

Carlos I. Fraenkel

A History of Arabic and Jewish Mediaeval Philosophy

Projektbeschreibung von Shlomo Pines

Der Titel des Projekts, das Pines skizziert, ist *A History of Arabic and Jewish Mediaeval Philosophy*. Damit bewarb er sich 1959 bei der Bollington Foundation in New York um Forschungsgelder. Die Projektbeschreibung wurde zur Begutachtung an Harry Austrin Wolfson (gest. 1974) weitergeleitet, der seit 1925 als Professor an der Harvard University lehrte. Wolfson gehört wie Pines zu den bedeutendsten Philosophie- und Religionshistorikern des 20. Jahrhunderts. Trotz vielfältiger Überschneidungen in ihrer Forschungsarbeit gelangten Pines und Wolfson meist zu recht unterschiedlichen Ergebnissen, die teilweise Unterschiede in ihren methodischen Grundannahmen widerspiegeln.¹ Ein Gutachten zu Pines' Projektbeschreibung von Wolfson ist nicht erhalten. Die Projektbeschreibung befindet sich in den Harvard University Archives, H. A. Wolfson papers, Sign. HUG (FP) 58.7, box 30, folder „Pines“, 1959.

A Detailed Statement of the Project

The history of the mediaeval Arabic and Jewish philosophy with which the present project is concerned will cover roughly the period from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries. It will deal with the transmission of Greek learning to the Islamic world, with the evolution of natural philosophy, metaphysics and the political and sociological doctrines of the Arabic and Jewish philosophers, and to a certain extent with the impact made by these philosophers on the intellectual life of Mediaeval Christian Europe.

The main texts which will be studied are written in Arabic, Persian and Hebrew. The integration of a history of Jewish philosophy into a history of Arabic philosophy is methodolo-

¹ Zu Wolfsons Ansatz, vgl. W. Z. Harvey: Der Hebraismus und die westliche Philosophie in der Historiographie H.A. Wolfsons, *Da'at* 4 (1980), S. 103 – 110 (Hebr.). Zu Pines' Ansatz, siehe S. 54, Anm. 3.

gically justified by the fact that in its decisive period mediaeval Jewish thought was an offshoot of Arabic thought: the debates of the Jewish philosophers can only be understood if one refers to the doctrinal difference obtaining among Arabic philosophers.

Within the last thirty or forty years our knowledge of Arabic thought has made great progress. In spite of this fact no comprehensive history of Arabic philosophy exists in any language. The short textbooks written on this subject are completely outdated. No history of Jewish philosophy on the lines suggested above has ever been written.

An adequate history of Arabic philosophy is essential for our understanding of the evolution of Islamic civilization. It should make a significant contribution to the understanding of the process of transmission and evolution of Greek learning in the Middle Ages, should render accessible to students doctrines of important Arabic and Jewish philosophers, who are barely known by name even to well-informed historians of philosophy, and should help to situate these [p. 2] philosophers in the context of their times. Finally, it should help to bring about a clearer understanding of the Greek philosophical tradition which was modified by the Arabs and the Jews and transmitted in its new metamorphosis to Christian Europe. According to my present plans, the history of Arabic and Jewish philosophy will comprise two volumes of 500 to 600 pages each. Many important Arabic and Jewish philosophical texts have never been published and exist only in manuscript, or, if published, are very rare.

A comprehensive history of Arabic and Jewish philosophy can only be written if there is a possibility of working in various great libraries and collections of MSS in the Orient (in particular in Istanbul), in Europe and this country. As the duration of an academic year in Jerusalem, where I teach, is only six to seven months, I could devote five to six months in the year to visiting libraries. The grant for which I apply would enable me to make in the course of three years the various journeys necessary for the project, to stay in each of the various countries for as long a time as is required by the search for and the study of important MSS, and for other forms of research by the project.

I plan to finish writing the history within approximately three years from the beginning of my work on the project.

S. Pines