the sayings of the philosophers. While the particular section quoted by Rodrigo cannot be found in the *Bocados*, the citation of the letter in that work shows that the letter was known in Spain. Rodrigo certainly had Christian Arabists among his company, [...] but it is also possible that he is telling the truth and that he did learn about this passage from Jews who used it to support their understanding of the Messiah. (Pick 2004, 151)

In what follows, I argue that Rodrigo, as Pick suggests here, actually learnt about this passage from a Jewish informant. In fact, the very same passage rendered into Latin by Rodrigo appears in the Judeo-Arabic treatise on poetics *Book of the Discussion and Remembrance* (*Kitāb al-muḥādara wa'l-mudākara*), composed by Moses ibn Ezra probably around the year 1138. This Judeo-Arabic treatise was in circulation in Toledo in the middle of the thirteenth century, and it is most likely that Rodrigo's source was a Toledan Jew, able to read Arabic, who borrowed the passage from Moses ibn Ezra's book.

The Arabic Pseudo-Aristotelian Epistle "On the Governance of Cities"

The Arabic epistle ascribed to Aristotle that occupies us here is found in several Arabic collections of epistles attributed to Aristotle (for a discussion of the six manuscripts that contain this epistle, see Bielawski & Plezia, 18-25). In this epistle, purportedly written as a response to a previous letter by Alexander, also found in some of the epistolary collections, Aristotle congratulates his former pupil on his victory over the Persians, and offers him advice on how to conduct governance, now that the times of war are over, and he needs to secure a stable rule over a vast territory. The letter argues that the law is more necessary in times of peace than in times of war, and that it requires a ruler who can enforce it properly: onto the ignoble men, by fear; onto the noble men, by virtue and love. Law can rule universally only if there is a universal ruler to enforce it in the whole world, which would thereby constitute some sort of single *polis*. The author of the letters exhorts Alexander to become this universal ruler, practicing justice to the uttermost degree, and avoiding tyranny. The ideal rule of a cosmopolitan regime, uniting all of mankind, is described, matching almost word by word the passage given above, as cited by Rodrigo.

The letter also advises Alexander to exile the people of Persia, or at least their ruling classes, from their country, relocating them to Greece and other parts of Europe. This would prevent them from rebelling, and would also increase the prestige of Alexander, a topic that takes on prominence in the second half of the letter, which ends reminding Alexander that glory and renown over the generations can be acquired through military victories, the foundation of cities, and the establishment of appropriate laws; and exhorting him to work on the second and third conditions, after having fulfilled the first.

In 1860, this Arabic epistle came to the attention of European scholars, after its discovery by Italian Arabist P. Armellini in the Vatican archives (Bielawski & Plezia, 6). The text was published by J. Lippert in a doctoral dissertation in 1891, in which he argued that although it was most likely a translation into Arabic of a lost Greek original, the attribution to Aristotle was probably pseudo-epigraphic. In the 1890s there was some

scholarly debate about the authenticity of the Aristotelian authorship, but Lippert's initial assessment was not debunked.

In the 1960s, the epistle became again the center of attention, after the discovery of more complete versions of the text in several manuscripts in Turkey. Two scholars in Poland, Josef Bielawski and Marian Plezia, and one scholar in the U.K., Samuel Stern, worked on the newly discovered versions at about the same time. The two teams did not manage to work in coordination (Stern, VIII), and as a result two different monographs on the epistle were published in the years 1968 and 1970. Whereas the two teams of research differed on many accounts in their respective approaches to the text, Bielawski and Plezia providing a commentated edition of the full text, and Stern focusing on the discussion of two topics covered in the letter—the deportation of the Persian population and the ideal of a cosmopolitan regime—they were both especially concerned with elucidating the question of the Aristotelian authorship, which I will not engage here. Both teams agreed, however, in the consideration that the Arabic text as we have it is a translation from an original Greek, and that it was done at a relatively early date in the history of translations from Greek into Arabic (perhaps through a Syriac intermediary). In all likelihood, the translator into Arabic of the epistolary compilation in which our letter was included was a secretary of caliph Hishām b. 'Abdi 'l-Mālik (r. 724-743 c.e.), Sālim Abū 'l-'Alā (Grignaschi).

In its Arabic version, this epistle achieved considerable circulation in the Arabic-speaking world, as we can see from its citations in widely disseminated works, such as, for example, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq's apophthegms (9th century c.e.), Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* (10th century c.e.), Al-Mubashshir b. Fātik's *Choice of Wise Sayings* (11th century), and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *History of Physicians* (13th century c.e.) (for an overview of all the citations of the epistle in Arabic literature, see Stern, 72-74).

The text of the passage that concerns us here reads as follows, rendered into English from the Arabic version:

I know that if mankind in general is destined to reach true felicity (*sa'ādātu jaddin*) within the duration of this world, there will come about that concord and order which I shall describe. Happy is he who sees the resplendence of that day when men will agree to constitute one rule and one kingdom. They will cease from wars and strife, and devote themselves to that which promotes their welfare and the welfare of their cities and countries. They will all enjoy safety and quiet, dividing their day into parts, part for rest and welfare of the body, part for education and attention to that noble pursuit, philosophy—studying what has been achieved and seeking what has not yet been attained (*fa-yunẓaru fi-mā udrika minhā wa-yuṭlabu mā lam yudrak*). I would love to remain alive and see that age—if not all, at least part of it. If, however, my old age and the length of my past life make this impossible, I wish that my friends and brethren may see it; if they, too, will not obtain this privilege, then those who are like them and follow their ways. (English translation in Stern, 7-8; Arabic text in Stern, 9-10)

The Pseudo-Aristotelian Passage in Moses ibn Ezra

The Arabic epistle, or at least some citations from it, reached Islamic Iberia. The treatise on rhetoric and poetry composed by the Andalusian Jew Moses ibn Ezra (ca. 1055-

ca. 1140), the *Book of the Discussion and Remembrance* (*Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wa'l-muḍākara*), reproduces the above-quoted passage on the cosmopolitan regime. Moses ibn Ezra, a major figure of the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry, composed this work during his years of exile in the Christian north of the Iberian Peninsula towards the end of his life, probably around 1138. According to Scheindlin's description, *The Book of the Discussion* offers an ambivalent defense of the composition of Hebrew poetry in the Arabic style that encapsulates the tensions and paradoxes felt by an Arabic-speaking poet who composed Hebrew verses among the Castilian-speaking Christians. The work also includes a more practical final section on how to compose such poetry in Hebrew, which contains a review of its most common rhetorical figures. *The Book of Discussion* is composed in Judeo-Arabic, and all extant manuscripts are written in Hebrew script, although we do not know with certainty which script was employed in the original composition—one of its editors, Montserrat Abumalhan, argues that it was originally penned by Moses using Arabic script (Moses ibn Ezra 1985, XXIX-XXX). The linguistic situation of this work embodies a paradox: never translated into Hebrew until the modern period (Moses ibn Ezra 1924), its intended audience, as Drory has argued, were precisely the Jews of Christian Europe who were not familiar with Arabic language and culture, since such a vindication of Arabic poetry would be completely redundant for anyone living in the Islamic world (Drory, 281).

Within his survey of rhetorical figures at the end of the book, Moses ibn Ezra includes what Brann has termed “rhetorical extravagance” (*al-ghulū*), a trope closely related to hyperbole (*al-mubālagha*) (Brann, 195). Moses ibn Ezra takes pains to dissociate this “rhetorical extravagance” from the language of eschatological prophecies, to which one might be tempted to relate it, warning that the prophecies about the messianic age are not at all hyperboles; rather, they have to be understood literally:

However, this type of phraseology [i.e., *al-ghulū*] in the Bible pertaining to our awaited kingdom—may God hasten it—is not analogous to the discourse in parables or riddles. All the miracles are veritable, constituting neither riddle nor allegory, and their realization in the past evinces their realization in the future. Further elucidation of this matter is not a provision of this treatise. He who examines them [i.e., the pertinent biblical texts] disparagingly or interprets them in a cunning manner is not an adherent of the law of the Jews (Moses ibn Ezra, 139r; English translation in Brann, 195).

After these cautionary remarks, he cites our Pseudo-Aristotelian passage, saying that it is taken from a work titled *Epistle on Justice* (*Risāla fī l-'adl*):

These noble promises, although they are in no need of support from anybody's statement and their truth need not be confirmed by other people's opinion, are nevertheless clearly expressed by scholars of other religions than ours. The philosopher Aristotle in his letter to his pupil Alexander, called the “Epistle of Justice,” indicated this expected kingdom, expressed his certainty of its coming, and made a clear statement about it. The following is an outstanding passage of this epistle: ‘There will be in this world a new felicity (*sa 'ādatun jadīdatun*) and the consolidation of one order, when all men will agree to constitute one community and one kingdom. They will cease from wars and strife, and devote themselves to things which promote the welfare of their cities and countries. They will all enjoy safety and repose, so that their days will be divided into a part devoted to rest and the welfare of the body, and another to education and to attending to that noble

pursuit, knowledge –studying that part of it which they had attained, and seeking that part which they had not yet attained (*fa-yunzaru mā yudraku minhu wa-yuṭlabu mā lam yudrak*). I would love, Alexander, to remain alive and see that day –if not the whole of it, at least part of it. If, however, my old age and the length of my past life make this impossible, I wish that my friends and brethren may see it; if they, too, they will not obtain this privilege, then those who are similar to them and follow their ways.’ If you examine the words of this unique man, outstanding in science, you will find that –although he makes no direct mention of our religion– they agree in their entirety with the expected promises of the prophets (peace be upon them); it would be very easy to explain this in detail, were I not afraid of prolixity. (Moses ibn Ezra, 139v; English translation in Stern, 79-80)

The main point of Moses ibn Ezra’s citation is to show the agreement of the most important Gentile philosopher, Aristotle, with the tenet of Jewish belief in the Messianic era. A close comparison of the Arabic version, both in the edition by Bielawski & Plezia, and in the edition by Stern, shows that the Judeo-Arabic version of Moses ibn Ezra presents one significant difference from the Arabic version, which occurs in the first line of the passage. According to Moses ibn Ezra the text reads: “There will be in this world a new felicity...” The Arabic versions give, in place of “a new felicity,” the rather unusual expression “*sa ‘ādatu jaddin*,” —“happiness of a fortune” would be an English rendition that captures the awkwardness of the Arabic phrase, grammatically an undetermined genitival construction or *iḍāfa*. This seems to be a sui generis phrase coined by the Arabic translator in order to render a Greek expression, which appears a total of three times in the epistle (according to Bielawski & Plezia’s edition, in paragraphs 1:1; 10:4; 11:4). Scholars disagree on the underlying Greek expression behind the Arabic phrase, Stern suggesting *eudaimonia* (Stern 1968, 7, note 4), and Bielawski and Plezia, on the other hand, proposing *eutukhia*, “good luck” (Bielawski & Plezia, 79, note E). Interestingly, the two scholarly suggestions, one emphasizing the element of virtue, the other the element of sheer fortune, mirror the different takes on the figure of Alexander already in Antiquity, as for instance, in Plutarch’s *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna Aut Virtute*.

Moses ibn Ezra (or, maybe, his source, since we do not know when the error originated) probably did not recognize or understand this phrase in Arabic, meant to convey an original Greek expression, and he read it as *sa ‘ādatun jadīdatun*, “a new happiness,” which in Arabic has a similar graphic expression, but is a much more common phrase (grammatically, a noun qualified by an adjective).

The comparison of Rodrigo’s Latin version with the Arabic and Judeo-Arabic versions in this point yields an interesting result. As we have seen above, Rodrigo’s Latin rendering also gives “a new happiness,” (“*felicitatem nouam*”) at the beginning of the passage. This proves that Rodrigo’s source was a Jewish informant who was familiar precisely with Moses ibn Ezra’s Judeo-Arabic text. As we shall see in what follows, Moses ibn Ezra’s Judeo-Arabic text was well known among the Arabic-speaking Jews in thirteenth-century Toledo.

One significant divergence that sets Rodrigo’s version apart from the rest is the different (and more elitist) reading of the sentence that says, in the Latin text: “They will act so that he who possesses knowledge will keep vigil in order to preserve it, and he who is without knowledge will ask the wise.” In the Arabic version, both knowledge and

ignorance could presumably apply to the same subject. The subordinate clause is in the passive voice, conveying a more impersonal sense, “studying *what has been achieved* and seeking *what has not yet been attained*.” Rodrigo’s version, on the contrary, foregrounds a sharp distinction between those who possess knowledge and those who are deprived of it and are, therefore, in need of the advice of the wise.

Hebrew Renderings of the Passage in Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Toledo

The same passage cited by Rodrigo in his *Dialogus* is quoted, this time in a Hebrew-language version, by a thirteenth-century Toledan Jewish author, Isaac ibn Laṭif. We have very few biographical data about Isaac ibn Laṭif, but some references in his works, such as his dedication of the book *Bundle of Myrrh* to the Toledan Rabbi Ṭodros b. Yosef ha-Levi Abulafia, suggest that he lived in Toledo, approximately between 1210-1280 (Raz, 506; Esudri, vol. 1, 12). Despite the fact that this city had been in Christian hands since 1089, its Jewish intellectuals were still fluent in Arabic at the end of the thirteenth century, as is the case of Laṭif, who in his Hebrew works provides his own translations of Arabic texts, most notably, of Al-Fārābī (Melamed).

In Laṭif’s first work, *Gates of Heaven*, our Pseudo-Aristotelian passage appears, for the first time, to my knowledge, in Hebrew translation. In its introduction, Laṭif states that he wrote it sixty years after the composition of *Mishneh Torah* by Maimonides,² which is dated to 1178 (Ibn Laṭif, 14r). This yields the year of 1238 for the final composition of *Gates of Heaven*, twenty-four years after Rodrigo’s *Dialogus*.

Gates of Heaven is, of all the works of Laṭif (for an overview, see Heller Wilensky), the one that shows the strongest Maimonidean influence. It is divided into four parts: the first part is dedicated to physics, the second part to metaphysics, the third part to the secrets of the Torah, and the fourth part to the reasons for the commandments. In the third part, the messianic age is discussed, as part of the secrets of the Torah. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account that the work was composed in a moment of heightened messianic expectations, given that the year 1240 c.e. marks the beginning of the sixth millennium in the Jewish calendar (Yuval). Laṭif presents, very much in the Maimonidean vein, a naturalistic understanding of the messianic.

Born in Cordoba in 1135, Maimonides lived through a period agitated by messianic expectations, one that has been described as a veritable “era of the *mahdis*” in al-Andalus and the Maghreb (García-Arenal). Most notably, the twelfth century saw the emergence of the Almohad movement, whose leader, Ibn Tūmart was hailed as *mahdī* (messiah). Messianic expectations in this period are found also among Andalusian and Maghrebi Jews, in the more theoretical form of calculation of the date of the arrival of the Messiah or the end of days, such as in the works of Abraham bar Ḥiyya, or in the document known as the “Letter of Toledo” —a late twelfth-century astrological prophecy, seemingly of Jewish origin, which was sometimes understood as referred to the take of Jerusalem by Saladdin in 1187, and to the Mongol conquests of the 13th century (McGinn, 152-153)— and also in practical, active messianic movements, such a those reported by Maimonides in his *Letter to Yemen* (Twersky, 459-460). Against this rather colorful background of popular expectations and political revolts, Maimonides epitomizes in his works the rationalist, naturalist view of the messianic kingdom. Maimonides deals explicitly with the

² See *Gates*, Introduction, Vatican Hebrew Manuscript 335, fol. 14r (all citations from *Gates* in the following will refer to this manuscript).

messianic era in his *Letter to Yemen*, in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, (on Sanhedrin 10, “Introduction to Perek Heleq,” where he includes the belief in the coming of the days of the Messiah among the thirteen principles of the Jewish faith); and in the *Mishneh Torah* (in the section titled “Laws Concerning the Kings”). From these texts emerge the main features of Maimonides’ conception of the messianic kingdom as the return or restoration of the Edenic human perfection, characterized by intellectual accomplishment, the lack of any alteration whatsoever of the order of nature, and a deliberate vagueness as to the interpretation of the biblical references to the messianic kingdom and the date of its arrival. According to Maimonides, human perfection can be attained in our days, although such attainment is extremely rare. What distinguishes the messianic era is the expansion of this attainment, a more generalized engagement with the intellectual pursuit that opens up the very restricted notion of human perfection to a community or a plurality. The generalized peace and abundance of the messianic era will make it easier for everyone to achieve, as much as it is possible for him, this ideal of human perfection.

Maimonides’ messianic kingdom is not a fanciful world of miracles, but rather a very generic model or idea of a good political regime, one that allows for a maximalistic attainment of human potentialities, and that closely resembles Al-Fārābī’s model of the “virtuous city,” which is defined as “the city in which people aim through association at co-operating for the things by which felicity in its real and true sense can be attained” (*Virtuous City* 15:3; Al-Fārābī, 231).

Laṭīf follows this naturalistic interpretation of messianism, and in support of it, he quotes the letter supposedly sent by Aristotle to Alexander, making explicit the source of his passage in the sentences that introduce his citation:

I have found that Rabbi Moses ben Ezra of blessed memory cites a noble passage in the name of Aristotle, taken, as he says, from a letter sent by Aristotle to his pupil Alexander, which has the following tenor (though he did not say it word by word, and I take no care to translate (*le-ha'atiq*) the words literally, since they have been transferred from one vessel to another (*she-kebar hurqu mi-keli 'el keli*), but only attend to what is needed for³ the subject expressed by them. (*Gate of Heavens*, Vatican Hebrew ms. 335, fol. 61r; English translation in Stern, 82)

Laṭīf tells the reader that he is not going to translate this passage literally, word by word, since the text has already been “transferred from one vessel to another,” —by this he means, employing a metaphor often used by medieval Jewish translators (Rothschild), that it had been rendered into different languages (referring, presumably, from the original Greek into Arabic)— and thus, he is going to translate it according to the meaning. He then provides the following text:

There will be in this world a new and exalted good (*ṭovah me'ullah ḥadashah*) and one order, and one king, and one agreement, which will join all human beings unanimously. And strife and wars will cease, and they will agree upon what

³ Stern cites the text of Gates from the ms. Oxford Neubauer no. 1277 (fol. 138), in which this word is *le-ṣorek* (“but only attend to what is needed for the subject expressed by them”) according to Stern’s citation (I have not had the opportunity of checking the Oxford ms.). Manuscripts Vatican 335 (fol. 61r) and Paris 982 (fol. 193r) read instead *le-ṣurat* (“but only attend to the form of the subject expressed by them”).

constitutes the benefit of their cities and countries, and it will include them within the frontiers of peace and security, to the point that [their days] will be divided in two parts: one part dedicated to the care of the body and another part dedicated to ethics and the cultivation of that excellent thing which is wisdom. He who has achieved it will contemplate, and he who has not achieved it, will strive for it (*ye'ayyen mi she-hisig mimenah we-yish'al mi she-lo' hisig*). As for me, I would like to be still alive in that day, if not all of it, at least part of it. But if I am not, at least my friends and brothers, and if not them, than those who are like them. (Ibn Laṭīf, 61r, English translation in Stern, 82)

In this version, the phrase “new felicity” has become “a new and exalted good” (*ṭovah me'ullah ḥadashah*), retaining the adjective “new,” as misread by Moses ibn Ezra (or maybe, his source), as we have mentioned *supra*. Interestingly, this version has in common with Rodrigo a more elitist misreading of the sentence “studying what has been achieved and seeking what has not yet been attained.” In this case, the sentence reads “he who has achieved it [wisdom] will contemplate, and he who has not achieved it, will strive for it.”

The passage, with its messianic overtones, continued to resonate among Toledan Jews in the following years. For instance, Menaḥem b. Zeraḥ (d. 1385), born in Navarre, but who settled in Toledo in 1368, cites the passage following Laṭīf's Hebrew translation, in his legal code *Ṣeda la-derekh*, in its final supplement dedicated to the messiah and the resurrection of the dead (reference in Stern, 80). Another fourteenth-century Toledan, Judah b. Sa'adia, is acquainted with the passage in its Judeo-Arabic version by Ibn Ezra, and cites it in his own Hebrew translation in his *Commentary on Job* (reference in Stern, 83). His citation is preceded by the following introduction: “Those who stole wisdom admit this and say it in their own name. Thus we find that Aristotle, in a treatise called by him the *Epistle of the Intellect*, which he sent to his pupil Alexander, writes as follows [...]” (cited in Stern, 83). In Judah b. Sa'adia, the title of the epistle is given as *Epistle of the Intellect*, due to a misreading of the Arabic: 'adl (justice) is mistakenly read as 'aql (intellect). As Steinschneider indicates, this mistake proves that Judah was reading from an Arabic/Judeo-Arabic text (Steinschneider, 271). In this introduction appears the motif of the “theft of wisdom,” according to which Greek (or Persian) philosophers had stolen their wisdom from the patriarchs of monotheism, who had access to revealed prophecy. This motif, very popular among medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophers (Roth), reflects an anxiety about the boundaries between what is internal and what is foreign to the tradition. This reveals the extent to which Muslim and Jewish traditions had incorporated Greek thought, to the point that it became difficult for Muslim and Jewish philosophers to accept that the philosophical doctrines could have had a foreign origin:

This man [Aristotle] knew the words of Isaiah and Micah and attributed them to himself. Nevertheless, we may be satisfied with his admission –not that we are in need of a confirmation of God's mercies to us, but since the greater part of the world considers him a sage, we can quote his argument against our opponents. (cited in Stern, 83-84)

Judah b. Sa'adia believes, needless to say, that (Pseudo-)Aristotle was merely

parroting the words of the biblical prophets, but given his prestige as a philosopher among the nations, he is ready to employ him as ammunition in the religious polemic with his Christian and Muslim opponents.

Tracing the source of this passage in the work of Rodrigo confirms Pick's suggestion that the archbishop came to know this text through a Jew, who had access to Moses ibn Ezra's treatise in its Judeo-Arabic original version. More importantly, Laṭīf's use of the passage in support of a naturalistic interpretation of messianism in his work *Gates of Heaven*, composed in 1238, only twenty-four years after the composition of Rodrigo's *Dialogus*, perfectly matches the description of the passage in the latter work. Since the original quotation of the passage in Moses ibn Ezra serves a very different function, Rodrigo (and his Jewish sources) were very much aware of the use of the passage in the post-Maimonidean context, as we find it in Laṭīf.

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