Introduction

The "reception" of a text can mean many things. It can refer not only to the dissemination of the text but also to interpretations of the text, to the ways that the text is used, to its influence on later authors or on historical actors, and to the image of the text within a given society. Although these areas of analysis can be distinguished in theory, they often overlap in practice. For example, the image of the book and its author will often influence the way that the book is interpreted (or vice versa).

Traditionally, literary scholars offered interpretations of texts to discern meaning, an activity largely focused on deciphering authorial intention. Where the reader entered the discussion was in terms of the effect that the author produced in the reader. Over the past four decades or so, however, many literary scholars have shifted their focus from the activity of the author to the activity of the reader as the central locus of study. For adherents to the various versions of reader-response theory or reception theory, the way that a particular book is read by a reader, usually an imagined one, determines the meaning of that book.[1] Stanley Fish has famously argued that the reader and not the author has the active role in the production of meaning.[2] In response, some critics, most notably E. D. Hirsch, have maintained the traditional view that it is the author who provides meaning to the text.[3] Others, such as Wolfgang Iser, have taken a more moderate position, attempting to balance the activity of the author in writing and the activity of the reader in interpreting.[4] And Jonathan Culler has proposed what he considers a

[1] See Tompkins, ed. *Reader-Response Criticism*; Culler, "Introduction: The Identity of the Literary Text"; and Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Holub distinguishes between (Anglo-American) "reader-response theory" and (German) "reception theory" (xii–xiv), but his distinction seems dated, and for our purposes here, they may be considered together.

[2] Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," in *Is There a Text in this Class?*; and his comments in the introduction to that volume, 2–4.

[3] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*.

[4] Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *The Implied Reader*, esp. 274–275. The difference in emphasis between author-centric and reader-centric approaches can also be characterized as a difference between "substantialist" and "pragmatic" approaches. (See Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," 251–255.) For a discussion of Iser's theoretical approach that situates him among other reception theorists such as Hans Robert Jauss, and in the context of the hermeneutical tradition, see Holub, *Reception Theory*. Also helpful in thinking about the application of reception theory to intellectual history is Katz, *God's Last Words*, xi–xvi.

practical solution, borrowing Richard Rorty's "pragmatic" solution in philosophy of science: scientists may "make" nature yet it is more practical to speak of them finding or discovering. Likewise, although readers might create the text, it is more practical "to talk about texts inviting or provoking responses."[5]

Historians, like literary critics, spend a great deal of time reading and interpreting texts. Although we often call these texts "evidence" or "archival records" they are nonetheless texts. To the extent that historical research is partially or largely concerned with reading texts, historians must be aware of their own role as readers who establish meaning of various texts although we may prefer to describe our activity as reconstructing past events or ideas by "understanding" the texts before us. Moreover, the basic assumptions behind reader-response and reception theories remind us that the historical subjects we study should themselves be seen as readers in their own responses to texts of various sorts.

A number of caveats, however, should be made in considering the relationship between these developments in literary criticism and theory and a historical consideration of the reception of texts.[6] First, in the case of this book, I am not concerned with establishing the meaning of the *Kuzari* according to Halevi's intentions. And, perhaps more importantly, I am also not concerned with offering my own interpretation – my own subjective response – to the *Kuzari*.[7] Rather, I am concerned with reconstructing the interpretations and responses of readers in the past operating in intellectual and cultural contexts distinct from our own. It is also not my goal here to judge the "correctness" of particular readings vis-à-vis Halevi's intentions.

THE ANTIPHILOSOPHICAL *KUZARI* IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

The *Kuzari* – despite some scholarly revisionism – is still read by many as the epitome of the antirationalist position in Jewish thought. Is it possible to avoid a teleological reception history of this book (or any book for that matter)? That is, can we avoid a history in which the dominant reading of the text among Jewish philosophers and academics today is not an inevitable conclusion? Are all readings that diverge from this reading to be deemed tendentious? The answer to these questions is yes and no. We cannot entirely avoid teleology in a history that connects past worlds to our own. And in all history, we cannot help but explain

[5] Culler, "Introduction," 8.

[6] For some discussion of the different approach of historians and literary critics to the history of reading, see Cavallo and Chartier in *A History of Reading in the West*, 2–3, 33f. And see Thompson, "Reception Theory," for a critical application of reception theory to historical study, especially the study of political thought.

[7] It is inevitable, however, that some of my own interpretation of the work will color my interpretation of others' interpretations.

the past in our terms. At the same time, however, we can work to "unlearn" what we think we know about a culture or a cultural artifact.[8]

The place to begin is simply with the recognition that interpretations and images of books have histories. The conception of the *Kuzari* as an antiphilosophical or antirationalistic book is a product of human agency operating in particular historical circumstances. So let us begin at the crystallization of that reading. We can then begin again and attempt a rereading of the reception that does not presuppose the dominant interpretation.

The view of the *Kuzari* as the antirationalist rejection of the project of Jewish philosophy is intertwined with a view of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* as the corresponding epitome of a rationalist philosophical project. In this view, the dichotomies line up as follows, with each step appearing to flow from the previous one:

Kuzari	*Guide*
1. Antirationalist	Rationalist
2. Revelation as the road to perfection	Philosophy as the road to perfection
3. Particularist/ethnocentric	Universalist/cosmopolitan

Halevi (in the *Kuzari*) is seen as emphasizing the uniqueness of the Jewish people by virtue not only of the revelation granted at Sinai but of an inherent biological (racial) superiority granted by God at creation that entitled them to the revelation at Sinai. According to the *Kuzari*, philosophers may get close to perfection through their use of reason but ultimately fall short without divine guidance and without the "divine substance" (*inyan ha-elohi*) which inhabits the faithful and obedient Jew. Maimonides (in the *Guide*), in contrast, is seen as emphasizing that perfection is ultimately attained not by Jews who simply follow the rules of revelation but by successful philosophers, whether Jewish or not, who through their use of reason attain the level of prophecy. (That the most successful of these philosopher/prophets, Moses and Abraham, were Jews is possibly coincidental.) Jews must obey the Law but should not think this is sufficient to attain perfection in the absence of philosophizing. The faith-reason debate in Judaism is thus personified by Halevi and Maimonides. Of course, this dichotomy between Halevi and Maimonides depends on a particular view of Maimonides as well as a particular view of Halevi. The view of Maimonides that has become dominant in contemporary scholarship is that of the "radical" Maimonides, and that too has a history.[9]

Perhaps the clearest statement of the dichotomizing view can be found in a 1912 essay by a young Harvard undergraduate and former Lithuanian yeshiva student, Harry Austryn Wolfson. Playing off nineteenth-century notions of a fundamental

[8] I am indebted here to Lionel Gossman's reflections that one must "unknow many things" to work as a literary historian (*Between History and Literature*, 20).

[9] See Lasker, "Review Essay: The Study of Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 128–129.

distinction between Hebraism and Hellenism, Wolfson put forward a basic dichotomy between Maimonides and Halevi.[10] For Wolfson, Halevi was the anti-rationalist par excellence and the chief exponent of the "Hebraizer" trend, while Maimonides was "the most typical representative" of the Hellenizer trend. Halevi was "diametrically opposed to Maimonides in insight, in conception of life and destiny."[11] At root, according to Wolfson, "these two men represent the opposite poles of Jewish thought in the Middle Ages."[12] As a mature scholar, Wolfson used this dichotomy as a wedge for analysis of a whole range of issues in the history of Jewish philosophy.[13]

Given Wolfson's foundational role in the development of the study of Jewish thought in the twentieth century (and not only in the United States), it is not surprising that his view has been influential, indeed dominant, in scholarship and teaching. Although Wolfson's work was highly contextualized and his close comparisons of Halevi and Maimonides often turned up areas of agreement between the two, other scholars have often adopted the dichotomizing approach with less nuance.[14] These dichotomized images of Halevi and Maimonides have had significant currency at certain points in Jewish history and continue to play a role in contemporary Jewish thought, in the scholarly reconstructions of the history of Jewish thought, and in popular presentations of Jewish philosophy to lay Jewish audiences.[15]

[10] Wolfson "Maimonides and Halevi: A Study in Typical Jewish Attitudes Towards Greek Philosophy in the Middle Ages."

[11] Ibid., 139.

[12] Ibid., 129. Warren Zev Harvey has argued that Wolfson favored Halevi's position while a college student. See "The Return of Maimonideanism," and "Hebraism and Western Philosophy."

[13] See, e.g., Wolfson, "Halevi and Maimonides on Design, Chance, and Necessity."

[14] For a good example of the dichotomizing approach in a fairly ahistorical and phenomenological manner, see Dreyfus, "Man and Reason in the Teachings of R. Judah Halevi and Pascal." Eliezer Schweid's essay "Halevi and Maimonides as Representatives of Romantic vs. Rationalistic Conceptions of Judaism" deserves more serious consideration. Schweid offers his dichotomy between Halevi and Maimonides as one that emerges in modern Jewish philosophy from the early nineteenth century to the present. Although Schweid avoids the mistake of seeing such notions as necessarily accurate descriptions of the twelfth-century philosophers, his own description of the nineteenth-century philosophers and scholars does not support the rigid dichotomy of Halevi/romantic vs. Maimonides/rationalistic that he portrays as characteristic of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, Schweid's view has been adopted uncritically by some readers. (See J. Cohen, "Common Ground for Cultural Renewal.")

[15] See, for examples, David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition*, and the review of Hartman by Menachem Kellner in JQR; and see Kellner's introduction to a special issue on Maimonides in *Jewish History*. (Kellner's recent book *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism* makes a persuasive argument for reading Maimonides as responding to the form of Judaism represented by Halevi.) An interviewer of Emmanuel Levinas was most interested to know whether he considered himself a Halevian or a Maimonidean (*In the Time of Nations*, 169–173). When Daniel Korobkin, an Orthodox rabbi in Allentown, Pennsylvania, published a new translation of the *Kuzari* in 1999, the headline in the *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent* was "Super Jew Takes on Maimonides" (December 23, 1999, 6).

For Wolfson, medieval Jewish philosophy, at root, was concerned with the same issue as Christian and Muslim philosophy in the same period: the need to reconcile the legacy of Greek philosophy with the legacy of Scripture.[16] Wolfson's view of the primary subject matter of medieval Jewish philosophy continues to be influential.[17] It is not surprising that Wolfson and others have seen Halevi's antirationalist critique as the central issue in the work – an observation that can easily lead to emphasizing the difference between Halevi and Maimonides. Julius Guttmann, also a foundational influence on twentieth-century scholarship, likewise saw Halevi's antirationalism as the key to the *Kuzari*.[18]

For those interested in this central theme of the potential conflict and the necessary reconciliation of religion and reason, the key issue in the *Kuzari* is Halevi's "Pascalian" preference for the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob versus the God of Aristotle.[19] The anti-Aristotelian critique at the beginning of the book and the extended development of that critique become the central themes of the work. In addition, Halevi's emphasis on the God of Exodus rather than the God of Creation evident in the initial exchange between the Ḥaver and the king (1:11–12) offers another opportunity to see his thought in dichotomizing terms within Jewish tradition.[20]

For the most part, this way of viewing the *Kuzari* lays emphasis on Halevi as the premier antirationalist within the tradition of medieval Sephardic Jewish thought. It is important to clarify, however, what is meant by "antirationalism" in the context of Halevi's philosophy. To be antirationalist does not necessarily mean that one is irrational or that one does not believe in the workings of logic. David Lachterman puts it well and appropriately for our discussion:

> The contest is not between being rational and being irrational; that definition of the contest, as it were, presupposes the supremacy of autonomous reason. Jehuda Halevi, who is the sterling example [of the antirationalist], doesn't argue that we should give up the principle of non-contradiction, or because of the unbroken tradition from the revelation on Sinai to the present day, that we should now all believe that two plus two equals seven. That's not the argument. The question is the question of the relative place of reason, logic, mathematics, the physical sciences, and the like.[21]

[16] On Wolfson's view, see Harvey, "Historiographies of Jewish Philosophy," 29.
[17] E.g., Ravitzky, "On the Study of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages," 130. Sirat, *History of Jewish Philosophy*, 5.
[18] "Das Verhältnis von Religion und Philosophie bei Jehudah Halewi." On Guttmann's view in the context of his own philosophy of Judaism, see Bamberger, "Julius Guttmann–Philosopher of Judaism."
[19] Cf. Dreyfus, "Man and Reason."
[20] This is seen in contrast to the emphasis on God as creator in the thought of Maimonides and of Baḥya ibn Pakuda (see Sirat, *History of Jewish Philosophy*, 83). For a recent philosophy of Judaism that makes much of this distinction, see Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition.*
[21] Lachterman "Torah and Logos," 20.

For Halevi, the central goal is knowing how best to serve God (how to take action pleasing to God). It is here that revelation and tradition emerge as the most reliable sources of knowledge. Areas of knowledge flowing from the use of reason can be used as aids in thinking about, or understanding, revelation, but they appear to have no independent value or use. Halevi's antirationalist approach is best seen in terms of the relative valuation of reason and of the areas of human knowledge that flow from its use, as Lachterman suggests.

Howard Kreisel has recently offered a revisionist view that downplays the Wolfsonian dichotomy between Maimonides and Halevi.[22] Of course, as Warren Zev Harvey has noted, Wolfson himself offered a later view seeing Halevi and Crescas as part of the same tradition as Maimonides.[23] But Kreisel has gone further than most in arguing that Halevi's work is best seen as attempting to mediate "between the God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle." Kreisel argues that while Halevi certainly saw reason as secondary to revelation, he adopted many of the philosophers' views, and where philosophy offered challenges to revealed religion, Halevi attempted to meet those challenges on rational grounds. Kreisel concludes that "Halevi's God of Abraham ultimately wears a visage reminiscent of the God of Aristotle."[24]

Indeed, while many have stressed the dialectic between religion and philosophy in Halevi's work, others have pointed toward the apologetic aspect of the work as its central theme. Isidore Epstein, writing in the 1930s, agreed with Wolfson that Maimonides was a rationalist and that Halevi was an empiricist. But he argued that the motive for the former to stress reason and the latter to stress religion "is merely due to the difference in aim and scope of their works: Maimonides was addressing himself to rationalists . . . whilst Halevi wrote for the pious and truly religious in quest of the true religion."[25] In contrast to Epstein's dismissal of the differences between Maimonides and Halevi as tactical, however, most scholarship on the apologetic aspects of the work, especially the strong assertions of Jewish superiority, has assimilated itself to the basic paradigm of Halevi as antirationalist. In other words, Halevi's particularism has been seen generally as significantly related to his antirationalism.[26]

In 1971, however, Jacob Levinger forcefully suggested that the emphasis on antirationalism and philosophical discussion in the work was misplaced. For him, Halevi's work was an apologetic "whose only aim was to defend the Jewish religion

[22] Kreisel, "Judah Halevi's Influence on Maimonides"; and "Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*: Between the God of Abraham and God of Aristotle."
[23] Harvey, "Historiographies of Jewish Philosophy," 29.
[24] Kreisel, "Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," 27. Interestingly, Kreisel views this conclusion as congruent with Guttman's view.
[25] Epstein, "Judah Halevi as Philosopher."
[26] Schweid's discussion of Halevi's conception of the divine is characteristic in this regard. See his "Meta-Philosophical Vindication of God in Halevi's Cuzari."

in every possible manner."[27] For Neḥemya Allony, the *Kuzari* was a Jewish version of Iberian Muslim conceptions of the superiority of Arabic and Islam, and Halevi's descriptions of the superiority of the Jewish people, the Land of Israel, and the Hebrew language were the crucial elements of the work.[28] Here, Halevi's defense of revelation is understood as a particular defense of the Hebrew Bible as the true heavenly revelation in contradistinction to the Koran.[29] Allony acknowledges that Halevi has other targets as well, including Kalam theology, Greek philosophy, Christianity, and Karaism, but in his view, the *Kuzari*'s antirationalism is a corollary to Halevi's polemical and apologetic position.

The notion that Judaism offers a superior path to God coexists in the work with notions of an inherent superiority of Jews. Most problematic – in terms of logic – is the fact that Halevi's distinction between gentile converts to Judaism and native-born Jews appears in a work whose literary framework is the story of the conversion of a gentile king and his people.[30] Since the nineteenth century, scholars have been increasingly uncomfortable with Halevi's racial definition of Jewish identity.[31] The general approach has been to offer apologetic justifications or rationalizations for Halevi's "racialism."[32]

But recognizing Halevi's racism is important in seeing a larger element of the work that goes beyond questions of "reason and faith." In the course of his apologetic for rabbinic Judaism, Halevi offers refutations of competing doctrines: Christianity, Islam, and Karaite Judaism, in addition to Aristotelian philosophy. For this reason, an exclusive emphasis on Halevi's antirationalist standpoint obscures the broader polemical agenda in the work. Although the fact that the first draft of the work was intended as a limited anti-Karaite polemic has been known since Goitein's studies, Halevi's attitude toward Karaism has only been extensively studied in the past two decades. Daniel Lasker in particular has elucidated Halevi's views on Karaism – including sympathy for some Karaite positions – as well as the context of Karaism in Halevi's period.[33] Halevi's polemic against Islam has been considered by Allony, as discussed earlier, and Lasker has also examined Halevi's views of the two other monotheistic religions in relation to his views of conversion.[34]

[27] Levinger, "The *Kuzari* and its Significance."
[28] Allony, "The *Kuzari*: A Jewish Polemical Response to the 'Arabiyya,'" 130–135; idem, "The *Kuzari* of Rabbi Judah Halevi in the Light of the Shu'ubiyya."
[29] Allony, "The *Kuzari*: A Jewish Polemical Response," 132.
[30] On this, see Lasker, "Proselyte Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Thought of Judah Halevi"; and cf. Eisen, "The Problem of the King's Dream and Non-Jewish Prophecy in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*."
[31] For nineteenth-century criticism of Halevi for this, see the discussion of Boston rabbi Solomon Schindler, discussed in the conclusion.
[32] See Dover, "The Racial Philosophy of Jehuda Halevi"; Jospe, "Teaching Judah Ha-Levi"; idem, "Jewish Particularity from Ha-Levi to Kaplan"; Schwarzschild, "Proselytism and Ethnicism in R. Yehudah Halevi"; Shiffman, "More on Judah Halevi's 'Racism.'"
[33] Lasker, "Judah Halevi and Karaism"; idem, "Karaism in Twelfth-Century Spain."
[34] Lasker, "Proselyte Judaism, Christianity, and Islam." See also Silman, "Revealed Religions in the Thought of Judah Halevi."

Other readers have been less convinced that the arguments against Islam, Christianity, Karaism, or Greek philosophy are central to the work. Michael Berger, for example, has argued that the work's real target is the "entire social order of Jews in Spain," and he situates the work as a kind of countercultural critique of a Jewish society contented with diaspora.[35] In many ways, Berger and Lasker follow the mid-century analyses by Salo Baron and others who saw the *Kuzari* as Halevi's response to the cultural and political situation of twelfth-century Spain.[36]

However, Berger explicitly takes his inspiration from recent studies that have focused on the literary structure of the work. In particular, various scholars, including Shlomo Dov Goitein, David Baneth, and more recently Eliezer Schweid and Yochanan Silman, have attempted to trace the process by which Halevi wrote the work and the implications of that development for understanding the text. Apparently, the section on Karaism in book 3 forms the earliest stratum of the text, while the extended critique of Artistotelianism in book 5 of the work may well have been a late addition.[37]

Silman has recently taken up the issue of the long genesis of the *Kuzari* and produced a highly original, although speculative, interpretation of the work. He has argued on the basis of internal evidence and his own idiosyncratic reading of the text that a number of stages in Halevi's own thinking are visible in the work, and that Halevi passed from believing in Aristotelian philosophy to disbelieving it.[38] Although the writing of the work in stages may ultimately be of great importance for interpretation of the work, as Silman argues, it was not, in the end, of importance in the book's reception before the twentieth century. David Novak is certainly correct when he describes the *Kuzari* as "a work accepted by posterity as a unitary classic."[39]

Silman's attempt to reconstruct the "prehistory" of the *Kuzari* also represents his intervention in the debate over how to characterize Halevi's relationship to philosophy. In some ways, Silman brings us back to the central Wolfsonian theme of the relationship between religious faith and rationalist philosophy. However, Silman's attention to the *Kuzari*'s literary form is undoubtedly also in the shadow of Leo Strauss's highly influential reading of the work. The framing of the work as a dialogue is central to Strauss's thesis that Halevi offers something of a

[35] Berger, "Toward a New Understanding of Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," esp. 219.

[36] Baron, "Yehudah Halevi: An Answer to a Historic Challenge"; Ben-Sasson, "Society in the Thought of R. Judah Halevi"; and Heinemann, "Judah Halevi's Conception of History." On the burgeoning interest in Halevi during World War II, see Steven Wasserstrom's interesting remarks in his review essay, "The Compunctious Philosopher?" 161.

[37] See Berger, "Toward a New Understanding," 211.

[38] *Bein Filosof le-Navi*. All citations here are to the English trans. *Philosopher and Prophet*. For criticism of Silman's thesis, see Wasserstrom, "The Compunctious Philosopher?" and Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 9, 12.

[39] Novak, *The Election of Israel*, 264.

philosophical refutation of philosophy.[40] According to Strauss, Halevi recognized the danger of philosophy because he was himself deeply influenced by philosophical reasoning.[41]

The other crucial element in Strauss's reading of the *Kuzari* is the literary framework itself – the story of the king's dream; his conversations with the philosopher, the Christian, the Muslim, and ultimately the Jew; and his conversion to Judaism. For Strauss, the dialogue suggests that Halevi hoped to strengthen his defense of rabbinic Judaism by showing how it could convince not someone already Jewish but a pagan king.[42] Strauss argued that as a result of the dialogue form the views of Halevi the author cannot be seen as identical with the views of the major character, the Ḥaver.[43] Indeed, Strauss argues that Halevi sets up such a distinction in the beginning of the book when the first-person voice of the author indicates that he agreed with "many" of the views of the Ḥaver that he found when looking for arguments against the philosophers and others who opposed Judaism.

THESIS, CONTENTS, AND THE PREMODERN READER

Like Strauss, some premodern readers (who were certainly not Straussians) were keenly aware of the frame-story of the Khazar conversion and the relationship between the historical event and the work entitled the *Kuzari*, and these issues were often raised by medieval and early modern commentators on the work. Likewise, the relationship between Halevi and the Ḥaver as "authors" of the ideas in the *Kuzari* was also the subject of discussion. Indeed, Strauss's greatest merit as interpreter of the *Kuzari* may be his recapturing of these particular premodern concerns that had largely disappeared under the influence of modern scholars for whom the *Kuzari*'s obviously fictional nature was hardly worthy of mention.

In many ways, Silman's post-Straussian and neo-Wolfsonian reading of the work returns us to a framework for considering the work as primarily concerned with Aristotelian philosophy and its challenges to Jewish faith. In his review of Silman's work, Steven Wasserstrom properly takes Silman to task for downplaying or ignoring the many other crucial elements of the work such as its mystical and occult

[40] "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. On Strauss's interpretation, see the supercommentary by Green, "Religion, Philosophy, and Morality." For other Straussian readings, some more convincing than others, see Motzkin, "On Halevi's *Kuzari* as a Platonic Dialogue"; Cavarocchi, "Il 'Kuzari' di Giuda Levita: Problemi e possibilita' interpretative"; and McDonald, "Judah ha-Levi's *Kuzari*; Proto-Zionism, the Paradox of Post-colonial Prosody, and the Ridiculous Rabbi."

[41] "The Law of Reason," 109–110.

[42] "The Law of Reason," 101–103. For a further analysis along this line, see Schweid, "The Literary Structure of the First Book of the Kuzari."

[43] "The Law of Reason," 101 n. 27.

elements, its polemical background, and its relation to Islamic religious thought.[44] We have already considered the apologetic and polemical aspects of the work. A number of scholars (Israel Efros, and more recently Raphael Jospe, Elliot Wolfson, and Diana Lobel) have studied the important role that mysticism plays in the *Kuzari*.[45] Shlomo Pines has drawn attention to the importance of magical and theurgic concepts in the work.[46] More specific issues raised in the work have been the subject of monographic study under headings such as "Topic X in the *Kuzari*" or "Halevi's view of X."[47] And of course many studies of a particular topic in Jewish religious thought have included discussion of Halevi's views in concert with the view of other major Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages.

This mountain of recent scholarship on the *Kuzari* reveals that the range of topics dealt with in the text goes far beyond one or two overarching themes. And this brief reception history of the *Kuzari* in twentieth-century scholarship should already suggest the range of potential interpretations of this multifaceted text. Indeed, two different modes of reading and reflection on a multifaceted work like the *Kuzari* can be discerned: a thesis approach and a contents approach. Many modern scholars have searched for an overarching theme, an all-encompassing thesis, or a central message or aim of the work. Others have acknowledged the existence of multiple aims or arguments in the text, but we might still consider this type of reading and analysis within the thesis approach category. The contents approach, while possibly acknowledging a central argument or arguments, is a mode of reading that takes up the text as a repository of individual pieces of information, small-scale arguments, views on particular subjects, and so forth. The two modes of reading are certainly not incompatible and some of the analysts of the *Kuzari*'s contents do so within the framework of a larger argument about the work's thesis or as part of the development of such an argument. Arguably, however, the attempt of modern scholarship to describe the book's thesis has obscured an important premodern mode of reading – that of the book as an authoritative repository of information and not only of arguments.

[44] See "The Compunctious Philosopher?" 168–172.

[45] The classic study is Efros, "Some Aspects of Yehuda Halevi's Mysticism." For Efros, Halevi's emphasis on "direct, mystical experience and the certitude of prophecy" is intimately connected with his antirationalism (34). More recently, Elliot Wolfson has argued for a connection between early Jewish mystical traditions and Halevi's thought in "Merkavah Traditions in Philosophical Garb" and *Through a Speculum that Shines*. Halevi's extensive comments on the mystical text *Sefer Yezirah* have been analyzed by Jospe, "Early Philosophical Commentaries on the Sefer Yezirah." Both Jospe and Wolfson argue for the need to not make sharp distinctions between philosophy and mysticism.

[46] Pines, "On the Term 'Ruḥaniyot' and Its Origins and on Judah Halevi's Doctrine"; for discussion, see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery*, 33–35.

[47] See, e.g., Davidson, "The Active Intellect in the Kuzari and Halevi's Theory of Causality"; Arieli, "Rabbi Judah Halevi and the Halakha"; Nuriel, "The Divine Will in the Kuzari"; Harvey, "Judah Halevi's Synesthetic Theory of Prophecy"; Langermann, "Science and the *Kuzari*"; and Rembaum, "Interpretation of Scripture in Judah Halevi's 'The Kuzari.'"