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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Maimonidean Studies, an international, interdisciplinary annual, conceives its area of interest in broad terms and will be hospitable to articles on a variety of subjects. In the field of Halakhah it will carry interpretations of Maimonides' legal works, studies dealing with their talmudic and geonic antecedents, the influence of his legal writings on subsequent commentators and decisors, and comparative legal studies. In the field of philosophy it will publish interpretations of Maimonides' philosophic writings, and studies of their Greek, Hellenistic, and Islamic antecedents, as well as their impact on Jewish philosophy in the later Middle Ages, on Latin scholasticism, and on the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the Haskalah. Besides these, Maimonidean Studies will carry articles on Maimonides as Bible commentator, physician, scientist, and communal leader, and on the history of Maimonides' time, the Maimonidean family, and the Maimonidean controversies. The annual will also publish articles on the language of Maimonides' Hebrew and Arabic writings and bibliographic information.

Since Maimonidean Studies is largely intended for an English-reading audience, its primary language is English. Since, however, a substantial part of Maimonides research is being conducted in Israel, each issue will contain some articles in Hebrew. As the need arises, there will also appear articles in French and German. There will be English summaries of articles in languages other than English.

Maimonidean Studies is not committed to any one interpretation of Maimonides' work; its editorial policy is determined by the very history of Maimonides research. As is true of the work of any seminal thinker, that of Maimonides has given rise to a variety of interpretations and has found, from the very beginning, its adherents as well as its critics. One need only think of Maimonides' own controversy with Samuel ben Ali, the Hassagot of Abraham ben David, the various commentaries on the Mishneh Torah, the Maimonidean controversies, down to the controversy in our own days between Julius Guttmann and Leo Strauss concerning the interpretation of Maimonides' philosophic views. The sole criteria governing the editorial policy of Maimonidean Studies are: defensible thesis, cogent arguments, proper documentation, and the observance of scholarly proprieties.
It is more acceptable to add elements to Jewish liturgy than to remove them from it: this, at least, seems to be what experience teaches us. Moreover, even when the dimensions of prayer are in fact reduced, it is generally done inconspicuously, almost unnoticeably. This is the point that was advanced by opponents of the nascent Reform movement, such as Solomon Judah Leib Rapoport (Shi’R), or even Zevi Hirsch Hayyes, who argued that one should allow the process of time “to do its own,” and were in fact certain that it would do so. Furthermore, optional prayers are more easily abridged and forgotten than are the statutory, obligatory prayers. Maimonides acted contrary to these general tendencies: he introduced a taqqanah (enactment) which abrogated the separate, silent recitation of the Amidah Prayer as it had been practiced for generations, and whose roots were well established in the Talmud.

It is known that Maimonides rejected attempts to eliminate completely the Reader's Repetition of the Amidah (Hazarat ha-Sha’i’). This position was based upon two considerations: a) a perception that the enactments of the Talmudic Sages carry universal force, and a consequent unwillingness to annul the enactment in one place, so long as it may be beneficial elsewhere; 2) a fear of the controversy and the religious-societal instability which would result from any alteration of accepted halakhic models. It is likewise known that Maimonides shied away from any acts which would generate public controversy. Yet in the case that we shall consider, Maimonides did not take these considerations into account, and proposed a quite serious change in the arrangements for public worship. He clearly thought that his enactment

* The following is taken from my book, Prayer in Maimonidean Halakhah (Hebrew), (Jerusalem, 1994) 169–181.
1. See below, in Section III, for a more detailed discussion of this point.
preserved significant components of public prayer, and so was not tantamount to a complete abolition of the Reader’s Repetition (although, as we shall see, he did attempt to restrict the compass of his enactment). But it would also appear that Maimonides thought that the very existence of public prayer was endangered by certain improper phenomena which turned it into a spiritual and social burden, and that his enactment was needed in order to save what could still be saved.

The essence of Maimonides’ enactment was quite simple: it abolished the silent recitation of the ‘Amidah in the synagogue prior to the Reader’s Repetition. From now on, the Reader would begin his prayer aloud immediately following the blessings of Shema’. Those individuals who were capable of praying by themselves would accompany the Reader, reciting their own silent prayer simultaneously, word by word, with his public recitation of it. Those who did not know how to pray would listen to the Reader’s Prayer and respond “Amen” to his recitation of the blessings, thereby discharging their own obligation to pray the ‘Amidah. By proposing this model, Maimonides made the form of the ‘Amidah equivalent to that used, in his opinion, for the Shema’ and its blessings. Here too:

[The Reader] begins and goes over Shema’ (pores ‘al Shema’) aloud, and they answer ‘Amen’ following each blessing. And those who know how to [recite the] blessing and to read with him, read until he reaches the blessing, Ga’al Yisra’el.3

We note that, in one place, Maimonides reports that his enactment was only intended for the prayers of Sabbaths and holidays, when a large and tumultuous crowd is gathered in the synagogue, but not for weekday prayers. But in a good part of the material relating to this enactment, this limitation is not emphasized, nor is it mentioned at all in the remarks of his son, R. Abraham.3

I. The Reasons for the Enactment

Put broadly, Maimonides enactment was motivated by the need to deal with the disorder that prevailed in the synagogue during the Reader’s Repetition. The public often utilized this time to stroll about outside the synagogue or to engage in conversation within it, so that the Reader was nearly abandoned, declaring a prayer to which no one paid any attention.4 With the abolition of the silent prayer prior to the Reader’s Repetition, each worshipper was required to stand quietly in the synagogue during the Reader’s Repetition—either in order to join the Reader’s Repetition with his own silent prayer, or to listen to it and respond “Amen.” However, N. Wieder has observed that Maimonides’ sensitivity to the prevalent disorder and confusion of the synagogue was based upon two sources, so that one may properly speak of two motivations for the enactment: an “internal motivation” and an “external motivation,” as Wieder calls them.

1) The “external” reason—which Wieder identifies as the principal one—related to the unseemly impression left by Jewish worship upon the Muslims among whom the Jews lived.5 Maimonides in no way attempts to conceal this motive, translating it into the halakhic religious concern of Hillul Ha-Shem (“Desecration of God’s Name”). He says, “and by this enactment one removes the Desecration of God’s Name, for they think that among us prayer is a joke and a mockery.” He further states “and let the matter be properly arranged and ordered, so that there will be avoided the lengthiness of the Reader’s Repetition, and we may remove the Desecration of God’s

4. Maimonides, Responso no. 256:474–75; no. 258:483–85; the relevant portions of these responsa are cited below. One ought to remark that Maimonides’ description is confirmed by the words of one of his interlocutors, who states in all innocence (p. 470) that: “It is our custom that the community does not recite the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah silently, out of the fear that, once they complete it and the Reader begins his Prayer, by which they fulfill their obligation, they will reverse, and perhaps some of them will go outside, relying upon what they are accustomed to do all the [other] days of the year, when they fulfill their own obligation by themselves in the silent prayer...” This interlocutor is evidently prepared to overlook the situation which prevails all year round, nor did his congregation think that there was any need to take steps to correct the situation. Maimonides’ disagreed.

5. See N. Wieder, Islamic Influences on Jewish Ritual (Oxford, 1947) 27–28 [Hebrew]. From the manner in which Maimonides’ enactment is presented by R. David ibn Zimra (Radba’i), it is clear that Hillul Ha-Shem in the eyes of the Muslims is identified as its main rationale, as noted by Wieder; however, one should add that for ibn Zimra, who wished to abolish this enactment, it was convenient to present it as lacking in internal-halakhic roots. Indeed, when R. Abraham Maimonides comes to defend his father’s taqqanah, he mentions the internal halakhic motivations exclusively, completely ignoring the element of Hillul Ha-Shem (see below, at notes 21, 22 and 42). Modern scholarship has long seen this latter factor as the main one: see H. Graetz, Divrei Yemei Yisrael 4 (Warsaw, 1894) 352–53, who only comments upon the external impression left by Jewish prayer.

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2. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Tefillah 9. 1, and see at note 19–20, below.
Name that has spread among the nations, that the Jews spit and expectorate and talk during prayer, as they themselves witness.” It is true that this reason is mentioned following the internal-halakhic discussion, so that it functions as an additional argument; but it is elsewhere cited as the exclusive reason, albeit in a somewhat indirect manner. In a brief responsa, Maimonides explains that, “During the time of the Reader’s Repetition of the Prayer, all the people turn their faces away and do not listen to his voice, apart from the fact that they engage in idle conversations and words of frivolity and joking, and this is a great Desecration of God’s Name, may He be blessed.” As we have seen, in our context Hillul Ha-Shem specifically refers to the Desecration of God’s Name in Gentile eyes. Wieder already observed that, when R. David ibn Zimra (Radba’zi) argued against Maimonides’s enactment and set about to abolish it (in the sixteenth century), he stated quite explicitly that Maimonides’ main motivation was the negative external impression which was created.6

This Maimonidean sensitivity need not surprise us. In his description of the commandment of Qiddush Ha-Shem (the Sanctification of God’s Name), Maimonides stresses that it is primarily directed toward the non-Jewish world, which constitutes its goal and target; the same applies to the avoidance of its opposite—Hillul Ha-Shem, “Profanation of God’s Name.” This sensitivity is not limited to the sociological realm or halakhic models alone. As I. Twersky has shown, Maimonides’ attempts to find reasons for the commandments are explicitly justified in terms which address themselves to those rationalistic standards shared by all of humanity. Among other factors, they stem from Maimonides’ belief in the universality of the commandments, and the assumption that the divine insight that brought them about will be recognized by all human beings—to the greater glory both of the Torah and of the Jewish people.10 Hence, the performance of the mitzva in such a manner as to suggest that the Jews are not “a wise and understanding people” undercuts the very stature and purpose of the Torah, and demands correction. However, we must add that Maimonides’ remarks are not to be understood purely as a detached reaction to the evaluation of Jewish prayer to be found within the foreign cultural milieu. In the final analysis, the estimation of the impression conveyed to non-Jews concerning Jewish prayer is rooted at least in part in Maimonides’ own perception of that impression. It is therefore possible that the reactions which Maimonides attributed to the non-Jews reflect also his own feelings.11 And indeed, did not Maimonides internalize—even if only incidentally—those values which were expressed in Muslim prayer, which was conducted “with exemplary order,” without any distractions or conversation?12

Indeed, the readiness to establish halakhic norms on the basis of the concern for the impression left by Jewish behavior upon the surrounding non-Jewish neighbors can already be found in Geonic literature. Thus, Rav ha-Mahashavah ha-Yehudit mugdeshet le Y. Katz (Jerusalem, 1980) 24:34 [Hebrew]; Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah) (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1980).

10. See also Maimonides Responsa no. 172:321, regarding a Reader who was in the habit of opening Torah scrolls in the presence of Gentiles for purposes of divination. When asked whether one is required to prevent such acts, or even to relieve this Reader of his position, Maimonides replied: “One must prevent him from doing this for Gentiles, for by this he desecrates [God’s Name], but he is not removed from his position and is not to be punished.” A more farreaching and sharper statement is made about a ritual slaughterer who was publicly exposed as a thief who also sold non-kosher meat as kosher “and this causes an undermining and perversion of Desecration of God’s Name,” to quote the interlocutor. Maimonides answered: “It is already well-known among the Gentiles that we do not appoint anyone as a slaughterer except those among who are [morally] fit, so [likewise is it our practice] with regard to our judges and our prayer Readers; and they honor and praise this, and are jealous of us for this. And such a person is forbidden. . . to be allowed to slaughter for the public, even if he fully repents, because of the Desecration of God’s Name. However, he is allowed to slaughter for any individual who wishes, within his own home.” (Maimonides, Responsa no. 173:321–22).

Hillul Ha-Shem is particularly pressed into service with regard to the penitent; Maimonides rules upon these matters in Mishneh Torah, Shehitah 4:15, without introducing this concept. Or possibly the ruling may have been presented in this more general way so as to make it more easily understandable. See the edict from Alexandria, below; and the remarks of S. Abramson in his note, Teshuvot ha-Rambam, vol. 3:165.

Hai Gaon explained immersion in the *mikveh* (for nocturnal pollutions?) as being prescribed “because of cleanliness and for Sanctification of God’s Name among the Gentiles”—an allusion to the practice of frequent ablutions among the Muslims. It is likewise reported that Rav Hai barred the taking of interest from Muslims because it is prohibited by their religion, so that the collection of interest by Jews would lead to *Hillul Ha-Shem*. Again, Mordecai Breuer has recently argued that those Jewish societies which are open to the non-Jewish environment and maintain cultural (and not only business) connections with it tend to make greater use than their ghettoized counterparts of the concept of *Hillul Ha-Shem* as an halakhic argument, and even fix certain of their norms accordingly. While Breuer presented this argument in the context of nineteenth century German Neo-Orthodox culture, it may be equally germane to the Judaism of the Geonic period, with its openness to the Muslim-Arab culture. Here, too, one sees how the Jewish world developed unusual sensitivity to the question of its image in the eyes of the non-Jewish world, and even internalized this evaluation. We have in fact seen elsewhere how Maimonides himself also used the concept of *Hillul Ha-Shem* in other, similar, contexts.13

2) Parallel to this we need to refer to the “internal” justification for the *taqqanaḥ*, that is, its purely halakhic basis or, to be more precise, its narrower halakhic basis. Indeed it is interesting that the avoidance of disrespectful conduct during prayer does not play a role; that argument is entirely channeled towards the external impression which is left by conduct during prayer. The “internal” Maimonidean justification is far more objectively halakhic, as if intended as argumentation for those who would not be convinced to accept


such a dramatic change in the ritual by a soft, “spiritual” argument. For this audience, Maimonides’ claim is that the existing situation is one in which Jews do not fulfill their obligation of prayer in the simple, straightforward sense. But Maimonides does not dissemble in making this halakhic argument (as implied by Wieder’s remark). As we shall see, Maimonides repeats here certain motifs which appear elsewhere in his thought; it therefore follows that they are quite authentic.14

In the responsa devoted to this subject, Maimonides argues (and this argument precedes the argument from *Hillul Ha-Shem*):

... And what requires me to do this is that, at the time of the Reader’s Repetition, the people do not pay attention to what he [the Reader] says, but speak with one another and go outside, and he recites a blessing nearly in vain,15 as there is no one to listen to him. And when one who is not lettered sees scholars and the like speaking and spitting at the time of the Reader’s Repetition, as if they are not praying, he does likewise. And it becomes set in the hearts of all the people that prayer is only at the time of the silent [*Amidah*]. (Responsa no. 256: 474–75.)

And with a slightly different emphasis:

... that when the Reader prays aloud, all of those who have already prayed and fulfilled their obligation turn... to idle conversation... And when those who are unlettered see this, they doubtlessly do likewise, thinking that one does not rely upon that which is recited by the Reader; and all those who are unlettered go outside [likewise], even though they have not fulfilled their obligation, so that the reason for which the Reader went down [i.e., to recite the Prayer]... [namely] to discharge the obligation on behalf of the unlettered, becomes nullified. And were the people not to recite the silent prayer at all, so that everyone would recite [only] the one Prayer with the Reader, including *Qedushah*, then

14. Certain problems, such as the concern lest the Reader recite the blessings of the Reader’s Repetition in vain (if it is in fact unnecessary), were raised by Maimonides’ interlocutors, who state that these were widespread arguments for the elimination of part of the double *Amidah*. See also the remarks of the questioner in note 4 above, which suggest that those who leave the synagogue do not fulfill their obligation because they do not hear the Reader’s Repetition.

15. But it is not considered a *berakhot le-battalat* in the literal sense, because the Reader is acting in accordance with the enactment instituted by the Sages. See Maimonides *Responsa* no. 394; but cf. *Responsa* no. 291:548.
those who are unlettered will listen, and everyone will bow down together with him [i.e., the Reader], the people facing the ark, with concentration (kavanah)—and thereby all will fulfill their obligation. . . (Responsa no. 258: 483–484.

These responsa reiterate several motifs which were close to Maimonides’ heart. When the ignorant see that the members of the learned elite disregard the Reader’s Repetition of the ‘Amidah, they will follow suit; but in so doing, they forfeit the only opportunity they have to fulfill their duty to pray, which they ought to discharge through attentive listening to the Reader’s Repetition. Maimonides’ enactment, in its purely halakhic rationale, re-orders the ‘Amidah in the interest of the ignorant. Since the knowledgeable will now remain in the synagogue during the Reader’s Repetition, the ignorant will follow suit.

In a sense, Maimonides here puts into practice his own interpretation of the establishment of a standardized order of prayers, as introduced by Ezra and his colleagues. In that context Maimonides stressed the difficulties faced by the unlettered in prayer, difficulties which led to the adoption of a standardized order of prayer. The knowledgeable elite were required, consequently, to forego their own spontaneous prayer so that all would accept the standardized order put into effect for the benefit of the unlettered. Maimonides’ own taqqanah embodies much the same value structure and technique, as it forces the knowledgeable to accept a further diminution in their mode of prayer—viz., the opportunity to pray a silent ‘Amidah at their own pace and with the possibility of individual variation—so that the ignorant would have no excuse to ignore the Reader’s Repetition through which they discharged their own obligation to pray.

However, we wonder whether this problem alone—without taking into consideration the Hillul Ha-Shem involved in the exposure of the shameful behavior of Jews at prayer to non-Jews—was sufficiently drastic to justify a fundamental change in the prayer. It is difficult to give an unequivocal answer to this question; we do not have the tools to evaluate the seriousness of this problem in Maimonides’ eyes, or the significance of the deviation involved in his enactment, particularly in light of the “preparatory” steps which had already been taken during the Geonic period. (It is interesting to note that Maimonides did not suggest any other alternative to the elimination of the double reading of the ‘Amidah, neither in terms of educating both ignorant and learned to behave differently, nor in terms of the possibility of “forcing” the lettered to remain in their place during the Reader’s Repetition.) In any event, the fact remains that nowhere does Maimonides refer to his enactment without mentioning the rationale of Hillul Hashem, and there are places where he relies upon this reason alone. 17

A further motif that recurs is Maimonides’ conviction that the spiritual and emotional power of prayer is undercut when the community feels that it is forced to participate in matters that are not required by halakhah, and that this consciousness reduces the level of involvement in those prayers. (Indeed, anyone who has noticed what goes on in contemporary synagogues during the recital of the Mi she-berakh or the Reader’s Repetition can testify that nothing has changed in this respect.) Similarly, in his discussion of Piyyut, Maimonides states that, “this is the greatest reason for lack of concentration and why the majority of people light-heartedly allow themselves to converse. . . because they feel that those things which are recited are not required.” 18 In our case, as well, the congregation as a whole does not treat the Reader’s Repetition seriously for a similar reason: those who are knowledgeable see no benefit to be derived from it, because they have already prayed by themselves; on the other hand, the argument that, because the untutored fulfill their obligation to pray by listening to it, the knowledgeable are similarly so required, is unavailing. As for the ignorant: when they see the contempt with which the Reader’s Repetition is treated by the knowledgeable, they conclude that there is no benefit to be derived from the exercise. As a result of this, that portion of the public forfeits its only opportunity to fulfill the obligation of prayer.

One also ought to mention the relationship of these responsa to a subject which has long concerned us—namely, the interrelation of public prayer and the Reader’s Repetition in Maimonides’ eyes. At first glance, our discussion seems to confirm what we have said elsewhere: namely, that in his responsa Maimonides assigns a functional role alone to the Reader’s Repetition, as a means by which the unlettered may discharge their obligation to pray: “so that the reason for which the Reader went down [i.e., to recite the Prayer]. . . [namely,] to discharge the obligation on behalf of the unlettered, becomes nullified.” But our responsa are not entirely identical. In responsa no. 258, Maimonides bases his argument upon the situation of the ignorant person who

16. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Tefillah 1.4. See also Bliistain, Prayer in Maimonidean Halakhah, chap. 2.


Maimonides' enactment was not made in a halakic vacum. One learns from both the elimination of the silent prayer was discussed by Maimonides' own writings, that this problem is in fact the only halakic problem mentioned by hearing the possible innovations in Maimonides' response. This was also alluded to in a responsum no. 256. (And one who is not liter. 12

"pray" Maimonides by that reciting repeats the Community, it is not always done with the approval of the Rabbits; however, those opinions which were not accepted and those folk practices even more than once. Regard to specific prayers or special circumstances, in certain locales, this was not always done. The approval of the scholars contributed to the enactment of a particular atmosphere, which was even introduced in actual practice. True, this was not always done with folk practice, but the opportunity of other folk practices were rejected by the scholars, contributed to the enactment of a particular atmosphere.

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We have no reason to suspect that Maimonides had any doubts or second thoughts about the validity of his enactment. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that the enactment is not mentioned in the *Mishneh Torah*. This is probably because Maimonides saw his enactment as a temporary but necessary deviation—and at that, possibly only a local one—which does not fit the Talmudic arrangement of the enactment.

2. The Impact of Geonic Thought

The leading geonic figure with regard to this question is Rav Hai Gaon, who dealt with three central topics pertinent to our subject:

a) Rav Hai Gaon was once queried by members of a certain community about the enactments of the Afternoon Prayer too late, and were concerned that, were they to recite both the silent prayer and the Reader’s Repetition, the time for prayer would pass. He did not allow them to abolish the silent prayer and to be satisfied with fulfilling their obligation through the Reader’s Repetition enumerated by his father in his own responsa, but one also senses in R. Abraham a certain note of ambivalence, both with regard to the very *taq姜nah* of the Reader’s Repetition and to his father’s innovation:

“What an excellent enactment this is, in light of the weakness of the Exile, so that the ignorant may not forego the recitation and the hearing as one; but how dangerous this enactment is, for the ignorant person may think that, inasmuch as the halakhah is based upon [the principle of], ‘He who hears something is as if he himself has recited it,’ he need not trouble himself to become learned in prayer. Particularly if his father and his teachers neglected his training when he was small, so that he will remain in his state of ignorance and die in his undeveloped intellect. And what my father and teacher of blessed memory introduced has already become widely known. . .”

22. Indeed, R. Abraham describes his father’s enactment as being “the opposite of the Talmudic arrangement” (see note 42 below). In practice, Maimonides does not include his own enactments in his *Mishneh Torah*, evidently considering them to be local ordinances which have no place in such a work. For example, the enactments concerning personal status found in Maimonides, *Responsa* no. 347:624: the *taq姜nah* allowing only those who bring a proof (or who are willing to swear an oath) that they are single to marry enlarges upon what is stated in *Mishneh Torah*, Issurei Bi’ah 21:29, but it is not mentioned there; the enactment prohibiting a foreign man who has married a local woman from leaving the country, even with his wife’s agreement, conflicts with 14. 2 (making everything dependent upon the woman’s will, and not distinguishing between a foreign man and a local one), but is not cited there.

23. *Osar ha-Ge’onim*, Rosh Hashanah, Teshuvot 133:71. One ought to take note of the reason given by R. Hai Gaon: so that the ignorant person may hear the words of the Reader, Rav Hai evidently entertained the idea of permitting such a procedure at one point, but changed his mind. In the final analysis, his advice to that community was that its members pray silently, that the Reader thereafter recite the first three blessings of the Shacharit, that they answer Qaddish, and that he then say Qaddish, “and thus were the rabbis accustomed to doing in the academy.” From the point of view of the Gaon, the most essential Prayer is the silent *Amidah*, as he was speaking here to a community composed entirely of lettered individuals; the importance of the Reader’s Repetition was only in the recitation of Qedushah, and one could forego the rest.

Even though Rav Hai Gaon rejected the request of the community who addressed him—namely, to abolish the silent prayer so that all of them would fulfill their obligation in a situation of duress by hearing the Reader’s Repetition—the very suggestion is worthy of mention. Rav Hai himself agreed that the suggestion was reasonable within the framework of Rabban Gamaliel’s teaching; there were evidently some geonim who issued rulings along the lines of the proposed suggestion. Moreover, Maimonides was numbered among those who permitted this stratagem, and even explicitly mentions it in connection with his enactment:

Likewise, if it happened that the Afternoon Prayer was very late, so that I feared that the sun might set, I would arrange that the Reader recite the Prayer out loud, with Qedushah. And I saw that there is no great loss in this, because he who is unlettered may fulfill his obligation by listening to the prayer, while he who is lettered may pray to himself together with the Reader, word by word.

the latter must pray “with a loud voice,” whereas the personal prayer was specifically instituted to be said silently, as we learn from the prayer of Hannah. This reemphasizes the distinction between the Reader’s Repetition recited aloud, even when it discharges the obligation of the ignorant person, and the prayer of the individual. Perhaps Maimonides’ comments in *Responsa* no. 291 also ought to be understood similarly (see note 15). In that case, we ought to interpret the sense of the description as that, “thus far they would recite the prayer aloud…”—that is, they tried to hear the Reader’s Repetition, which was recited aloud. (I now notice that M. Havaiselet, *ha-Rambam ve-ha-Ge’onim* (Jerusalem, 1967) 172–73, has pursued a line of argument similar to my own in this section.)

26. “And if there are ten, they pray as a congregation (tefillut zibbur), and the Reader goes down before them, and they answer Qaddish and Barukh and Yidelokh, and conclude the prayer…”—Otar ha-Ge’onim, Berakhot, Teshuvot 194:75.
It is true that Maimonides here adopted a model which had been discussed among the scholars of the preceding generation, who even introduced it in practice in certain places. However, he took care to bring it into conformity with the position of the Rabbis and with accepted norms of 

*pesaq:* namely, that only an untutored person may fulfill his obligation by listening to the Reader’s Repetition, whereas a lettered person must pray by himself, silently, word by word with the Reader.

b) The case of an individual who came late to Synagogue and found the public in the middle of the silent prayer: in such a case, the Rabbis were accustomed—thus reports Hai Gaon—to wait until the Reader began his Repetition, and for the individual in question to then recite the Prayer with him silently, word by word, and to answer Qedushah with the congregation. The individual thus both recites his own silent prayer and joins in the prayer of the public, and is even allowed to answer the Qedushah with a quorum of ten, interrupting his own prayer; he must therefore begin his own prayer with that of the Reader. In such a case, we do not forgo the silent prayer, but a solution is found in which the silent prayer of the individual is combined with that of the congregation—the same solution as suggested by Maimonides in his enactment, as has been observed by Rabbi Kapah. It is interesting to note that Rav Hai Gaon did not propose a similar solution in that case in which the public is pressured to pray Minhah on time (case [a] above); for the public as a whole, and *ab initio*, he seems to have preferred the solution he mentioned, which preserves both the silent prayer and the recitation of Qedushah within the Reader’s Repetition—obviously impossible in the case of an individual latecomer.

c) The Musaf Prayer of Rosh Hashanah constituted, as is known, a bone of contention during the geonic period and thereafter. Nearly all of the Babylonian geonim asserted that the distinction between the lettered and the unlettered is not applied in the case of this lengthy prayer, in which “individuals are liable to err and to become confused”

28. *Ozar ha-Ge'onim*, Perushim 88:27. R. Joseph Kapah, *Midrash Torah* (Jerusalem, 1985), 1:229, has already argued that this is the source of Maimonides’ *taqkanah*. However, in this case we are still only concerned with the elimination of the private prayer of one person alone, and not with a change in the order of prayer of the public.

29. In his personal prayer, the individual evidently functions simulaneously as an individual and as a component of the worshipping community. This topic is discussed elsewhere in Bldstein, *Prayer in Maimonidean Halakhah* 165f.


discharges the obligation on behalf of all. However, the geonim disagreed among themselves with regard to the scope of this arrangement. Most available sources—and Rav Natronai Gaon is mentioned as the originator of this approach—indicate that the Reader discharges the individual’s obligation only with regard to those blessings which are unique to Musaf of that day, but that each individual must recite the seven standard blessings for himself, as usual. In practice, the public is left to recite only the seven blessings in their own silent prayer. Rav Hai went so far as to argue that “they did not institute more than seven (blessings) in the silent prayer when one is with the congregation.” However, one source has preserved a lenient opinion of Rav Hai, allowing an individual to recite all nine blessings “if he so wishes.”

On the other hand, there are other, though isolated opinions. It would appear from the remarks of R. Saadaya Gaon that even a knowledgeable individual is permitted to rely upon the Reader’s Repetition in order to fulfill his obligation regarding all of the blessings of Musaf (a similar opinion appears at the end of R. Hai Gaon’s responsum). But R. Saadaya does not seem to have agreed to the elimination of the silent prayer of the congregation; rather, it is our impression that he simply gives those individuals who so desire the option of relying upon the Reader’s prayer. However, from the summary of R. Yitzhak ibn Giat, it would appear that there were “places where it was the custom on Rosh Hashanah for the Reader to go before them, and for the congregation to intend to stand behind him”—that is, to totally abolish the silent prayer. Moreover, “Rabbi Israel taught that one should do so in every prayer” (evidently referring to all of the prayers of Rosh Hashanah, and not to the ‘Amidah of the entire year). In any event, even these authorities do not seem to suggest anywhere that the separate silent prayer be abolished, and that the knowledgeable members of the community silently accompany the Reader’s public Repetition.


31. See, on the entire subject, the material cited in *Ozar ha-Ge'onim*.
the silent prayer entirely. In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides does not at all raise the possibility that in a given community all the literate members will want to rely upon the Reader’s Repetition. True, such a possibility is mentioned in one of his responsa, in which case he does agree to abolish the silent prayer, even though this entails doing away with the period of time set aside for the Reader to prepare his prayer:

And that which you mentioned concerning your enactment [relating to] the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah, this is a good custom, without reproach. And we have seen this custom everywhere we pass. And the Reader fulfills his obligation thereby, even though he did not previously set his prayer in order, just as one who prayed and did not order his prayer, doubtless fulfilled his obligation. And we are not required to arrange it, save for the fear that he might make some error.

While it is true that the Reader’s “arranging” of the prayer is not an absolute precondition for the Reader’s Repetition, it is clear that, according to the Rabbis, this was the original motivation for the introduction of the silent prayer, and as such cannot easily be uprooted. However, Maimonides thought that its elimination was facilitated by the very agreement of the Sages to permit all who are knowledgeable to fulfill their obligation through hearing the Reader’s Repetition; the impression gained is that he did not see it as such a critical institution (“we are not required to arrange it, except. . .”). In this situation, Maimonides approved a local enactment which completely abolishes the interval during which the Reader may arrange his prayer.

Let us summarize the manner in which the statements of the geonim concerning our subject are reflected in Maimonides’ writings, as follows from his responsa. It has become clear to us that a) Maimonides, unlike R. Hai Gaon, thought that the community may, under circumstances of duress, forego the recitation of the silent prayer and suffice with the Reader’s Repetition, accompanied quietly by the more learned element within the community; b) he agreed that an individual who arrives late at the synagogue may silently accompany the Reader’s Repetition, and join the community

III. Maimonides and the Practice in His Own Day

Despite the apparent calm marking Maimonides’ discussion of this subject in the Mishneh Torah, it seems clear that the (actual) reality was far more turbulent. This may be inferred from the other writings of Maimonides, as we have already seen, while the questions which were addressed to him reflect this situation even more strongly. (Albeit, it is difficult to ascertain whether these interlocuters reflect a broad public, nor how typical they are.) In any event, it is quite clear that the double recitation of the Amidah elicited considerable questioning, especially in those times and places in which everyone was competent to pray by himself. The question was not only presented in the abstract; occasionally, concrete steps were taken on this issue.

There are some sources in which we find, as we have noted, that the problem is raised in the abstract (although even there practical conclusions were involved). In one instance, for example, Maimonides was addressed with a question based upon the assumption that, in a community in which everyone knows how to pray, one ought by rights to abolish one of the two Amidah prayers. But the authors of this inquiry found it difficult to decide between the two; ought one to abolish the Reader’s Repetition since, as all of them had discharged their obligation in the silent prayer, it remained superfluous, and the silent prayer is in any event the main prayer? or ought one to retain the Reader’s Repetition, “so that the [public] service not be abolished”?

A lengthy query realistically described the vicissitudes of this question in one particular community. In his responsa, Maimonides reveals that the halakhic reality on this point was in fact quite diverse. The responsa begins by citing a report concerning the practice of some cantors to recite in the recitation of Qedushah; c) in the case of those prayers recited during the High Holy Days, in which even one who is literate fulfills his obligation by listening to the Reader’s Repetition, the silent prayer may be abolished altogether if the community wishes to do so. This flexible approach is not reflected in Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah, with the exception of section (b). The reason for this would seem to be the fact that, in that case, it does not lead to the total abolition of the silent prayer of the community (as in this case only the one particular individual is involved).

33. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Tefillah 8.10. Maimonides, Commentary on the Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 4.9, does not specifically state that this refers to Yom Kippur of Jubilee years (whose blessings are identical with those of Rosh Hashanah), but perhaps this was merely for reasons of brevity.

34. Maimonides, Responsa no. 256:473.
the ‘Amidah aloud twice—once for those who were unable to do so for themselves, and once as the Reader’s Repetition, including Qedusah. This new practice enjoyed a positive response on the part of the ignorant, whereas the knowledgeable found that the Reader’s first recital of the Prayer aloud disturbed them during their own silent devotions, so that they were forced to join the Reader and follow him. In any event, the practice was also demanding on the Reader, who is required to recite the prayer aloud twice in succession. Hence, it was decided to abolish the silent prayer altogether and to be satisfied with the Reader’s Repetition alone. There were those communities which followed this practice only on the Sabbaths and holidays, since on those days the prayer was in any event longer, and this arrangement saved some time; there were others who did so all the time. But the heart of the people was still drawn towards the original innovation of the cantors—namely, a reading of the Prayer aloud for those who are untutored, prior to the “official” Reader’s Repetition.  

In responding to this request, Maimonides advises that only one prayer

36. Maimonides, Responsum no. 258. The question appears on p. 479, and the response on p. 482. In any event, it is not self-evident that these worshippers found lengthy prayer as burdensome as do many modern Jews, True, the interlocutor states: “And he should not do this except... on the Sabbath and Festivals, when they remain in the synagogue until a late hour of the day” (480); however, the point is not that the patience of the worshippers wears thin, but that they wish to reserve a considerable portion of the day for other activity. When Maimonides writes (484): “And let it be orderly and fixed, and the lengthiness of the repetition will be avoided, and we shall remove the Desecration of God’s Name that has spread among the Gentiles,” his intention seems to be that, in the above-mentioned context, anything superfluous in the synagogue service encourages conversation and walking about, increasing Golein thinks—and other scholars concur with him in this—that the typical worshipper was attracted towards that place which could tempt him with a shorter, more rapid prayer; see A Mediterranean Society (Berkeley, Cal.: U. California Pr., 1972) 2:52. Golein bases himself upon the attempts of the members of the Palestinian synagogue in Fostat to attract worshippers with the argument that “our services are brief.” However, the point there seems to be that this enables children, who cannot handle the lengthy Torah lection found in the Babylonian liturgy, to participate in the service: “Go there so that your children may read the portion with the community every Sabbath, and one who wishes to read the Targum may do so, because our services are brief.” This document is published by Golein in his Sidrei Hinakh bi-yemel ha-Ge’onim u-ve-bet ha-Rambam (Jerusalem, 1962) 37–38. It is superfluous to add that medieval public worship was far lengthier—particularly in Oriental communities—than that which is customary in modern congregations. The reason was the large number of hymns, priymut, etc,

be recited, to be joined in by the “experts” as well. However, he stresses that even in other places the Talmudic arrangement had started to show stress under the weight of the problems: “Many people pray only once, with the Qedusah, and that is better and preferable.” Maimonides also tells us that “one of the sages of Edom” (i.e., a certain Ashkenazi scholar) introduced a similar practice, although one may gather from his remarks that this scholar rejected the idea of the double prayer in principle—in which he certainly erred.  

Already in the description found in the present query, one finds that the variegated practice regarding this matter did not contribute to communal unity, and that the frequent changes clearly stemmed from the conflicting pressures of one or another element of the public. Furthermore, there is room for suspicion that the debate was conducted along lines dividing the ignorant from those who knew how to pray, in this respect touching upon a weak point in the communal fabric. We even hear of the “hatred of many people” aroused by the introduction of this very enactment by one of Maimonides’ students. It follows that Maimonides’ concerns about the negative social impact of changes in the arrangements for public worship were not unfounded.

It follows from all that has been said that there was actually no halachic innovation involved in the practice introduced by Maimonides with regard to the ‘Amidah prayer—at least in the sense that he was not the first to advocate the arrangement in question. We have seen that a similar practice was proposed during the Geonic Period (with regard to a public which was under some duress), although it was certainly not accepted by all of the Sages of the period. The arrangement was practiced more broadly during

37. Maimonides, Responsum no. 259-483.
38. Maimonides, Responsum no. 259-483, and see note 5 there. It would appear from the context that the questioner considered any blessing uttered during the Reader’s Repetition in a congregation, all of who members were literate, as an unnecessary blessing—a view strongly rejected by Maimonides, as we have seen. However, Maimonides did draw an analogy between the practice of reciting Qiddush in the synagogue and the Reader’s Repetition in public (Maimonides, Responsum no. 221, 394-95). As is known, the opposite view is also cited in his name: namely, that one who recites Qiddush in a synagogue where no guest are present indeed recites a superfluous blessing. See Responsum. ed. Lichtenberg, p. 53a. May we conclude from this that Maimonides also saw, in principle, a difficulty in the recitation of the Reader’s Repetition in a community of learned people? Or did he distinguish between the force of these two different enactments? Or perhaps one ought to question the reliability of this tradition entirely?
39. The body of the responsa is found at note 41.
Maimonides's time: "Many people worship only once, with the Qedushah alone." Thus, rather than inventing the idea, Maimonides made it customary, requiring that the arrangement in question be utilized. However, we have not found anyone who justified the adoption of the new arrangement by the same arguments used by Maimonides—i.e., that the existing situation caused Hillul Ha-Shem, and that the ignorant themselves fail to fulfill their obligation regarding prayer. The public seems to have been more concerned, perhaps, by the length of the prayer (or is this a modern projection?); there were even questions raised in principle regarding the suitability of the original Talmudic practice for a community, all of whose members are knowledgeable (though the new arrangement was also introduced in mixed communities of both ignorant and learned people). These arguments were of course not accepted by Maimonides, just as his particular sensitivities and qualms were not shared by others.

It is likewise possible to trace the manner in which Maimonides' leadership was brought to bear in a particular community, and the reactions of various portions of that same community.

Question:

May his Excellency also teach us what is his opinion on this: we have already taken trouble that it [i.e., these arrangements for prayer] be arranged and established, and we have aroused thereby the hatred of many people, and they remained our enemies for a long time, until it reached the point that many have adopted [the change]. And we asked of him [i.e., Maimonides] a ruling that we arrange the prayers with Qedushah, rather than as they had arranged it, without Qedushah. And some people objected to this, and we forced them to do so [by virtue of your] ruling. They remained dissatisfied with this for some time, until after many days it became easier for them.

At first this was introduced in the small synagogue, and afterwards it was done in the great one, and everyone relied upon this on all days on which the community was gathered, apart from two days, 'Azeret and Kippur [i.e., Shavuot and Yom Kippur], on which days they continued to recite the silent prayer without Qedushah, until the Reader's Repetition containing the Qerovah [i.e., a certain type of pious], and on Yom Kippur he does the hazanot [i.e., the Qerovah], and on Shavuot he recites the Azerot [i.e., pious] enumerating

the 613 commandments given on Shavuot]. And we were extremely persistent, until the practice was introduced in the small synagogue that on Shavuot they should arrange the prayers with Qedushah, and recite the Azerot after the [conclusion of the] Prayer; and that on Yom Kippur likewise they should arrange all the prayers with Qedushah, and thereafter recite the Qerovah simply, without the Prayer. But in the great synagogue this was prevented by the person who goes before the Ark [i.e., who acts as Reader] for the Additional Prayer on Azeret and who recites the Qerovah on Kippur. And perhaps they will accept the obligation to do this from your Excellency, because they rely upon your words and do not dispute them. And your reward will be double from Heaven, because the scholars among them intend to strengthen this custom, and if they hear the ruling of your Excellency, they will not do so.

Reply:

Let him who confused that which is suitable fear God, and not divide the practice, and let all of you continue according to that which was already instituted. Thus wrote Moshe.

The interlocuter relates the entire story, from which we may learn the process by which Maimonides' ruling came to be accepted, a process which began with coercion and ended in a more voluntary acceptance. The new practice also penetrated gradually in terms of locale: it began in the small synagogue and only "afterwards to the great one," with the sole exceptions of Shavuot and Yom Kippur. The disciple now wishes to impose the new custom in the great synagogue on those days as well, but does not have sufficient religious-social authority to do so. He therefore turns to Maimonides himself: "and perhaps they will accept the obligation to do this from your Excellency, because they rely upon your words and do not dispute them." Indeed, it was precisely the learned element who joined forces with the cantors to prevent the acceptance of Maimonidean practice—and these would certainly respect an explicit ruling from the master.

This description is indicative of a quite complex situation, from which we gain the impression that Maimonides' enactment did not contribute to public peace, to say the least. It is interesting that, despite the fact that the new arrangement shortened the length of the prayer, this community was not quick to accept it; even if it was known and accepted elsewhere, as we

40. Compare Wieder's discussion, from which it follows that Maimonides was the first to challenge the double 'Amidah, and this by virtue of the "external factor," to use his wording.

have seen, it was still an unorthodox practice. Maimonides' answer sounds rather equivocal: "Let him who confused that which is suitable fear God, and not divide the practice, and let all of you continue according to that which was already instituted." Maimonides evidently insists that his enactment by respected, and even threatens those who refuse to do so. On the other hand, his remarks are extremely brief, even curt, so that one senses that he did not wish to elaborate upon this matter. Was he affected by physical exhaustion, or was he perhaps worn out by the controversy which arose in light of his enactment and the attempts to enforce it?\footnote{This impression differs from R. Abraham Maimonides' explicit statement (Sefer ha-Maspiq 196): "And none of the Sages of his generation disagreed with him on this, and they did not accuse him of rejecting the words of the Sages on this matter, even though it was the opposite of Talmudic practice." However, perhaps one may distinguish between popular opposition, based upon the convenience of routine (or of piyyut), and the opposition of scholars (with R. Abraham Maimonides alluding here only to the latter). In any event, perhaps R. Abraham's report reflects his own painful situation, one which rises to the surface in the following comment: "Because there was then no one who could challenge the Rabbis... as those who disagreed with our ordinances and recommendations did in our time."}

IV. The Taqqanah in Relation to Piyyut

The above responsum includes a number of suggestive details concerning the relationship of Maimonides' practice to the recitation of piyyut. The interlocuter relates that the most consistent opponents of the new taqqanah were the cantors, who did not agree to the abolition of the Qerovah on Yom Kippur which it brought about. Indeed, the institution of only one 'Amidah caused the Qerovah and the Azharot to be displaced from their natural setting; and even this was done only in order to preserve them. The reasons for this are clear: with the abolition of the silent prayer and the channeling of the 'Amidah entirely into the Reader's Repetition, the entire public was frozen silently to their places for all the obligatory sections of the Prayer. Those who were lettered recited the silent prayer together with the Reader, while the untutored stood silently listening to the Reader. Hence, nobody was available to join the Reader in reciting the Qerovah.

Although I do not wish to link the two phenomena—i.e., the introduction of the single 'Amidah and the abolition of piyyut—one cannot ignore the situation which was created. With the abolition of the second 'Amidah, the piyyut was removed from the 'Amidah as well, a result which Maimonides certainly viewed positively.

V. Maimonides' Attitude to His Own Enactment

We have already seen that "Maimonides' Enactment" was not really an innovation, but was already known in all of its details from the Geonic period, and was even practiced within a broader context (i.e., not only in situations of duress) in Maimonides' own day—although it certainly did not enjoy widespread support. We have likewise seen that Maimonides was aware of this situation, and even recommended the acceptance of this model, without ascribing the innovation of this arrangement to himself. On the other hand, it would seem that he evaluated those factors which in his view fostered the change—i.e., the desecration of God's Name in non-Jewish eyes, and the non-fulfillment by the unlettered of their obligation to pray—as a situation of "duress," and as such restricted its practice to problematic occasions—i.e., Sabbaths and festivals, when the synagogue was teeming with worshippers. It is nevertheless difficult not to feel Maimonides' inner tension surrounding his presentation of this position:

I would combine them into one prayer only at the Morning and Additional Prayer for Sabbaths and Festivals, because of the large number of people... and we have seen that there is nothing at all lost by this, for one who is not learned will fulfill his obligation by listening to the prayer, and one who is learned may pray quietly by himself together with the Reader, word by word.\footnote{Maimonides, Responsa no. 256:474.}

On the one hand, it is argued that "nothing at all is lost" by the new practice, an expression which automatically prompts the question—if so, why did the Talmudic Rabbis introduce a custom which was so much more complicated? On the other hand, Maimonides stressed that he also introduced this practice only on certain special occasions, in response to particular pressure, and did not do so on an everyday basis. Actually, both of these statements are intended to defend both the innovation and him who introduced it. Perhaps the expression, "nothing at all is lost by this" ought to be understood in a more limited sense—namely, that everyone can fulfill his obligation thereby, as he...
An examination of the responsa in question reveals an additional fact. Maimonides was asked to choose between two possible modes of conduct; i.e., either to eliminate the Reader’s Repetition or, alternatively, to eliminate the silent prayer. On the face of it, Maimonides seems to respond in the negative to the appeal of his interlocutors. However, a careful reading reveals that he related in his responsa to only one of the alternatives—namely, the elimination of the Reader’s Repetition which, as we said, he rejected. Maimonides says nothing at all about the second alternative—namely, the elimination of the silent prayer. It may be, of course, that one response entails

45. The following is the text of his responsa no. 221:393–95:

**Question:**
What does our master say concerning a congregation, all of whose members are learned in prayer: shall the Reader arrange the Prayer for them [i.e., pray aloud], so as not to embarrass him who is unlearned, the main order of prayer being for him; or shall the Reader not recite the Prayer, because it is an unnecessary blessing, as they all have already fulfilled their obligation in the silent prayer; or shall the Reader go down (before the Ark) at the beginning and pray before them, and they will not recite the silent prayer, so that the order of the Prayer not be eliminated; or is it more fitting that they maintain the silent prayer? And if the Repetition is not permitted save in the presence of one who is unlearned, how many must be their number, must there be ten, or [may there be] fewer?

**Answer:**
Since our Sages of blessed memory enacted that the Reader should go down before the ark to fulfill the obligation for those who are not knowledgeable, and according to R. Galfin even to fulfill the obligation for the learned who did not pray privately, the Reader’s Repetition is on no account a superfluous blessing; by reason of the enactment itself—even though in this congregation there is no one who has not fulfilled his obligation. [Similarly] they instituted the recitation of Qedushah in the synagogue [on Friday nights], the main [purpose] of which was because of the guests; yet it became obligatory in all the synagogues, even though there were no guests there. Similarly, they instituted the [abbreviated] repetition of the Evening Prayer on the Sabbath night for the latecomers, so that they might catch up on the prayer; and this is required at all times, even if there was no one there who was not there from the beginning. This is true of any taqkanah made for a given reason. We do not restrict its implementation to situations where the problem it was designed to alleviate is known to exist. Rather, the taqkanah is implemented universally, taking into consideration the possibility that the problem may in fact be present in any situation. This must be understood. For if we did not do so, the words of the Sages would be made a relative matter, and we would have to test each person in the synagogue and establish his level, and only then would the Reader decide whether to repeat the Amidah or not. But this is not how taqkanah function. So wrote Moshe.

44. From a formal viewpoint, this resembles the distinction drawn by Maimonides regarding the authority of the Rabbis to make temporary edicts and enactments overruling the laws of the Torah; see Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:41; and *Mishneh Torah*, Onir 3.
or implies the other; if one is not allowed to do away with the Reader’s Repetition, then there is certainly no justification for abolishing the silent prayer, which is the main prayer. It is for this reason that he did not even bother to say so explicitly.

However, there is another way of understanding Maimonides’ silence with regard to the second alternative presented by his inquirers. It is true that he is not prepared to agree to the total elimination of the silent prayer for a community of knowledgeable people; however, he also knew that there are circumstances under which one may abolish the separate recitation of the silent prayer, and combine it with the Reader’s Repetition. It is true that such a step also constitutes a partial abrogation of the Rabbis’ taqqaanah, but Maimonides is prepared to do so, and even suggests it. This being so, perhaps Maimonides is cautious in his response to his questioners, and did not entirely rule out the second alternative raised, even though he did not explicitly accept it. On the one hand, it was too extreme to be acceptable; on the other hand, it did include components which would be acceptable to Maimonides under conditions of duress. Hence, the prudent path was that of silence.

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ASHKENAZI HASIDISM
AND THE MAIMONIDEAN CONTROVERSY

by

JOSEPH DAN

The development of the Ashkenazi Hasid circles of mystics, pietists, and esoterics is contemporary to the periods in which Maimonides wrote most of his works, in which they were translated, and in which the first controversies about his writings erupted in his last years and after his death (i.e., the second half of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth). In the same period in which Maimonides wrote his Guide of the Perplexed, Rabbi Judah ben Samuel the Pious wrote most of his Sefer Hasidim and works of esoteric theology, and Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah of Worms wrote his great Commentary on the Prayers, the first comprehensive such commentary which has reached us. Most of Rabbi Judah’s “and Rabbi Eleazar’s” works were written when the Guide was being translated into Hebrew.1 When the great controversy about the Guide began in 1232, both Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Eleazar were already dead, and we do not find any reference to that hectic period in the writings of their immediate disciples. It is as if these two major phenomena in Jewish cultural history during the High Middle Ages co-existed without touching, each completely independent and ignorant of the other.

It is true that in Maimonides’ works we do not find any reference or any sign of awareness of the existence of the new trends and ideas in Ashkenazi Jewry. But in the works of the Ashkenazi Hasidim, there is some knowledge of the great rationalistic awakening to their south, in Spain, though mostly in a marginal way. It is the purpose of this paper to assemble and analyze the materials found in Ashkenazi Hasidic works and in works closely related to them, which may enable us to understand the attitude of Ashkenazi thinkers in the late 12th century and the early 13th concerning the cultural developments.

1. Rabbi Judah the Pious died in 1217, and Rabbi Eleazar died circa 1230. See J. Dan, Iyyurin be-Sifrut Hasidai Ashkenaz (Ramat-Gan: Massada, 1975) 44-47.
in Spanish Jewry at that time, and especially toward rationalistic philosophy in general and Maimonidean in particular.

A most interesting connection between Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean controversy occurred in 1232, though neither any Maimonides' followers, nor any Ashkenazi Hasidic writer, was involved in it. This connection is found in the works of a great thinker belonging to the third great Jewish ideological movement which flourished almost exactly at the same period, namely the Kabbalah. Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides), the leader of the Kabbalistic school of Gerona in the first half of the 13th century, and one of the most important leaders of northern Spanish Jewry at the time of the controversy of 1232, was trying to prevent the controversy from assuming dangerous dimensions. As a community leader, rather than as a kabbalist, he wrote his famous epistle "Be-Terem E'eneh Ant Shogeg," which is intended first and foremost to establish common ground between the Maimonidean rationalists on the one hand, and their opponents in Catalonia and the Provence on the other. One of the leaders of the anti-Maimonidean camp was Nahmanides' nephew, Rabbi Jonah Gerondi. In this epistle, which was written early in the controversy, Nahmanides tried not to take any side, to keep himself acceptable to both camps, to hide his own ideological preferences, and to preach unity to the quarreling radicals on the two sides. Circumstances did not allow Nahmanides to hold this neutral position for long, and he was pushed into the anti-Maimonidean camp, when personal attacks against Rabbi Jonah's family, which was his as well, compelled him into a less even-handed position. But in this epistle he was still trying to prove to both camps that their differences were not as great and insurmountable as they believed.

Nahmanides did that by a quotation from a work by Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, Sha'arei ha-Sod, ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah ("The Gates of Esoteric Knowledge, The Unity of God and Faith"), a brief treatise that Rabbi Eleazar wrote as an exoteric pamphlet to preach to the public the true way of faith and, especially, of prayer. The sentences Nahmanides chose to quote demonstrate Rabbi Eleazar's belief in the complete unity of God, His transcendence, and His omnipotence and omniscience. These sentences seemed to prove, according to Nahmanides, that the belief in an abstract, completely spiritual God, without any anthropomorphic characteristics, which the rationalists preaching following Maimonides, was accepted by the most orthodox and traditional segment of Judaism at the time, namely the sages of Ashkenaz. Nahmanides admonishes the quarreling rabbis of Spain and the Provence: if everybody is in agreement about the unity of God, His incorporeality, His omnipotence - what basis is there for such fierce mutual criticism? Why should the study of the Guide be prohibited, if essentially it follows the same ideas as those of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms? In the background of Nahmanides' statement there probably was the knowledge that the opponents of Maimonides had applied for assistance to the rabbis of Northern France and Germany, asking for intervention against the study of Maimonidean writings and joining the ban against them. We do not know exactly who these rabbis were nor their exact response, but it seems that Nahmanides intended to prevent the spread of the controversy to more countries and to show that the basic teachings of Maimonides could be accepted by the Ashkenazi traditionalists.

The quotation Nahmanides used was accurate, and it seems to uphold the thesis that he tried to expound. But only externally. Nahmanides was wrong, knowingly or unknowingly, on two counts: First, the controversy was centered around the basic problem of the means by which religious truth can be achieved—by human reason, or only by tradition and by interpreting hermeneutically the ancient texts, the Bible and the Talmud. The Ashkenazi
Hasidim claimed that all their knowledge, esoteric and otherwise, was acquired by means of tradition, and they fiercely rejected any notion that man can independently arrive at true theological conclusions using his reason. The second point is, that while the quotation Nahmanides used did describe the nature of the supreme Godhead, the Ashkenazi Hasidim additionally believed in, and described in detail, another divine figure, that of the Divine Glory (kavod), which can be revealed to the prophets, and therefore can assume visible attributes. In this way they explained that the anthropomorphic statements concerning God in the Bible, the Talmud and Midrash, and ancient mystical works like the Shīr Qomah, refer to that Divine Glory.7 In their esoteric works, like the one quoted by Nahmanides, they did not dwell on the "secret" of the Divine Glory,8 but in their esoteric works they clearly stated that human prayer can be heard and answered only by this lower, emanated, divine power, and not by the supreme Godhead. Such a concept, of a secondary divine power which is both anthropomorphic and the addressee of prayer, was unacceptable to the Jewish rationalists. While there can be no doubt about the sincerity of Nahmanides and his good intentions, his statement obscures the true nature of the Ashkenazi Hasidic concept of God and the means of achieving theological truth.

On the other hand, we have a text which may have been motivated by similar considerations, that is, trying to gloss over and ignore the deep contradiction between Ashkenazi Hasidic theological speculations and those of the rationalists. This is a section of Rabbi Abraham ben-Rabbi Azriel's, "of the Elders of Bohemia", encyclopaedic commentary on the piyyutim, Arugat ha-Bosem.9 This work is unique in the history of Ashkenazi literature in its comprehensiveness. Usually in the 12th and 13th century Jewish culture in the south of Europe, which was deeply influenced by Arabic culture, and Jewish culture in central Europe, especially in Northern France and the Rhineland, had very little in common, and few writers quoted extensively contemporary, or recent, works written by Jews in the other part of Europe. Arugat ha-Bosem is the most prominent exception. The author had a detailed and extensive acquaintance, unparalleled in his time, of most that was written both in his own cultural realm and in the Spanish one. He was unusually careful, compared to the norms of his time, to quote exactly, by title and author's name, every work he used. And as his commentary was encyclopaedic and anthological in character, preferring quotes to his own words, he presents a comprehensive panorama of Jewish culture in Europe as a whole.

What characterizes the book as whole, is also apparent in its treatment of particular subjects. When the author presented his commentary on a piyyut which starts with the phrase: "His Glory is the sign for his myriads of hosts", he devoted several pages to a detailed exposition of the nature and meaning of the Divine Glory.10 This exposition was made mostly in the form of an anthology, in which the views of several medieval authorities on the subject were presented, among them those of Rav Saadia Gaon whose treatment of the subject served as a starting-point for almost all medieval thinkers, those of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, those of Rabbi Moses Taku (whose views will be discussed below, section IV), and those of Maimonides.11 It seems that Rabbi Abraham ben-Rabbi Azriel did not have access to a Hebrew translation of the Guide: the Maimonidean quotation he used is taken from the Sefer ha-Madda' and deals with God's incorporeality and the interpretation of anthropomorphic descriptions of God contained in the visions of the prophets.12 Maimonides' statement, quoted by the author, of course, completely contradicts, those of the Ashkenazi Hasidic authorities he included in this section. Yet, Rabbi Abraham quotes it without even one word of criticism, nor is there any attempt to reconcile it with those of his direct teachers, Rabbi Judah the Pious and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms whose views he undoubtedly embraced. He presents the Maimonidean quotation as a legitimate position, though one among several, in dealing with the difficult problem of divine revelation.

When was this section written? As E. E. Urbach has shown, Arugat ha-Bosem was concluded circa 1234, that is, during the great controversy.13 Yet, in the book itself there is no reference to this upheaval. The author may have known, as suggested by Urbach, about the earlier controversy in the beginning of the century concerning Maimonides' belief in the

8. The esoteric Ashkenazi Hasidic "Yiḥud Literature" was described by me in Kiyvat Sefer 41 (1966): 533-44 (reprinted in Dan, Iyyunim 72-88).
9. This monumental work was published in a critical edition in four volumes by E.E. Urbach (Jerusalem: Mekizei Nirdamim, 1939-64). The fourth volume contains the editor's detailed introduction.
resurrection. But the contemporary events went unmentioned. There can be
two explanations for this fact. One is, that Rabbi Abraham just did not know
what was happening in Spain and the Provence—something very difficult to
accept when his keen interest in every aspect of Jewish contemporary culture
is taken into account. The second is, that he chose to ignore it, to present a
facade in which every view is legitimate and worth quoting, thus trying to
negate the bitterness and intensity of the controversy - an attitude similar to
that of Nahmanides in his first epistle of 1232.

These two examples seem to prove that not everybody involved in the
traumatic events of 1232–1235 wished to take a clear stand and to devote his
writings to prove that his faction is right and the other is wrong. Some writers
tried to minimize the depth of the conflict and to emphasize the uniting factors
rather than the points of contention, and this includes Ashkenazi writers. But
these efforts could not hide the deep divisions that separated Ashkenazi
Hasidism from Jewish rationalism.

II

The term “philosophy” is not found in the writings of the Ashkenazi
Hasidim, but the term “philosopher” is a common one. It seems that these
writers used this term without the contemporary, medieval connotations, in
which it acquired the meaning of someone who follows the methods, and some
of the contents, of the teachings of the ancient Greek and medieval Arab
rationalists. Rather, they used it in the way in which it is sometimes found in
talmudic and midrashic literature, as a synonym for “a sage”, “a wise person”,
who can be Jewish or not. A detailed treatise written by Rabbi Judah the Pious
around the year 1200 adapted the literary form of an argument between three
scholars about the nature and theological significance of the Divine Glory; this
format was probably adapted through the influence of some vague, inaccurate
knowledge of the format of Rabbi Judah ha-Levi’s Kuzari. The three Jewish
scholars who argue their cases before “an Arab king in Spain” are alternately
called hakhamim, wise men, and filosofim, philosophers; among them is the
one who represents Rabbi Judah’s own views. It is clear that the author of
this work did not find any derogatory element in the term “philosopher.”

15. See, Dan, Iyyunim 31–33.

The Ashkenazi Hasidic writers did have a specific term which represented
for them the evils of rationalistic thinking: “Dialectics”. This term transcribed
into Hebrew, is used in a clearly derogatory manner both in Rabbi Judah
the Pious’ Sefer Hasidim, and in Rabbi Eleazar of Worms’ treatise on
psychology, Hokhmah ha-Nefesh (“The Wisdom of the Soul”). In both cases,
it is impossible to discern from the context what exactly did these writers
mean by this term, nor can we guess exactly from where they did take it (the
Hebrew sources which were available to them did not use this term, and it has
not been established that they had access to Latin philosophical works.)
Rav Saadia Gaon is often quoted, both his Emunat ve-De’ot and his Commentary
on the Book of Creation (Sefer Yeziira). They often rely on Abraham ibn
Ezra’s Commentary on the Bible and his Yesod Mora (“The Foundation
of the Fear of God”), a brief ethical treatise that Ibn Ezra wrote in London.
At least one circle of Ashkenazi mystics used extensively a neo-Platonic source
quoted by Rabbi Abraham bar Hyya in his philosophical study of creation,
Megillat ha-Megalleh. These works were used in the esoteric and theological
works of the Ashkenazi Hasidim in an unqualified manner except, in two
cases, in which they refuse to accept Rav Saadia’s views concerning the
created nature of the Divine Glory, and his un-messianic understanding of
the phrase in the morning’s prayer, “Or Hadash al Ziyyon Ta’ir.” How can
we regard their objection to rationalism as total when such works are regarded
as authoritative sources?

The answer is, that the Ashkenazi Hasidic teachers did not regard these

16. Sefer Hasidim, eds. J. Wustinetzky and J. Freimann (Frankfurt a/M, 1924) section 752.
17. Hokhmah ha-Nefesh (Lvov, 1876) 6b.
18. J. Baez, in his ground-breaking study of Ashkenazi Hasidism (Zion 3 [1938]: 1–50),
suggested that these scholars knew Latin and used some Christian theological texts. As far as
I know, no supportive evidence to this thesis was presented in the more than fifty years that
passed since then. While G. Vajda pointed out some interesting parallels between the works of
Rabbi Elhanan ben Yaqar of London and some Latin theological sources, these are parallels
rather than positive proof of first-hand knowledge of Christian Latin sources. See Vajda, “De
quelques infiltrations chrétiennes dans l’œuvre d’un auteur anglo-Juif du XIIIe siècle,” Archives
19. Rabbi Judah the Pious declares emphatically that the concept of revelation adapted by
him contradicts that of Rav Saadia. See Dan, Iyyunim 154:
20. This section was quoted by me from the Jerusalem manuscript 8 3296. See “On the
Historical Personality of Rabbi Judah ha-Hasid,” Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry, Studies
Devoted to the Memory of H.H. Ben-Sasson, eds. M. Ben-Sasson, R. Bonfil, J.R. Hacker,
Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel, 1989) 395, note 17, [Hebrew].
works as ones of rationalistic investigation, but rather as compilations of reliable traditions transmitted by these writers. Rabbi Judah Ibn Tibbon, but the early, probably 11th-century, poetical paraphrase of both his \textit{Emunot ve-De\'ot} and the Commentary on \textit{Sefer Yezirah}. This paraphrase presents Saadia’s delusions as if they were poetic, visionary declarations, based not on reason but on tradition and spiritual experience. The Ashkenazi Hasidic attitude towards these works proves that they could be read in the Middle Ages, in this paraphrase, without realizing that they are philosophical, rationalistic treatises. Abraham Ibn Ezra was quoted by Rabbi Eleazar of Worms as \textit{Avraham ha-Hozeh}, Abraham the Visionary, expressing the belief that his knowledge was not acquired by human investigation but by divine revelation. Concerning Abraham bar Hiyya, it is not clear whether they knew who he was; only his title as “chief of police” in Arabic was known to them in a corrupt manner, which they probably did not understand. The neo-Platonic source quoted by Bar Hiyya, which describes the five spiritual worlds, was integrated by these mystics into a pseudepigraphic text, the Sarita of Joseph ben Uzziel, which they described not only as a talmudic source, but as one containing the teachings of the prophet Jeremiah and his “son” Ben Sira (Eclesiasticus), that is, originating directly from biblical times. They certainly had no notion of its philosophical character.

At the turn of the 13th century, a reader of Hebrew could study the works of Jewish philosophers in this language without being exposed to the essence of philosophical attitude—the method, the system of proving logically one’s conclusions. This includes, of course, also Maimonides’ \textit{Sefer ha-Madda}, in which the author’s views are presented as norms rather than as results of logical, methodical investigation. Thus, verses which Saadia used to illustrate his conclusions were regarded by the Hasidim as proof-texts in the midrashic manner. These medieval sources which contributed in a most meaningful manner to the development of the theology of the various Ashkenazi Hasidic circles, were neither regarded as rationalistic ones, nor did they convey any rationalistic message in the way that the Hasidim received and used these sources.

It should be pointed out, that there was no similarity between the way Jewish scholars in Spain treated Arabic culture in general and philosophy in particular, and the way the Ashkenazi scholars treated the Latin culture which flourished around them. Arabic was regarded by the Jews as the language of a civilization and not of a religion (much as English is regarded today), in which ideas can be expressed which represent any religion or even secular ideas. The Geonim started to write halachic monographs in Arabic, beginning with the 10th century at the latest. Latin, on the other hand, was regarded by Ashkenazi Jews as the language of the Church, everything expressed in it being Christian in nature. The “neutral” language, the every-day one, was the vernacular, German or French, which, at that time, was not extensively used for theological and philosophical speculation. Thus the Jews in Central Europe were not exposed, as were their brothers in the South, to the impact of philosophy from their immediate neighbors, and they did not have any incentive to study Latin. This does not mean that scattered ideas did not reach them, and that some basic neo-Platonic attitudes which prevailed among the intellectuals around them were not used sometimes in their works. But again, the essence of philosophy is the systematic use of logical methods, and to this they did not have any access, and if they did—they regarded it as the “dialectics” which are forbidden and heretical.

Ashkenazi Hasidism, at the turn of the century, therefore can be described as circles of Jewish intellectuals who relied exclusively on tradition and hermeneutics in order to develop their systems of thought. They received and integrated into their speculations several philosophical sources, 

\begin{itemize}
\item 22. Such a statement concerning “Or HaDaih” is included in the same passage. Rabbi Judah objected to the possibility that Rav Saadia was mistaken concerning this problem because “Rav Saadia had great knowledge of esoteric traditions”.
\item 24. \textit{Hokhmot ha-Nefesh}, 31c.
\item 25. In the printed version of the Ashkenazi commentary on \textit{Sefer Yezira} which is known as the “pseudo-Saadia”, this theory is quoted from a \textit{Sefer Zoh ve-Ashur}. Needless to say, there is no such book. This is a corruption of Abraham bar Hiyya’s Arabic title, Sahib al-Shurtah (Chief of Police) See the next note.
\item 28. Rabbi Eleazar, for instance, identifies matter and evil in a neo-Platonic manner in his commentary on \textit{Sefer Yezirah}. See Dan, \textit{Esoteric Theology} 98–100.
\end{itemize}
without being aware of their original nature, and accepting them as treasuries of Jewish traditions or divine revelations to great sages.

III

While there is no doubt concerning the thorough opposition of the Ashkenazi Hasidim to the methods and basic concepts of Jewish philosophy, it should be pointed out that they did not oppose systematically ideas and attitudes which characterize the religious philosophy of the rationalists. We do find in their writings, on several occasions, some of the most typical concepts of Jewish philosophy which are either treated tolerantly as legitimate possibilities or are accepted without hesitation. Two examples can demonstrate this: one is concerned with their favorite subject of speculation—divine revelation, and the other with divine providence.

Rabbi Judah the Pious dedicated a part of a treatise to a fictional description of a religious debate of three scholars before an Arab king in Spain, a debate at the end of which the king converted to Judaism with all his people.29 The three scholars are described as Jews, debating among themselves the problems connected with the revelation to the prophets. The positions adopted by the three scholars are quite clear and distinct. One—described as "the third scholar" by Rabbi Judah—follows the concept of revelation as presented in Saadia Gaon's Emunot ve-De'ot, namely, that what the prophets actually saw in their visions and described as God himself is a created being, the Glory (Kavod), a special, supreme angel created specifically for this purpose.30 The appearance of the Glory before the eyes of the prophet is regarded as a proof of the divine source and the veracity of the content of the prophecy. Revelation, according to this position, is indeed a natural phenomenon in which one created being, the Kavod, is envisioned by another, the prophet.

The second position, presented by "the first scholar", is that the whole process of divine revelation is a psychological one, directed by God, who makes the visions appear in the mind of the prophet without anything actually happening in the external world. Some elements of this position can be found in the talmudic-midrashic tradition, and it is found in the works of some early medieval Jewish thinkers, such as Rav Hai Gaon, before it became central in the schools of the Jewish rationalists. The biblical and talmudic descriptions of the appearances of God before the prophets should not, according to this view, be taken literally; they never happened. They only reflect the prophet's imagination, directed by God, and the whole process is described by Rabbi Judah as ahizat einayim, an illusory phenomenon.

The third position, attributed by Rabbi Judah to "the second scholar", is the one adapted by most of the Ashkenazi Hasidic thinkers: Revelation is a process by which an emanated divine power, the Divine Glory, is envisioned by the prophet. This view is supported by Rabbi Judah's interpretation of Abraham ibn Ezra's commentary on Moses' vision of the Glory in Exodus 33.31 According to this interpretation, the Glory, which is emanated from God and is of His essence, has a supreme, upper aspect which cannot be seen by man, while its lower aspect is the subject of prophetic vision. Thus, what the prophets describes is indeed a divine revelation, though not God Himself is its subject but the lower aspect of His emanated Divine Glory.

These three views are presented by Rabbi Judah, in a treatise probably written about the turn of the 13th century, as completely legitimate and acceptable within Judaism, though two of them are wrong and only one is true. When criticizing the two rejected views he does not complain of their heretical nature; he insists that they do not do justice to the biblical verses. There is no acrimony in this rejection; the "second scholar's" view is accepted because it is better, not because the others are so bad.

A religious school which calmly debates the various merits and demerits of three such views, which can be described as Saadian, Maimonidean and Ibn Ezraian, cannot be described as categorically inimical to all aspects of Jewish rationalism. It is not the actual concepts of the Jewish philosophers which were opposed by the Ashkenazi Hasidim, but their methodology: the reliance on human reasoning, rather than on tradition and exegesis of ancient texts.

Rabbi Judah the Pious and his school described divine providence in great detail in their works. The concept of God's supervision of every earthly detail by means of hordes of angels constituting an enormous bureaucracy, which decides everything, from marriage to every fleeting thought and intention, is unparalleled in the history of Jewish religious thought.32 Yet,

29. A detailed analysis of this discussion is presented in Dan, Esoteric Theology 129-43.
The text was printed in Dan, lyyanim 159-60.
31. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Exodus 33:23. The section is also included, in a more expanded form, in Ibn Ezra, Yesod Mora, ed. S. Stern (Prague, 1933) chap. 12.
32. An example of this concept of divine providence is found in Rabbi Judah the Pious'
very near to the time and place in which these works were written, another Ashkenazi scholar, the anonymous author of the Sefer ha-Hayyim (circa 1200), presented a radically different view. When confronting the problem of the existence of imperfection, sin and evil in the created world, he insisted that divine providence supplies only the general rules, not the individual details. According to this author, who was unaware of the works of Rabbi Judah and the Kalonimide school, God only gave the world the basic laws by which it is governed, but the actual details of the nature and fate of every phenomenon is not directed by divine providence; though he does not state so clearly, it seems that he regards these details as the product of earthly accident, which should not reflect on the nature and powers of the Creator. In many other respects the author of the Sefer ha-Hayyim is surprisingly close to the Kalonimide school, and the works of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra are among the major sources of his ideas. But concerning the problem of imperfection and evil, he adapted a position which is diametrically opposed to that of Rabbi Judah the Pious and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, and is close to concepts held by several Jewish rationalists in explaining the imperfections in the created worlds.

Ashkenazi Hasidism should not, therefore, be regarded as expressing a direct opposition to every theological idea which is characteristic of Jewish philosophical rationalism in the Middle Ages. In this, Nahmanides was quite correct in pointing out some basic similarities in the attitudes of both schools of thought. This becomes evident when we analyze the most comprehensive attack on rationalistic views expressed by a medieval Ashkenazi thinker, that of Rabbi Moses Taku; his attack on rationalism was turned into an attack against Ashkenazi Hasidism as well.

IV

Rabbi Moses Taku wrote his polemical work against the theologians of his time and previous generations around the year 1220, without knowing anything about the beginnings of the controversies concerning Maimonidean rationalism. He may have had some knowledge of the polemical exchange concerning the belief in the resurrection of the dead, though this is not certain. It is quite clear, however, that he had no knowledge of the existence of the Guide of the Perplexed, nor of Maimonides' centrality among Jewish rationalists. It may be stated that even though he wrote his treatise fifty years later, his world-view, concerning Jewish culture in Southern Europe was that of 1170 or so (and even that, only concerning works which were extant in Hebrew at that time; of works in Arabic he knew nothing). His knowledge concerning developments in the Ashkenazi cultural realm was somewhat more up to date, but still surprisingly incomplete.

Rabbi Moses ben Hisdai Taku was a well-known figure in the schools of the Tosafists, and many details concerning his life and works were analyzed by E.E. Urbach. Most of his only non-halachic treatise, Kitav Tamim, is probably lost, and only one section of it has survived in one manuscript in Paris. It was first published by R. Kirchheim in 1860 and re-published in a facsimile edition recently. It seems that this fragment contains less than one-third of the complete work. Judging by the number of references to it and quotations from it in later generations, it hardly had any impact; it seems to represent an isolated, inconsequential episode in the history of Jewish thought in the Middle Ages. This appears to be due to three reasons: The first is, that it was written a decade or so before the great controversy of 1232; second, it lost some of its thrust by including Ashkenazi Hasidim and rationalists in one camp, and fiercely criticizing them as if they were one; and third, this episode reflects the peculiar Ashkenazi Hasidic attitude towards ideological conflicts. Before explaining these points, which are, in fact, an explanation of the relative passivity of Ashkenazi thinkers in the Maimonidean controversy in the 13th century, the unique theological positions of Rabbi Moses Taku should be briefly described.

According to Kitav Tamim, three post-biblical theological catastrophies occurred in Judaism, which produced three great schools of heretics: one was

Sefer Mala'akhim, which I published from manuscript Oxford 1567 in Daat 2-3 (1978-79): 99-120.
34. See above, note 14.
36. Oser Nechmad 3 (Vienne, 1860): 54-99
37. Kitav Tamim, manuscript Paris H711, ed. and introd., J. Dan, Jerusalem: Dinur Center for Jewish History, 1987.)
led by Jesus Christ and produced Christianity, the second was led by Anan and produced Karaism, and the third is expressed in Emetot ve-Deot and the Commentary on the Sefer Yeẓirah by Saadia Gaon. There is a hint in the fragment of the work in our possession that the attribution of these works to Saadia is, according to Taku, pseudepigraphical,38 thus saving the Gaon of Sura from joining the figures of Jesus and Anan as arch-heretics; it is not clear whether Rabbi Moses developed this excuse for Saadia systematically and actually based his polemics on it. In most cases, he seems to be attacking Saadia without any reservation. According to Rabbi Moses, while speculative works of Saadia are the foundation of this new heresy, the followers of this new danger to orthodox Judaism are: Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (who is erroneously described, as the author of the above-mentioned Sefer ha-Ḥayyim), Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, of whose writings he is familiar only with the Sefer ha-Madda; the author or authors of the Shir ha-Yihud, and Rabbi Judah the Pious (it seems that Taku was familiar with the treatise in which the controversy between the three scholars concerning revelation was presented, and he referred to it as “Sefer ha-Kavod”, “The Book of Divine Glory”). Rabbi Eleazar of Worms was not mentioned by name, but there is a reference to “books from Worms”, which may indicate Rabbi Eleazar’s works.39 Rabbi Moses Taku states emphatically that all these writers based their views on the Saadian works, which are the source of all evil. This radical opposition to all theological speculation earned Rabbi Moses Taku, in Gershon Scholem’s eyes, the title of one of the two truly reactionary Jewish writers of the Middle Ages.40

Taku’s criticism is concentrated on attacking two basic ideas which, according to him, characterize the ideas of this new heretical school: Divine revelation and divine immanence. He insists on the literal acceptance of the prophets’ descriptions of their visions as well as the anthropomorphic references to God in talmudic-midrashic literature. He does not do so because of his belief in the literal veracity of these descriptions; he only insists that they represent the maximum that can be conveyed concerning God’s essence and appearance, and that any further inquiry cannot lead to valid conclusions. God chose to reveal to us in the scriptures whatever is found in them: man should be satisfied with that, and ask no more questions. It is not that Rabbi Moses Taku believed in an anthropomorphic God; most probably, he did not. It is a fact that Taku is the only Ashkenazi writer in this period to deny completely the authenticity of the Shī‘ur Qomah, even though this anthropomorphic treatise is traditionally attributed to the great sages of the Mishnah, Rabbi Akibah and Rabbi Ishmael.41 He confidently declares that there are many books that the heretics have forged, and that they are recognizable by being different from what is clearly found in the Talmud and the classical Midrash. He could, because of his great self-confidence as an authentic speaker for talmudic tradition, discern between what is acceptable and what is not in that tradition, something that even Rav Saadia could not afford, and therefore, he was certain that the Shī‘ur Qomah is a pseudepigraphic forgery, he had to offer an explanation to it as if it were authentic rabbinic tradition.42 Rabbi Moses Taku denied the normative power of anything which is not found in the center of the talmudic tradition, and did not hesitate to delineate the boundaries of this tradition according to his own preferences. He did not oppose one or the other Ashkenazi Hasidic solution to the problems of prophetic revelation and anthropomorphic descriptions; he denied the necessity to ponder these problems and opposed their investigation by any method whatsoever.

The second basic idea which Rabbi Moses Taku opposed fiercely was the concept of divine immanence, which was developed by the various circles of the Ashkenazi Hasidim following some of Saadia’s statements. God, while being completely transcendent, is at the same time present within everything in the cosmos in a uniform way, because nothing can stop him or deny his

38. Ṭazar Nechmad 3:79 (ms. p. 26a): “Because Rav Saadia, if Sefer ha-Emunot is his, because it is not signed”. See J. Dan, ed., Kav Tanim, Introduction 23 note 70.
41. Taku writes (p. 3a-b): “And so it is in the Shī‘ur Komah, which is written in the Alpha Beta of Rabbi Akibah, it has no end and no measure, if it [the treatise] is reliable, because it is not found in our Talmud or in the Jerusalem Talmud or in the great midrashim. For there are books that the heretics have forged in order to mislead the world, like the Perek Shira, and it is written in its end [of the Shī‘ur Komah] that anyone who studies it always will earn this and that and this or that scholar guarantees it. And what is written in the book the names of the limbs [of the divine figure in the Shī‘ur Komah], the palm of His right hand its name is such and of the left its name is such... One should not believe this, for they say it only to strengthen the impact of their words. And we have heard that Anan the heretic and his followers used to write treatises of heresy and lies and used to bury them in the ground and later they unearthed them and claimed that they have found ancient books”.
42. Saadia’s statement concerning the Shī‘ur Qomah is quoted by Rabbi Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona in his Commentary on Sefer Yeẓirah, ed. S.Z.H. Halberstamm (Mekizei Nirdamim, Berlin, 1885) 21.
immanence in it. This raises the problem of divine presence within evil, sin and filth. Saadia’s answer to that was, that God’s immanence is not harmed by evil or filth in the same way that the sun’s light is not diminished or defiled by such elements. This answer was quoted in the Shir ha-Yihud and other Ashkenazi Hasidic works. Taku could not tolerate the notion of God’s presence in the baser layers of cosmic existence, and saw in such statements heretical attacks on God’s complete purity and transcendence. He ridiculed in several sections of Ktov Tanim the religious attitude of people who can believe that God can be found in filth and sinfulness, but did not offer an alternative conception of the nature of divine presence within the created world. Again, his only demand was that whatever God chose to reveal to us in Scriptures and the Talmud should be understood literally, and any questions regarding such matters should not be analyzed and discussed. Tradition should not be required to present answers to every question raised by curious minds, and it has no obligation to present a sustained, coherent and unambiguous system of thought. We should be thankful for the little that is revealed to us, and ask for nothing more.

Rabbi Moses Taku’s concept of the role of Maimonides in his time is best expressed by his statement, that “the idle chatter of Moses ben Maimon is not even his own”; he is only following the “Book of Beliefs”, i.e., Saadia, who was the first to ponder the essence of the divine.44 Anyone aware of the existence of the Guide of the Perplexed could not make such a statement, and after the great upheaval of 1232 such a view could never have been expressed. Taku’s polemics reflect an intellectual realm in which the most important and meaningful events of the first third of the 13th century either did not yet occur or were completely unknown.

V

Not all the facts concerning the participation of Ashkenazi scholars in the events of 1232–1235 and later have been clarified, and some work has still to be done in order to glean from the existing material a balanced historical picture of the role of Ashkenazi Hasidism in the great controversy concerning Maimonidean rationalism. Still, it is quite clear that these pietists did not show during this debate the sustained anti-Maimonidean activity that some Rabbis in the south expected of them; they did not rise as one man to completely deny and denounce Maimonides and his teachings. There were, undoubtedly, many reasons for this phenomenon, but the survey presented can elucidate at least some of them.

Anti-rationalist treatises were not a new phenomenon to the Ashkenazi scholars in 1232; Rabbi Moses Taku preceded them by a decade or more. The worst denunciations of the teachings of Maimonides by his opponents in Provence and Northern Spain seemed mild when compared to Taku’s comparison between Saadia and Jesus and Anan. Any description of the religious dangers inherent in the Guide of the Perplexed made in 1232 would fall short of Taku’s description of Sefer ha-Emunot as the root of all evil in contemporary Judaism. Any Ashkenazi scholar who read Ktov Tanim a decade earlier could not be overwhelmed by the cries of danger of Maimonides’s opponents in 1232–1235, who claimed, like Taku, that the Guide represents a Jewish heresy.

More meaningful than that is the fact that Taku’s polemics included both Maimonides and Rabbi Judah the Pious, and described them together as partners to the “new religion” threatening the foundations of traditional Judaism. It is very hard to imagine that Taku’s warning was taken seriously by scholars who were familiar with the personality and the teachings of Rabbi Samuel the Pious, Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, who upheld strict orthodoxy in any halakhic or ethical problem. Sefer Hasidim, the book which expressed Ashkenazi Hasidic every-day legal and ethical behaviour, is one of the most orthodox religious works written in the Middle Ages. To describe the school which produced it as religiously dangerous, and to equate it with the dangers of Christianity or Karaimism, was as absurd then as it is now. One may imagine that the new accusations of 1232 were accepted with an element of skepticism by some Ashkenazi rabbis of the time who were exposed to Taku’s ideas.

We do not have any historical information concerning the reception that Ktov Tanim had in Germany immediately after its publication. One could expect a controversy to arise, and that some scholars, including the leaders of Ashkenazi Hasidism, would debate and refute Taku’s accusations. It is quite certain that at least several of Rabbi Eleazar of Worm’s books which have

43. The description of the divine immanence is found especially in the section entitled “Tuesday” in the division of the poem according to the days of the week, found in later editions. See my Introduction to the Magnes Press edition of the “Shir ha-Yihud,” Jerusalem 1982.
reached us were written after *Ktav Tamim* was published (Rabbi Eleazar died circa 1230), yet there is no reference in his writings to Rabbi Moses Taku or his ideas in any way. I could not find even one passage which could be viewed as an indirect refutation of any of Taku's arguments. There can be no doubt that in Rabbi Eleazar’s circle Taku’s book was known, because his direct disciple, Rabbi Abraham ben-Rabbi Azriel, the author of *Arugat ha-Bosem*, the extensive commentary on the piyyutim, quotes Taku often; his book was written, as Urbach has shown, around the year 1234. Rabbi Abraham’s quotations from *Ktav Tamim* do not reflect in any way the radical nature of the controversy presented in the book. He uses that text calmly as he does every other text in this encyclopaedic work, including Saadia, Maimonides and the Ashkenazi Hasidic leaders. If we had to rely on *Arugat ha-Bosem*, we would never guess that Rabbi Moses Taku was a bitter opponent of Rabbi Abraham’s teacher and his teacher’s teacher, Rabbi Judah the Pious.

The only other Ashkenazi Hasidic source which mentions *Ktav Tamim* is *Sefer ha-Navon*, which is an anonymous commentary on Shema’ Yisra’el and on *Shi’ur Qomah*. The author often quotes Saadia’s *Sefer ha-Emunot*, but not directly; it seems that he did not possess a copy of this work, so he quotes the Babylonian Gaon as “In *Sefer ha-Emunot in Sefer ha-Tamim*”. Having no way to use Saadia’s work directly, the author quotes him from the work of his arch-opponent, *Ktav Tamim*. He does so without any hint at the nature of that work, and no word of polemics against Rabbi Moses Taku, can be found in this treatise. This despite the fact that Taku who not only opposed Saadia, but also denied the authenticity of *Shi’ur Qomah*—the subject of his work.

These three very loud silences, those of Rabbi Eleazar, of Rabbi Abraham ben-Rabbi Azriel and of the author of *Sefer ha-Navon*, concerning the arguments directed against their ideas and sources by Rabbi Moses Taku, cannot be regarded as accidental. It is as if the scholars of the age, headed by the Ashkenazi Hasidic teachers, agreed to disregard and ignore the fierce polemics of *Ktav Tamim*. They showed no disrespect to Rabbi Moses Taku, and *Arugat ha-Bosem* quotes him in matters of halachah and theology as a source equal to all others used to elucidate a given problem. Thus, they avoided a “pre-controversy” concerning the impact of rationalism on traditional Judaism which could have erupted in the Rhineland a few years before the great controversy began in the Provence and Northern Spain. It is probable that when that great event occurred, there were at least some Ashkenazi scholars who decided that the attitude adapted concerning *Ktav Tamim* was suitable also to the appearance of the Hebrew translation of the Guide of the Perplexed and the epistles of its opponents.

We do not know whether Nahmanides’s epistle, which tried to show the closeness of some rationalistic ideas to those of the Ashkenazi Hasidism was known to the scholars in Germany during the period of the great controversy, and if it was—whether it had any effect. But it seems probable that the arguments against Maimonides which did reach them had less than maximum effect, because they had been exposed, a few years earlier, to a much stronger version of an anti-rationalistic polemic. The same work, *Arugat ha-Bosem*, which was written during the years in which the conflict raged in Southern Europe, ignored both the Taku episode and the Maimonidean controversy. This may be understood as at least a partial agreement with Nahmanides’ argument: an attack against the Maimonideans could be construed, following Taku’s polemics, as an attack against Ashkenazi Hasidism itself.

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45. This treatise was published by me in *Kobez Al Yad*, vol. 16, part 1 (Jerusalem, 1966) 199-223; it was reprinted in Dan, *Iyunim* 112-33.
MAIMONIDES ON
METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE

by

HERBERT A. DAVIDSON

It would surely appear the better, indeed the obligatory, course to controvert even what touches us closely for the sake of upholding the truth, especially since we are lovers of wisdom. For while both [Plato and the truth] are dear, it is a sacred duty to give preference to the truth. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1.6.1096a, 14-17.

1. Introduction.

Maimonides’ statement about intentional contradictions in the Guide—the declaration that, as he puts it, different parts of the book, intentionally treat matters from the standpoint of propositions which contradict each other, all with the purpose of keeping unenlightened readers in the dark—has been a Pandora’s box and a treasure trove. The statement has been a Pandora’s box for those medieval and modern readers who believe that interpreters combing the Guide for its esoteric doctrines have distorted Maimonides’ genuine beliefs. The statement has been a treasure trove for academics, far more having been published on the subject of Maimonides’ esotericism, over the past few decades, than on any other subject in medieval Jewish philosophy.

Since Maimonides openly announces that the Guide contains intentional contradictions, which serve to hide his true opinion, they surely must be there. Divine providence would appear to be an obvious instance. On the one hand, the Guide uses language indicating that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked; on the other, it asserts that individual men enjoy providence thanks exclusively to the development of their intellect. The contradiction is palpable,

Advocacy of the more comprehensive approach has come in two waves, as it were, and in both instances, “an agenda,” to use modern parlance, was at work. The first wave comprised medieval Averroists, notably, Isaac Albalag. Joseph Kaspi, and Moses Narboni, who wished to bring one of their heroes, Maimonides, as close as they could to their other hero, Averroes. As part of the enterprise, they attributed to Maimonides a secret belief in the eternity of the world.9 The second wave was initiated in this century by Leo Strauss. Strauss was both eccentric in his own views and acutely engaged. Early in his career, he became exercised by what he called the “conflict” between “enlightenment” and “orthodoxy,” and he was able to transcend the stalemate between the two warring abstractions, at least to his own satisfaction, by recourse to an alternative form of enlightenment—by recourse to “medieval enlightenment, the enlightenment of Maimonides.” 10 In Strauss’s judgment, esotericism lay at the heart of medieval enlightenment11 and, in particular, at the heart of Maimonides’s philosophy.12 The esoteric motif, deemed by him to be pivotal to the medieval enlightenment which he prized, so enchanted Strauss that he made esotericism a key to the history of all premodern philosophy.13 He even tried his own

3. Z. Diesendruck, “Samuel and Moses Ibn Tibbon on Maimonides’ Theory of Providence,” HUCA 9 (1936). Ibn Tibbon, Commentary on Ecclesiastes, Parma, Hebrew MS 272 (2182) 6b (my pagination), accepted Maimonides’ refutations of arguments for eternity at face value: “[Maimonides] showed that there is no apodictic demonstration for eternity and all the philosophers’ arguments for eternity can be refuted.”

4. W. Dunphy, “Maimonides’ Not-So-Secret Position on Creation,” Moses Maimonides and his Time, ed. E. Ormsby (Washington, 1989) 151-172, criticizes an article of mine, as well as Munk’s translation of the Guide (although Dunphy does not read Arabic) and an article of L.A. Wolfson. His criticisms rest on the mistaken premise that the term creation designates for Maimonides, as it does for Aquinas, eternal creation, that is, the thesis that God eternally and continually brings the world into existence.

hand at esoteric writing. Students of medieval Jewish philosophy who evinced no interest in Strauss’s personal ideology or in his peculiar conception of the history of philosophy have embraced his guidelines for interpreting Maimonides, and it is they who popularized the comprehensive approach to Maimonides’ esotericism in recent years. They read Maimonides as having secretly acknowledged the eternity of the world and as having accepted the implications that eternity carries for the nature of God. In our day, the dean of the proponents of the comprehensive approach to Maimonides’ esotericism was Shlomo Pines. Partly, perhaps, because repetition palls, Pines, in the last decade of his life, advanced a startling new thesis. The Guide for the Perplexed openly places limits on human knowledge in two areas, in regard to the supernal incorporeal beings, and in regard to the celestial bodies. It maintains, for example, that whereas the existence of God is demonstrable, the essence of God is unknowable to man. And it further maintains that while man can attain certainty regarding aspects of the translunar portion of the material universe, a comprehensive scientific account of the translunar region lies beyond the human intellect’s reach. In the first of the two instances, Maimonides is expressing a medieval topos, and in the second he would appear to be reflecting the spirit of the conservative Islamic thinker Ghazâli, whose work he knew and used. In Pines’ new thesis, set forth in a series of articles, Maimonides went beyond fixing partial limits upon human knowledge of the incorporeal realm and translunar corporeal realm, and his inspiration did not come from the conservative end of the medieval philosophic spectrum. Maimonides, in Pines’ thesis, rejected the possibility of any nomenclatural scientific knowledge. That is to say, he rejected both the possibility of metaphysical knowledge in the sense of knowledge of the incorporeal realm, and also the possibility of any genuine knowledge of the celestial region. His esoteric doctrine turns out to be not a form of deism in the Aristotelian mode, as the comprehensive approach to his esotericism had depicted it, and as Pines himself had hitherto held, but rather a critique of the very possibility of nomenclatural knowledge, hence a critique of any genuine knowledge at all about God. Maimonides was concealing a “critical (in the Kantian sense) attitude," to quote Pines. From having been read as a crypto-Aristotelian, a crypto-Averroist, or a crypto-Straussian, Maimonides is now read as a crypto-Kantian.

The thesis is startling because on numerous occasions, starting with the first chapter and ending with the last, Maimonides’ Guide defines the human goal in life as mastering “divine science,” that is, the science of metaphysics, and learning as much as a man possibly can about God. The Guide puts forward four “demonstrative (barhâniyya) methods” for establishing the existence of a single incorporeal cause

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21. Aristotle, Metaphysics 6.1, 1026a, 18–19, and 11.7, 1064b, 2–3, distinguishes the three theoretical “philosophies” or “sciences” as: the “mathematical,” the “physical,” and the “theoretical.”
of the universe, in other words, four apodictic demonstrations of the existence of God. It affirms that Aristotle established the existence of a plurality of celestial spheres through a “demonstration (burhān),” that the existence of the souls of the spheres is “proved (bayyin, tabayyana)” philosophically, that the existence of the transcendent active intellect is “proved (dalla ‘alayhi)” by the passage of the human intellect from potentiality to actuality and by the appearance of natural forms in the sublunar world. Maimonides states that his object in writing the book was to show how scriptural anthropomorphisms may be squared with the scientifically demonstrated proposition that the First Cause is incorporeal, the “perplexed” of the book’s title being those who cannot effect the harmonization by themselves and need guidance. Maimonides devotes a series of chapters to explaining how, seeing that God’s existence is knowable, while His essence is not, God may be described; another series to the phenomenon of prophecy, which he characterizes as an effect of the emanation of the incorporeal active intellect on the human soul; and a third series to God’s knowledge and divine providence. Yet, we are now informed, these were all subjects that Maimonides placed beyond human competence. The Guide becomes the most bizarre work in the history of philosophy, a 450 page book written—or at least published, if we take the thesis to mean that Maimonides came to his critical insight after completing the book—with the purpose of concealing a handful of remarks that, sotto voce, undermine virtually every paragraph of the book says. The thesis could only be born within the context of contemporary Maimonides scholarship. If Maimonides can have framed the most original philosophic arguments for the creation of the world in medieval Islamic and Jewish literature, and yet have believed that the world was in fact eternal, why not go the whole hog? Why not conclude that he meant virtually nothing he says in the Guide?

To buttress his thesis, Pines adduced reports regarding Alfarabi’s lost Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, particularly a report regarding the Commentary which he found in a short, previously unknown work of Ibn Bājja’s; and he also adduced a statement made by Ibn Bājja in his own name, in that same work. Alfarabi’s Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics and Ibn Bājja’s own statement, Pines conjectured, led Maimonides to his critical stance on nonempirical knowledge. Then Pines cited a number of passages in the Guide—seven, as I count them—which, in his judgment, reflect the critical stance he ascribed to Maimonides. The present paper will in the following section examine what is known about Alfarabi’s lost Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics and about Ibn Bājja’s attitude to metaphysics; the section after that will examine the seven passages in the Guide; and the final sections will try to clarify Maimonides’ views on knowledge of incorporeal substances.

It is not especially pleasant to offer a critique of a scholar whom one admires, with whom one once studied, and from whose works one has learned much. Doing so after his death does not help matters: en mashivin et ha-aretz le-ahar mita. But Shlomo Pines himself recognized the scholarly obligation to pursue the truth even when the pursuit might not be wholly pleasant.

Perhaps we have an obligation to Maimonides as well.

2. Alfarabi’s lost Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics; Ibn Bājja’s statement in a recently published work.

Alfarabi’s preserved works recognize a First Cause, which initiates a series of eternal emanations bringing the incorporeal intelligences, the active intellect, and the rest of the universe, into existence. The active intellect is construed in those works as a transcendent, incorporeal substance whose eternal, unchanging action enables each inborn human potentiality for thought to pass to actuality. Should a human intellect master all, or almost all, science, it reaches a level wherein it “conjoins (ittasala)” with the active intellect; the fortunate human intellect is thereupon rendered “free of matter” and “remains in that state perpetually,” its “eudaemonia (sa’ada) complete.”

While Alfarabi's preserved works betray no hesitation regarding the foregoing propositions, Alfarabi reportedly rejected some of the propositions in a book that has been lost, his Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Evidence of Maimonides' familiarity with the Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* consists in a single remark that in no way reflects the Commentary's reputed radicalism. The remark runs: "In his introduction to his Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Alfarabi wrote: 'Those who are able to transport themselves [or: their souls] from one moral quality to another, are those of whom Plato said that God's providence is with them in a preeminent degree.'" Information about the radical character of the Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* comes from Ibn Bājja, Ibn Tufail, and Averroes.

Pines discovered statements concerning Alfarabi's Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in what was at the time an unpublished text, forming part of a manuscript collection of Ibn Bājja's works; the text has, together with other compositions in the manuscript, been published by J. Alaoui. As both Pines and Alaoui indicate, it is not written with care and is, as a consequence, problematic in a number of spots. Alaoui moreover questions its attribution to Ibn Bājja.

Pines translates the following statement from the beginning of the text: "As to what is believed about" remarks in Alfarabi’s Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the effect that "after death and demise there is no afterlife, that there is no happiness except political happiness [or: civic happiness (al-sa’āda al-madaniyya)], that there is no existence except that which is perceived by the senses," that the notion of human immortality is "an old wives' tale, I am of the opinion that all this [that which is believed about al-Farabi] is false, [that those are lies used to attack] Abū Nasr al-Farabi." Alfarabi only "made these remarks at his first reading [of the Ethics], but what he says in this subject does not resemble these statements of his that are entailed by a demonstration." Several comments should be made. The opening clause in the passage can be translated: "as to what might be believed (yuqanūn), rather than "as to what is believed." The possessive adjective "his" in the phrase "at his first reading" is an interpretation, as Pines tacitly acknowledges in a footnote; the possessive adjective does not appear in the photocopy of the manuscript which I examined. And the last sentence in the quotation, while not inaccurate, may be formulated somewhat more felicitously as follows: "What he [i.e., Alfarabi] says here does not resemble statements of his [made elsewhere] which are demonstrably necessary."

The crux of the passage is the phrase "at a first reading." As Pines observed, the phrase might be taken in one of two very different ways. It might, on the one hand, mean that, in Ibn Bājja's judgment, Alfarabi made the remarks in question on the occasion of his first reading of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*—or possibly on the occasion of his first reading in philosophy—but that he subsequently changed his mind. It might, on the other hand, mean—in Pines' words—that Alfarabi "has in effect made these remarks according to what one understands at the first reading." That is to say, Alfarabi merely appears to have made the remarks on a first, casual reading of his Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Pines takes the phrase in the former sense, and he finds that Ibn Bājja did "not deny al-Farabi's having made the remarks." Should it be taken, however, in the latter sense, Ibn Bājja is saying instead that Alfarabi never made the statements at all, that they were attributed to him falsely.

Considerations can be cited to support each of the alternatives. Supporting the first alternative is the final sentence in the passage quoted by Pines—"What he [i.e., Alfarabi] says here does not resemble statements of his [made elsewhere] which are demonstrably necessary"—as well as a later remark in the text complaining that Alfarabi's statements at "the beginning (awwal) of the Commentary [on the Nicomachean Ethics]" have "caused much damage." Both remarks suggest that the Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* took positions differing from what Alfarabi held in

27. Alaoui 19, 62-64.
29. Pines, "Limitations of Human Knowledge." n. 7. I quote the footnote in the following paragraph.
30. The photocopy was made available to me through the good offices of the Keeper of Oriental Books, Bodleian Library; my colleague Michael Fishbein was kind enough to help me read it. Alaoui prints "fi awwal qurūbthin," with the possessive suffix, but there are other instances as well where he corrects the text.
32. Pines, "Limitations of Human Knowledge" 83. In his introduction to his translation of the Guide, 1xx., Pines seems to have taken the phrase in the second of the two senses.
33. Alaoui 201.
works where he affirmed the possibility of the human intellect’s attaining immortality. Supporting the second alternative are the words translated by Pines as: “[those are lies used to attack] Abū Naṣr [al-Farabi] (mākhdūb fihi ‘alā Abī Naṣr),” as well as a sentence a few lines later which I think should be translated: “Most of his [i.e., Alfarabi’s] statements in this book [i.e., in the Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*] are attributed, Alfarabi having had the desire to advance a censorious refutation of them [i.e., of the statements at issue] (aktaruhā mansūba, wa-yatastawwaqī ‘al-radd bihi ‘alā jihaṭ tawbikh).”34 If Ibn Bājja is indeed the author of the text under discussion the following should also carry weight: One of Ibn Bājja’s works—which expresses itself in Ibn Bājja’s typically obscure fashion—appears to credit “Alfarabi’s Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*” with nothing less than a belief in the transmigration of the soul.35 And Averroes subsequently testified that Ibn Bājja—incorrectly, in Averroes’ opinion—understood Alfarabi’s Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* to have recognized human immortality.36 Lastly, there is the circumstance that Averroes describes the Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a work containing Alfarabi’s “final” position on issues pertaining to human immortality, and hence not a work likely to embody Alfarabi’s first, immature reading of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.37 In short, the newly discovered text of Ibn Bājja’s need not be read as maintaining that the skeptical statements about immortality represented Alfarabi’s own views. The text may mean that the skeptical statements were positions that Alfarabi undertook to refute.

An additional sentence in the passage quoted by Pines from the newly discovered Ibn Bājja text needs clarification, the sentence according to which Alfarabi said, or might be mistakenly interpreted as saying: “There is no existence except that which is perceived by the senses.” Since the other clauses in the sentence have in view the fate of man, this clause too almost surely means that there is no existence for man apart from what is perceived by the senses; in other words, man cannot exist without a physical body. If the sentence is so read, Ibn Bājja—assuming him to be the author—has reported the following: Alfarabi’s Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* stated, or some believed it to have stated, or it can be believed to state, that man exists only in a body and is not immortal, that talk of human immortality is an old wives’ tale, and that the only possible human eudaimonia is political or civic in character.38

Later in the text Ibn Bājja also makes the following remark: If one examines the end of Alfarabi’s Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, one will “find that he mentions something” to the effect that the true purpose of society is to create conditions enabling the citizens to develop their “intellect.”39

A briefer and more straightforward report regarding the lost Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* is provided by Ibn Ṭufail, and it concurs with one reading of Ibn Bājja’s report. Ibn Ṭufail writes: Alfarabi’s “Commentary on the Ethics” diverged from other works of Alfarabi in refusing to admit “human eudaimonia” beyond this world and in branding talk of a hereafter as “raving and old wives’ tales.”40

Averroes adds a few more details, which may reflect first-hand knowledge, but could conceivably be his own fleshing out of what he either himself discovered in the Commentary or learned from writers such as Ibn Bājja and Ibn Ṭufail. Averroes would sometimes recreate the reasoning of philosophers whom he discusses and he may have done so in the case of Alfarabi. The information provided by Averroes is recorded in works belonging to the several stages of his career.

Averroes writes that even in the Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Alfarabi recognized a transcendent active intellect, whose function

34. Alaoui 197.
35. Ibn Bājja, Ṭālīṣ al-Wadā‘, ed. and Spanish trans. M. Amin Palacios, as “La Carta de Adios,” Al-Andalus 8 (1943) 22. Alaoui 63, addsuce the discrepancy as a reason for questioning the attribution of the newly published text to Ibn Bājja.
36. Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros* (to be cited as the Long Commentary on the *De anima*), ed. F. Crawford (Cambridge, Mass., 1953) 433: On Ibn Bājja’s interpretation, Alfarabi maintained in the Commentary “that conjunction [with the active intellect] is possible and does constitute the end [for man].”
37. Long Commentary on the *De anima* 485. See also below, n. 45.
38. Pines, “Limitations of Human Knowledge,” 83, quotes another passage from the Ibn Bājja manuscript which he translates as follows: “A statement made by al-Farabi [in the work in question], which does not resemble other statements of his [concerned with the opinion] attributed by him to some of the Ancients; according to al-Farabi they [opposed] a violent negation [to the teaching concerning the separation of the soul from the body]. . . .” The remainder of the passage deals with the implications of locating human eudaimonia exclusively in a political framework, and seems to attribute those implications to the neo-Platonic, and possibly Ismā‘īlī, Ḥikmat al-Safī (the “Breadth of Purity”) rather than to Alfarabi.
it is to lead the human intellect from potentiality to actuality.\textsuperscript{41} On several occasions he too reports that in the Commentary, Alfarabi branded talk of human immortality as “old wives’ tales.”\textsuperscript{42} As already mentioned, Alfarabi’s preserved works took the conjunction of the human intellect with the active intellect and the immortality of the human intellect to be concomitants of a human intellect’s attaining perfection. Averroes, for his part, understood the connection between conjunction and human immortality differently from Alfarabi; he understood the connection to consist in immortality’s being a consequence of conjunction. He accordingly reports that, in the first instance, Alfarabi’s Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics rejected the possibility of conjunction with the active intellect, and that Alfarabi then rejected human immortality as a corollary of his rejection of conjunction. Alfarabi’s grounds for rejecting conjunction and the immortality that results from it were, in Averroes’ account, as follows: The human intellect comes into existence; if it should conjoin with the active intellect, it would be rendered indestructible; but anything generated is—as Aristotle established—\textsuperscript{43}—perforce destructible; hence the human intellect cannot conjoin with the active intellect.\textsuperscript{44} In one passage, Averroes also gives a nonphilosophical explanation for Alfarabi’s abandonment of the belief in conjunction. Alfarabi, Averroes there informs us, became disillusioned by his own failure to achieve conjunction despite, as he supposed, having achieved intellectual “perfection at the end of his life”, and as a consequence, he dismissed the possibility of conjunction.\textsuperscript{45} We here incidentally have another indication that the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics was a late work of Alfarabi’s. Finally, Averroes reports that when Alfarabi rejected the possibility of conjunction with the active intellect, he concluded “that man has no perfection other than perfection through the theoretical sciences.”\textsuperscript{46} In other words, Alfarabi still took the goal of human existence to be intellectual perfection through acquisition of the theoretical sciences—which would ordinarily mean mathematics, physics, and metaphysics—but he restricted man’s enjoyment of intellectual perfection to the present life.

If the reports furnished by Ibn Bāja, Ibn Tufail, and Averroes, are collated, we arrive at the following. The lost Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics recognized the existence of at least one nonphysical substance, the transcendent active intellect. In Ibn Bāja’s account, Alfarabi, on a “first reading,” branded human immortality an old wives’ tale and located human eudaemonia in a civic or political framework. Those words might mean either that Alfarabi did so on his first reading of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, or that he merely seems to have done so on a first, careless reading of his Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics. The accounts of Ibn Tufail and Averroes concur in the attribution to the Commentary of the sentiment about immortality’s being an old wives’ tale. In Averroes’ account, the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics based its rejection of the possibility of conjunction and human immortality on grounds that had nothing to do with the limitations of human science; the grounds were the Aristotelian rule that what is generated cannot become indestructible. Moreover, according to Averroes, the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, like Alfarabi’s earlier works, regarded perfection in the theoretical sciences—which would ordinarily include the science of metaphysics—as the goal of human life. According to a similar, although more guarded report in the Ibn Bāja text, the conclusion of the lost Commentary represented the true goal of the state as helping citizens to develop their intellect.

Pines focuses on the statement recorded by Ibn Bāja to the effect that human eudaemonia is political or civic in character; and from the statement, Pines concludes: “In the framework of the Aristotelian system this means that intellectual perfection is not the final end of man. This view seems to be due to the fact that, according to al-Farabi, metaphysics, regarded as cognition of the immaterial entities, is a science that transcends human capacity. . . . [The] reference to political happiness [the term I translate in the present article as eudaemonia (H.D.)] provides a clue for this interpretation. They [Alfarabi’s statements] negate traditional philosophy.” It was “probably under

\textsuperscript{41} Averroes, Drei Abhandlungen über die Conjunction, ed. and German trans. J. Hertz (Berlin, 1869), Hebrew section 11; German translation 51; Long Commentary on the De Anima 485.

\textsuperscript{42} Drei Abhandlungen, Hebrew Section 10, 13; German translation 46, 54; Averroes, Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect, ed. and trans. K. Bland (New York, 1982) §14; Hebrew text, 108; English translation 85.

\textsuperscript{43} Aristotle, De caelo 1.12.

\textsuperscript{44} Drei Abhandlungen, Hebrew section 7–8, 13; German translation 27, 36–37, 54; Long Commentary on the De anima 481. In his Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction §14; Hebrew text 108, Averroes attributes a different chain of reasoning to Alfarabi.

\textsuperscript{45} Drei Abhandlungen, Hebrew section 9; German translation 46.

\textsuperscript{46} Averroes, Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction §14, Hebrew text, 108; English translation 85. Similarly in Long Commentary on De anima 433.
the influence of al-Farabi. . ." that Maimonides arrived at his critical stance toward metaphysical knowledge.47

If Alfarabi's Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics indeed asserted that human eudaemonia is civic or political in character and hence does not consist in intellectual perfection, then the Commentary abandoned the philosophic ideal animating the Aristotelian tradition and espoused by Alfarabi's own earlier works. As we have seen, the Ibn Bājja text, which reports that reading of Alfarabi's Commentary, very possibly intended it as an inaccurate reading; the same text credits the end of the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics with the opinion that society's true purpose is to create conditions enabling citizens to develop their intellect; and Averroes testifies that the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics regarded perfection in the theoretical sciences as man's goal in life.48 Quite apart, however, from the question whether Alfarabi's Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics stated that human eudaemonia is political or civic in character, such a statement neither is equivalent to, nor entails, a rejection of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. Furthermore, it is wholly conjectural that Maimonides knew Alfarabi's entire Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, that he, like Pines, discovered a rejection of metaphysical knowledge there, and that he was influenced by the Commentary's putative rejection of metaphysical knowledge. The suggestion that Alfarabi's Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics represented human eudaemonia as political or civic in character is, in a word, uncertain; even if the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics took such a position, there is no evidence that the Commentary rejected the possibility of metaphysical knowledge; and there is no evidence that Maimonides knew anything about, and was influenced by, the putative rejection of metaphysics in the Commentary.

To further buttress his thesis, Pines adduces another passage in the same Ibn Bājja text from which he quotes the report about Alfarabi's Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics. Here, Ibn Bājja spoke in his own name.

47. Pines, "Limitations of Human Knowledge" 83, 100. On p. 99, Pines writes more cautiously that "Maimonides' epistemology . . . may have been formed under the influence" of Alfarabi.

48. Pines, "Limitations of Human Knowledge" 104, n. 9, refers to the incompatibility of the statement about civic eudaemonia with Averroes' statement about theoretical perfection as man's goal in life. He suggests that Alfarabi either "adopted . . . two contradictory positions" in the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, or that by theoretical perfection, Averroes meant physical, but not metaphysical knowledge.

Ibn Bājja's previously known works present a picture of the universe and of the human intellectual process which is similar to that drawn in Alfarabi's preserved works. They recognize an incorporeal First Cause, incorporeal intelligences, and a transcendent, incorporeal active intellect, which enables the human potentiality for thought to pass to actuality.49 Human intellectual development culminates in a stage wherein the human intellect "conjoins" with the active intellect. Conjunction with the active intellect constitutes "ultimate human eudaemonia." And the culminating stage of human intellect is the sole immortal aspect of man.50

One work advances an argument that is especially pertinent for our purposes. Ibn Bājja there considered the successive levels of abstraction attainable by the human intellect. "The masses (al-jumhūr)," he wrote, have as an object of their thought "universals" that are closely linked to images in the imaginative faculty. "The student of physical science" performs an additional act of abstraction upon those universals. The student of metaphysics goes a step beyond, performs an act of abstraction upon the concepts proper to physical science, and rises to a level where he thinks thoughts not insofar as they refer to objects in the physical world but—in Ibn Bājja's mystifying language—"insofar as they are themselves existent beings in the universe." And still higher levels of abstraction are attainable. If the series of successive abstractions never came to an end, it would run "to infinity—whereas an infinite of such a sort does not exist." The successive abstractions must consequently terminate in "a concept that has no further concept," in a single "first intelligible thought" common to all men. Since all human intellects


fortunate enough to reach the ultimate level have the same thought, and
since intellect is identical with the thought it thinks, all human thoughts at
the ultimate level become "one in number, with no distinction whatsoever
between them." Ibn Bajja takes for granted that the thought common to human
intellects at the ultimate stage is identical with the active intellect's thought
and hence with the active intellect itself. As a consequence, he concludes,
human intellects at the ultimate level become "conjoined... with the final
intelligence [i.e., the active intellect]." The thesis that human intellects unite
with each other after the death of their bodies is cited by Maimonides in Ibn
Bajja's name.52

The foregoing are views Ibn Bajja expounded in works that have long
been known. In the newly discovered text, Ibn Bajja—assuming him to be
the author—speaks of the human intellect's acquiring intelligible thoughts by
abstracting from images in the imaginative faculty of the soul. Man is able
to make such abstractions thanks to a "divine power emanating from the active
intellect."53 A few sentences later, Ibn Bajja makes a statement that Pines'
translates as follows: "(Citons), à titre d'exemple, ce que nous imaginons
relativement aux mouvements célestes. En effet, à partir de la connaissance
de la quiddité de ces mouvements s'actualisent (hasala; H.D.) en nous les
objets de connaissance les plus nobles (ashref al-ma'lumât; H.D.) et les
plus sublimes."54 Pines understands that "(les objets de) connaissance les
plus nobles et les plus sublimes" which make their appearance in man as a
result of man's knowledge of the quiddity of celestial motions are precisely
the quiddities of those motions. He writes: "The quiddities of the celestial
movements are regarded as the noblest objects of intellection;"55 "de toute
evidences, ces objets de connaissance, qui sont les plus nobles, relèvent de la
physique tout court... [et] ne résortissent pas à 'la science divine'."56

Whence Pines concludes: "There is... no reference to objects of intellection
that were not, prior to their transmutation, percept of the imagination
(and before that percept of the senses)"; and "the doctrine of the unity of
the intellect is not mentioned."57 "Ibn Bajja dans l'écrit qui nous intéresse
ne fournit aucun argument qui puisse faire croire que la connaissance de ces
substances [i.e., incorporeal substances (H.D.)] nous est possible." Hence:
"Il semble qu'il accepte tacitement le raisonnement d'al-Farabi qui conclut
à l'impossibilité d'une connaissance de ce genre. Il s'ensuit que l'étude
des sciences naturelles suffit à procurer l'immortalité: à ce point de vue,
nul besoin de la science divine, dont des parties essentielles dépasse
l'entendement humain."58 Because statements made by Maimonides in the
*Guide* agree, in Pines' judgment, with what Ibn Bajja maintains in the text
under consideration, "it may be assumed with a certain degree of likelihood
that he [i.e., Maimonides] was acquainted with" the views expressed in the
text.59 Maimonides arrived at his critical epistemology "probably under the
influence of al-Farabi and the... theory... of Ibn Bajja."60

Elsewhere in the newly discovered text, Pines found Ibn Bajja maintaining
that ideal political systems help citizens develop their intellects through
knowledge, the "first... object of knowledge" being "God," while others
are God's "angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and all His creatures."61
The sentence plainly recognizes that non-physical beings can become objects
of human knowledge, but Pines thinks Ibn Bajja is speaking now as "a
theologian, and not as a philosopher."62

Immediately prior, however, to the remark about God, angels, scriptures,
and messengers, Ibn Bajja makes a parallel statement that does employ
philosophic language. He writes: "It is clear from what Aristotle says in
his treatise..." that "substances... are three [in kind]." The name of the
Aristotelian treatise cited is illegible in the manuscript, but, as the editor of
the printed text observes, the reference is undoubtedly to *Metaphysics* 12.
Ibn Bajja goes on: The three classes of substance established by Aristotle
comprise: substances subject to "generation and destruction," the "celestial
bodies," and "substance that is intellect and does not require matter to exist."63
At the head of the substances in the third class resides the "most exalted"

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33-38, 43-45. Cf. Pines, "Limitations of Human Knowledge" 87; Altmann, "Ibn Bajja on
Man's Ultimate Felicity" 77.
52. Guide 1.74 (7).
55. Pines, "Limitations of Human Knowledge" 86.
being, which has "itself as its object of knowledge," and which by knowing itself knows everything "emanating from It." The lowest link in that class is "man's intellect." Ibn Bājja, it thus turns out, asserts explicitly that philosophy can establish the existence of incorporeal substances, including an incorporeal First Cause of the existence of the universe.

Let us return to the sentences that Pines translates as: "(Citons), à titre d'exemple, ce que nous imaginons relativement aux mouvements célestes. En effet, à partir de la connaissance de la quiddité de ces mouvements s'actualisent (khāṣala) en nous (les objets de) connaissance les plus nobles (ashrāf al-ma'ālāmāt) et les plus sublimes." As already mentioned, Pines understands "(les objets de) connaissance les plus nobles et les plus sublimes" to be nothing other than thoughts consisting in the quiddities of the celestial motions. He, in other words, represents Ibn Bājja as affirming that thoughts consisting in the quiddities of celestial movements make their appearance in man's mind as a result of man's having knowledge of those same quiddities. If such was Ibn Bājja's intent, his reasoning is circular.

The passage quoted by Pines should, however, be read within its context. After writing that man abstracts thoughts through a divine power emanated from the active intellect, Ibn Bājja, or whoever the author is, submits that any being possessing perception is "alive." Whereupon, he asks rhetorically: "Is it not necessary" that someone should be characterized as alive if he "has cognition (yudrīk) of the nobler objects of cognition (mudrakāt), namely, the quiddities of the things perceived in the imaginative faculty (māhiyāt al-mudrakāt al-mutakhayyala), and [even more so if he has cognition of] what is known (yudrāk) in true science from which results (ṭarāla) from those quiddities abstracted (ma'khudha) from the imaginative faculty?" A distinction is drawn here between at least three things: percepts in the imaginative faculty, the quiddities abstracted from the percepts, and what results from the quiddities. I take Ibn Bājja to be repeating much of what he has been seen to state in another work. That is, I take him to be saying that physical science abstracts quiddities from images in the imaginative faculty; and that a higher level of abstraction will then "result" when the "true science," the science of metaphysics, acts on the abstractions attained by physics. As Pines observes, no mention is made of the very highest stage of abstraction wherein all men have the same thought, and wherein their intellects unite with one another and with the active intellect.

At this juncture in the text come the sentences quoted by Pines. Ibn Bājja writes: An "example" of the different levels of abstraction is what "we represent in our imagination from [or: regarding] the quiddities of the movements of the heavens." From knowledge of those quiddities "there results for us...the most noble and exalted pieces of knowledge." The syntax is awkward, and some words may very well have dropped out, but I understand Ibn Bājja to be illustrating his foregoing analysis, and to be saying that a higher level of knowledge, and specifically metaphysical knowledge, results when man abstracts from quiddities which are derived, in turn, from empirical knowledge of the motions of the celestial spheres.

The text under consideration, in short, expressly recognizes philosophy's ability to establish the existence of nonphysical beings, including the "most exalted" incorporeal substance from which everything else emanates. It suggests that the ideal society teaches philosophic truths in a form understandable to the unenlightened, while creating requisite conditions for the pursuit of scientific activity by the enlightened; that notion was a commonplace shared by all the Arabic Aristotelians. The text makes an obscure statement about "most noble" and "most exalted" objects of thought that grow out of percepts in the imaginative faculty having celestial motions as their object. Pines interprets the statement as contradicting the explicit recognition of philosophical knowledge of incorporeal beings. I have tried to show that the statement can be read in harmony with, rather than as a contradiction of, the recognition of such philosophic knowledge. If we now assume Maimonides to have encountered the text at issue—and there is not a scrap of evidence to justify the assumption—why suppose that he dismissed what the text explicitly affirms and instead interpreted the text as Pines does?

In sum, that Alfarabi's Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics ruled out the possibility of metaphysical knowledge is conjectural. Pines' contention that the Ibn Bājja text ruled out the possibility of metaphysical knowledge runs counter to what the text expressly affirms. That Maimonides saw in Alfarabi the implication detected by Pines is one further conjecture. And, finally, there is no evidence that Maimonides either had knowledge of the Ibn Bājja text, or that, if he had, he would have dismissed the text's express statements in favor of the interpretation Pines proposed.

64. Aristotle, Metaphysics 12. 9.
65. Alā'ūqī 199.
66. Above, note 51.
67. Alā'ūqī 201.

Pines cites seven passages—as I counted them—where he believes that Maimonides’ Guide alludes to the impossibility of man’s going beyond empirical knowledge.

(a) A common philosophic topos used the metaphor of light to represent human intellectual activity; we still have the metaphor in terms such as *enlightenment*. In one version of the topos, it is metaphorical flashes of lighting that enlighten man, and the Introduction to the Guide plays on that version. Pines discovers a proof of his thesis in the way Maimonides there deploys the imagery.

The pertinent passage begins with Maimonides’ opinion that the mysterious ancient rabbinic doctrine called the *account of creation* was nothing other than the philosophic science of physics, and that the still more mysterious doctrine called the *account of the chariot* was “divine science,” in other words, the science of metaphysics. Maimonides proceeds: The rabbis did not speak openly of “things” belonging even to the account of creation; that is to say, they did not state propositions belonging to the science of physics openly. For the propositions of physics have a “strong link” to the science of metaphysics, therefore they too, in a sense, “make up part of the secrets of divine science, [i.e., of metaphysics],” and all the secrets of metaphysics must be hidden from the uninitiated.

As for “these immense secrets,” that is, the secrets of metaphysics, they are not “known to any of us fully and completely.” “Rather the truth at times shines upon us so that we consider it to be day, but then [our] material circumstances and habits conceal it [i.e., the truth], so that we return into an obscure night. . . . We are like a person in a very dark night, upon whom lightning repeatedly flashes. [i] One of us was such that the lightning flashed upon him constantly, with the result that he was almost always in light. . . .


69. Altman, *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Auflärung* 127–128, discusses the link between physics and metaphysics in Maimonides.

Such was the level of the greatest of the prophets [i.e., Moses]. . . . [ii] There are men for whom the lightning flashes once in the night; this is the level of those of whom it is said that ‘they prophesied, but they did so no more [Num. 11:25].’ [iii] There are others for whom the flashes of lightning are separated by greater or lesser intervals.” [iv] Still others “do not reach the level where their darkness is illuminated by lightning,” yet they enjoy illumination “by a polished body or something similar, such as certain stones and the like, which gleam in the darkness. . . . ; and even that lesser light shining upon us is not constant.” “In accordance with the foregoing, the levels attained by perfect men vary.” [v] Finally, “the truth, despite its intense [intrinsic] clarity, is entirely hidden” from some, and they spend their entire lives in darkness.

Pines understands that the third class of men listed in the passage, men for whom the flashes of lightning are separated by greater or lesser intervals, are prophets. He infers that, for Maimonides, “only the prophets appear to see the lightning flashes,” whereas the “common run of people as well as the philosophers,” including Maimonides himself, have their darkness lit up through a lesser source of light, through polished surfaces. The two types of illumination, through lightning flashes and polished surfaces, are, Pines conjectures, to be correlated with knowledge going beyond the empirical and knowledge that stops with the empirical. Maimonides’ deployment of the imagery, on Pines’ reading, accordingly indicates that only prophets can attain nonempirical knowledge, whereas philosophers cannot. Pines further conjectures that Maimonides was privately skeptical about prophecy’s being a legitimate source of theoretical knowledge, by the side of philosophy, and equally skeptical about the uniqueness of Moses’ prophecy. He thus reads Maimonides as excluding nonempirical knowledge except through prophecy, and as at the same time surreptitiously rejecting prophecy as a source of theoretical knowledge. He accordingly concludes that Maimonides covertly dismissed the possibility of any nonempirical human knowledge and, hence, the possibility of human metaphysical knowledge; be it of a prophetic or a philosophic character.

The interpretation is open to question. We have here a classification of the degrees of illumination which bring man metaphysical knowledge; and, for Maimonides, mastering the philosophic sciences, including the science of


metaphysics, is a precondition for prophecy, rather than the fruit of prophecy.72 There are consequently no grounds for assuming that the third class of men receiving illumination, those who are vouchsafed repeated lightning flashes, but whose flashes are separated by intervals, comprises only prophets. In fact, the second class as well, the class of those who are expressly said to have "prophesied," although they did "so no more," are not genuine prophets in Maimonides' view. For in the chapter of the Guide which enumerates the categories of prophecy, Maimonides places the elders of whom the Book of Numbers says that they prophesied and then did so no more, in a category of inspiration which, he writes, is pre-prophetic and not covered by the definition of prophecy.73 Thus no matter how one construes the class that is vouchsafed flashes of lightning separated by intervals, at least some men enjoying lightning flashes are not, in Maimonides' application of the imagery, prophets. Furthermore, even if one were to suppose that the first three classes enumerated in the passage are classes of prophets, illumination through polished surfaces—the illumination characterizing the fourth class—is, no less than illumination through flashes of lightning, a mode in which the "truth" embodying the "secrets" of divine science, or metaphysics, "shines upon us." Men who enjoy illumination through polished surfaces, like those who enjoy illumination through lightning flashes, are described by Maimonides as "perfect." Only the benighted are excluded from the secrets of metaphysics.

The straightforward interpretation of the passage is therefore not that metaphysics lies beyond man's grasp, but that some men attain metaphysical knowledge with the aid of a higher degree of illumination, some with the aid of a lower degree, and some not at all. If Maimonides intended anything more specific by the imagery, illumination through lightning flashes may perhaps signify knowledge of metaphysics through the emanation of the active intellect without the intermediacy of a human teacher, while illumination through polished surfaces signifies knowledge of metaphysics through the emanation of the active intellect with the aid of a teacher. In any event, the passage is most naturally read as a depiction of different degrees of metaphysical illumination, not as a repudiation of such illumination.

(b) In Guide 3.9, Maimonides writes that "matter is a powerful veil preventing cognition (istārik; hassaga) of the incorporeal as it truly is." Even the "most noble and pure matter. . . . the matter of the celestial spheres,"

imposes limits on the intelligible thought of the souls of the spheres; "a fortiori, this dark, turbid [human] matter. . . . Hence whenever our intellect aspires to cognition of God or of one of the [incorporeal] intelligences, the powerful veil interposes itself."

Pines writes: "This passage entails at least two conclusions: man cannot cognize God because the human intellect is tied up with the body. For the same reason man cannot cognize the separate intellects. The second conclusion. . . appears to mean that man can only know material objects or objects connected with matter."74

The passage under consideration plainly states that man cannot have knowledge of God and incorporeal intelligences as they "truly" are. That is to say, the human intellect cannot comprehend their essences. Maimonides may also be alluding to the notion that man cannot have God and the incorporeal intelligences as direct objects of thought, as man does have the forms of physical things as objects of thought; that is to say, the human intellect cannot receive, and indeed become identical with, the form of God, as it does receive, and becomes identical with, the form of whatever physical thing it thinks.75 In one sense, then, Pines is undoubtedly correct in writing that man cannot, for Maimonides, "cognize God" and the incorporeal intelligences. The passage contains nothing, however, to suggest that man cannot "cognize" God and the incorporeal intelligences in other senses. It contains nothing to suggest that Maimonides has abandoned the proposition, maintained throughout the Guide, that man can demonstrate God’s existence, nothing to suggest that Maimonides has abandoned the proposition that man can gain demonstrative, albeit circumscribed, knowledge of God’s attributes, and nothing to suggest that he rules out human knowledge of the existence of the incorporeal intelligences. The passage therefore does not justify the conclusion that man can know only material objects or objects connected with matter, that he can have no knowledge whatsoever of nonmaterial beings.

(c) In Guide 1.37–38, Maimonides expounds the different senses that the terms face and back have in Scripture, and in the course of the discussion takes up the response that Moses received upon asking God to show him His "glory" (Ex. 33:18). God's response was: "Thou shalt see My back, but My face shall not be seen" (Ex. 33:23). In that verse, Maimonides writes, the term face signifies "presence," and back signifies "following" and "imitating. . . .the

72. Guide 2.36.
73. Guide 2.45.
75. Guide 1.68.
natural limitations of the knowledge of a corporeal being made it probable that 'Onkelos' interpretation' was correct and that Maimonides' own interpretation was propounded for theological reasons, a doctrine emphasizing the uniqueness of Moses being needed for the defense of religion.76

Pines has uncovered something unexpected and worthy of attention in the passages at issue, but it cannot be Maimonides' citing of Onkelos. The information on the Aramaic rendering of their terms face and back is part of the lexicographical side of the Guide, which, although it may not excite the modern reader, was integral to Maimonides' purpose in writing the book. And Maimonides' reading of the Aramaic translation of the key scriptural verse agrees completely with his own declared position. His position, as already seen, was that man cannot know the essence of God or the essence of the intelligences, and the Aramaic translation, as read by Maimonides, says precisely that. What deserves attention is Maimonides' statement, when speaking in his own name, that Moses was told: "You will have cognition of what follows me, . . . namely all my creatures." The statement appears to mean that Moses would be vouchsafed knowledge of the essence of the incorporeal intelligences, a kind of knowledge that, Maimonides has been seen to maintain, lies beyond man's power. Perhaps Maimonides ranked Moses' capacity so far beyond the capacity of ordinary men that Moses, unlike others, did have the ability to attain such knowledge. Perhaps Maimonides meant not that Moses would be vouchsafed knowledge of the intelligences' essences, but that he alone would have certain knowledge of the intelligences existence.77 At all events, the passages Pines adduces do not reveal Maimonides unexpectedly limiting human metaphysical knowledge, that is, knowledge of nonphysical beings. At most, they reveal him unexpectedly extending metaphysical knowledge in the case of the greatest of the prophets.

(d) Pines quotes from Guide 2.3, as follows:

"... the opinions held by Aristotle regarding the cause of the motion of the spheres—from which opinions he deduced the existence of separate intellects—are simple assertions for which no demonstration has been made;" they are however "of all the opinions put forward on this subject, those that are exposed to the smallest number of doubts and those that are the most suitable for being put into a coherent order."78

77. See the following subsection.
78. Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge" 94.
Whence Pines concludes:

This view clearly entails the consequence that the existence of the separate intellects is merely probable and that no way has been found to attain certainty with regard to this matter. This being so, there is no point in setting oneself the aim to intellect or achieve a conjunction with a separate intellect.\(^{79}\)

The word “cause” in the first sentence of Pines’ quotation from Maimonides is probably a typographical error for *causes*, which is the reading of Pines’ own translation of the *Guide*; the Arabic has the plural asbāb, and the Hebrew of Ibn Tibbon, *sibbot*. “Opinions” in the clause “from which opinions he deduced. . .” is not found in the original, and the grammar of the sentence permits taking “motion,” “spheres,” or even “causes,” instead of “opinions,” as the antecedent of “which”; Maimonides was not as meticulous a writer as is sometimes supposed. The adjective “simple,” which qualifies “assertions,” is also not found in the original. When we correct *cause* to *causes* and remove the two words that Pines added to the text, his translation of the first sentence in the Maimonides passage will read: “The opinions held by Aristotle regarding the causes of the motion of the spheres—from which he deduced the existence of separate intellects—are assertions for which no demonstration has been made.”

Before drawing any conclusion about the passage, we have to ascertain what Maimonides meant by the “causes of the motion of the spheres.” If the “causes of the motion of the spheres” are the agents that move the spheres, Pines could not be correct in taking the “opinions held by Aristotle” as the antecedent of “which” in the parenthetical clause. For should “causes” be taken in the sense of agents, Maimonides would be saying: “Aristotle’s opinions regarding the agents that move the spheres, from which [opinions] he deduced the existence of incorporeal agents that move the spheres. . . .” Maimonides would be representing Aristotle as having deduced the existence of agents that move the spheres from opinions he already had regarding those agents; Aristotle would be credited with a blatant *petitio principii*. Moreover, even without supposing “opinions” to be the antecedent of the pronoun “which,” an awkward sentence still results if we take the “causes of the motion of the spheres” to be the agents moving the spheres. Maimonides would be saying: “The opinions held by Aristotle regarding the agents that cause the motion of the spheres, from which [motion] he deduced the existence of such agents. . . .” The sentence, although no longer embodying a logical fallacy, would be circuitous, and its point unclear.

A satisfactory construction results only if the term “causes” is taken in the logical sense employed by Maimonides elsewhere in the *Guide*\(^{60}\)—in the sense of propositions, or principles. The passage will then say: “Aristotle’s opinions regarding the principles of the motion of the spheres, from which [motion; or: from which principles; or, less plausibly: from which opinions] he inferred the existence of incorporeal intelligences [that move the spheres].” are, although they are judgments (*da’swā; *te’anot*) supported by no *apodictic* demonstration (*burdīn*), nonetheless . . . the opinions that are least subject to doubt and that best fit together into a system.” Maimonides is expressing reservations about the principles that he thought Aristotle posited to explain celestial motion. He does not spell out the principles he has in mind. But they are very likely the propositions he cites in the following chapter when expounding Aristotle’s argumentation regarding the players involved in celestial motion, namely, the propositions that the souls of the celestial spheres must possess a “concept,” that the souls of the spheres must possess a “desire,” that the soul of each sphere must have its own unique concept, and that the number of incorporeal intelligences, which provide the concepts, must consequently be equal to the number of spheres.\(^{81}\)

In addition to citing the propositions just mentioned, the following chapter of the *Guide* refers to a “demonstration” of the existence of multiple celestial

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\(^{79}\) Pines, *The Limitations of Human Knowledge* 94.

\(^{60}\) Guide 2.38.

\(^{81}\) Guide 2.4.
spheres, to "proofs" of the existence of the souls of the spheres, and to the
provability of the existence of the transcendent active intellect. The chapter
of the Guide which establishes the existence of God begins with a proof
from the motion of the celestial spheres, that is, a proof proceeding from
the unceasing motion of the spheres to the existence of an incorporeal cause
of the motion; and Maimonides characterizes the proofs of the existence
of God offered in that chapter as "demonstrative methods." He thus contrasts
"Aristotle's opinions regarding the principles of the motion of the spheres" with other propositions about the supernal realm which, he writes, can be
demonstrated.

Maimonides' demonstration of the existence of God from motion con-
tends, in a nutshell, that the unending motion of the celestial spheres implies
an infinite force, and an infinite force implies an incorporeal mover. The
reasoning rests on general Aristotelian principles of physical motion, principles
that, Maimonides states, either are self-evident or had been "demonstrated." No
principle related specifically to celestial motion, and hence none of
"Aristotle's" undemonstrated "opinions regarding the principles of the motion
of the spheres," come into play; and indeed within the Aristotelian corpus, the
undemonstrated "opinions" have their origin in a different context from the
demonstration of an unmoved mover. Maimonides' proof for the existence
of a transcendent active intellect also rests on a principle of physics, the
principle that every transition from potentiality to actuality is effected by a
being already actually in possession of the given quality. The reasoning is
that the passage of the human intellect from potentiality to actuality, and
the emergence of natural forms in the sublunar world, must be due to a
cause consisting in actual intellect and actual form. Aristotle's opinions
regarding the principles of the motion of the spheres again play no part.
By contrast, the argument recorded by Maimonides for the existence of
an individual incorporeal mover for each of the several celestial spheres
employs what Maimonides appears to have in mind when he speaks of

82. Guide 2.4.
83. Guide 2.1 (1).
84. See Guide 2, introduction, propositions 1, 2, 12, 17. The proof also uses proposition
26, which Maimonides accepts only hypothetically.
85. The demonstration is formulated fully in Aristotle, Physics 8, and is summarized
very briefly at the end of Metaphysics 12.7. The undemonstrated "opinions" are laid down in
Metaphysics 12.7.
86. Guide 2.4. Cf. 2.18 (1).
87. Guide 1.72; 2.6, 7, 11; 3.9.

undemonstrable opinions regarding the principles of celestial motion. The
reasoning here is that the soul of each sphere must have its own object of
desire, since it performs its own motion, and the object of desire inspiring
each sphere must be an individual incorporeal being coordinated with that
sphere alone. Pines has therefore put his finger on a significant point that
escaped previous students of Maimonides: Maimonides apparently doubts
the apodictic character of philosophic arguments for the existence of multiple
incorporeal intelligences, which move the celestial spheres.

In fine, the passage in Guide 2.3 to which Pines calls attention maintains
that Aristotle's opinions regarding the principles governing celestial motion
are not amenable to demonstration. If the principles are not amenable to
demonstration, the existence of multiple incorporeal movers of the spheres,
which is inferred with the aid of those principles, is apparently also not
demonstrable. The passage in no way indicates, however, that Maimonides
doubted the apodictic character of his demonstration of at least one incorporeal
mover of the spheres or that he doubted his proof of the existence of a
transcendent active intellect. Pines' statement "that the existence of the
separate intellects is merely probable and that no way has been found to
attain certainty with regard to this matter" is therefore well taken as regards
the multiple incorporeal movers of the spheres, but not as regards the existence
of at least one mover of the spheres or the existence of the incorporeal active
intellect. The further statement that "this being so, there is no point in setting
oneself the aim to intellect or achieve a conjunction with a separate intellect,"
is also well taken in respect to the incorporeal movers of the spheres. But
the Arabic Aristotelians from whom Maimonides learned philosophy were
primarily, if not exclusively, interested in the possibility of man's having
the active intellect, and not the movers of the spheres, as a direct object of
thought, and in the possibility of man's conjoining specifically with the active
intellect. The question of those twin possibilities will be taken up in section
5 of the present article.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that despite Maimonides' reserva-
tions about the demonstrability of multiple incorporeal intelligences, he
assumes, throughout the Guide, a hierarchy of incorporeal intelligences,
which move the spheres. His grounds, if he is taken at his word, were that
he considered "Aristotle's opinions regarding the principles of the motion
of the spheres" to be, although undemonstrated, "the opinions that are least
subject to doubt and that best fit together into a system”; and that he also found Aristotle’s position on multiple incorporeal movers of the spheres to be supported by Scripture and midrashic literature.  
   
(e) In the spirit of the passage just examined, two of Maimonides’ three arguments for creation turn on the inability of the most accomplished philosophic speculation to formulate a set of natural laws that will explain the structure of the heavens. As a footnote to those two arguments for creation, Maimonides writes in Guide 2.24, that “everything Aristotle says about the sublunar region follows the syllogistic method; . . . but of what is in the heavens, man can comprehend merely a small amount, mathematical in character”; in other words, man can determine the measurements of the celestial bodies and predict most of the movements of the heavens accurately.  
   
“God alone” has “complete” knowledge of “the true reality, nature, substance, form, motions, and causes, of the heavens.” In the “general enterprise of drawing up proofs (istidlāl)” regarding the heavens, what can be concluded with confidence is only that the heavens “reveal to us [or: prove to us (dallānā)] their mover.” That is to say, the only genuine philosophic proof to be framed concerning the heavens themselves, as distinct from their movements, is that they have at least one incorporeal agent which moves them. “Let us then stop at the point where we are still competent and cede what cannot be known (yudrak; yussag) syllogistically, to him who received the great divine emanation [i.e., to Moses].”  
   
Pines’ translation of the Guide, following Munk, renders the sentence stating that the heavens “reveal to us their mover” in a way that has Maimonides contradict what he said when proving the existence of God in Guide 2.1. Whereas Guide 2.1 demonstrated the existence of an incorporeal mover of the heavens from the heavens’ unceasing motion, Pines’ rendering of the present sentence has Maimonides affirm: “And even the general conclusion that may be drawn from them [i.e., from the heavens (H.D.)], namely, that they prove the existence of their Mover, is a matter the knowledge of which cannot be reached by human intellects.” A justification for my translation and an explanation of the syntax of the sentence is given below, in an appendix.  
   
With reference to the statements quoted here from Guide 2.24, Pines writes:  
   
Moses is the only human being that may be assumed to have had this knowledge. In this context too the exception made in favor of Moses . . . may also be supposed to have been formulated for theological reasons. . . . Maimonides . . . considers that man can have scientific knowledge (which involves intellection) only of the phenomena of the sublunar world . . . Maimonides is of the opinion that no scientific certainty can be achieved with regard to objects that are outside the sublunar world.  
   
In the present instance, as in the passage discussed under the previous heading, Maimonides sets limits upon scientific and philosophic knowledge of the celestial region. He does so candidly; there is nothing esoteric about his language. The standpoint from which he sets limits on knowledge of the heavens is, moreover, the conservative fideist skepticism of Ghazali, not a radical epistemological skepticism; for the statements we are considering are a footnote to arguments for creation which were inspired by Ghazali’s acerbic critique of philosophic attempts to explain the structure of the heavens. And when Maimonides is read straightforwardly and not forced into unnecessary inconsistencies, he plainly affirms that scientific and philosophic knowledge of the heavens is, although limited, possible. His position is as follows: Science—if we allow ourselves the postmedieval distinction between science and philosophy—discovers that the stars and planets are embedded in spheres, which rotate around the earth; philosophy legitimately infers from the circular movement of the celestial spheres that they have souls; philosophy can likewise demonstrate the existence of at least one incorporeal being that moves the spheres; astronomical science formulates mathematical rules for predicting the movements of the spheres. Other issues concerning the heavens, such as the precise type of substance they consist in, and even the existence of multiple incorporeal movers of the spheres, lie beyond the competence of human science and philosophy, although they perhaps fall with the competence of the greatest of prophets.  
   
(f) Pines quotes the opening sentence of Guide 1.68:  
   
You already know that the following dictum of the philosophers with reference  
   
to God... is generally admitted; the dictum being that He is the intellect as well as the intellectually cognizing subject and the intellectually cognized object, and that those three notions form in Him one single notion in which there is no multiplicity.

Whereupon he comments:

It is obvious that, if Maimonides’ epistemology is accepted, man cannot possibly have the knowledge of God that is presupposed in the “dictum of the philosophers.”... It may be significant that Maimonides refers to the shukra (rendered in the translation as “generally admitted”) of the “dictum.” The Arabic word has the same root as mashhārd (Hebrew: mefursamot (H.D.)), a term used by Maimonides to denote notions that are generally admitted without either being self-evident indubitable truths or having been proven by rigorous reasoning. The thesis in question forms a part of a theological system, which may be believed, but cannot be proved to be true.49

Pines fails to mention that Maimonides writes a little later in the chapter: It has been “demonstrated (tabarhanna) that God... is actual intellect,” and that in Him “intellect, the subject of intelligible thought, and the object of intelligible thought” coincide.50 If Maimonides is taken at his word, the proposition that God is actual intellect, and the companion proposition that in God the three moments—intellect, the subject of intelligible thought, and the object of intelligible thought—coincide, are thus not merely generally accepted dicta. They are demonstrated scientific theorems. Nor is the demonstration far to seek. Both Alfarabi and Avicenna had posited that an incorporeal, noncomposite substance can exist in nothing but actual undifferentiated intellect, and had reasoned that the First Cause of the universe, being incorporeal and noncomposite, must therefore consist in actual intellect. Both further concluded that in the noncomposite First Cause, the three moments—intellect, the subject of intelligible thought, and the object of intelligible thought—must coincide.50 As asked how God can be known to consist in pure, actual intellect, when His essence is completely unknowable, Alfarabi, Avicenna, and now Maimonides, might have responded that while God can be shown to consist in actual intelligible thought, the content of His thought, which constitutes His essence, remains wholly beyond man’s ken.

Pines explains elsewhere why, if Maimonides’ epistemology is accepted, God cannot be known to consist in actual intellect: In Pines’ judgment, the characterization of God as actual intellect is incompatible with Maimonides’ so-called “negative theology,”57 with his insistence that the only adequate mode of describing God is through negative statements. Another recent commentator, Josef Stern, has drawn a still stronger inference from Maimonides’ discourse on negative attributes. Stern contends that the standards imposed by Maimonides upon descriptions of God show Maimonides to have, in fact, ruled out the possibility of all such descriptions, to have covertly advocated the “negation of the possibility of theology,” rather than advocating—as Maimonides professedly does—a “negative theology.”58

It can hardly be denied that Maimonides’ position on negative divine attributes raises problems, that he makes affirmative statements about God without explaining how they are to be recast negatively, and that one of the propositions for which he provides no negative reformulation is: ‘God consists in pure intellect.’ But before concluding that Maimonides’ doctrine of negative attributes is a universal solvent invalidating all knowledge of the deity, we should remember the grounds that he himself adduces for setting restrictions on descriptions of God. God, Maimonides tells us, can have no “affirmative attribute,” because “it has been demonstrated,” and “I shall demonstrate” that “God is necessarily existent [by virtue of Himself] and contains no composition,” whereas affirmative attributes would perforce refer to parts within God and hence violate His noncomposite nature.59 Maimonides’ position on attributes thus rests on philosophic demonstrations set forth in his chapter proving the existence of God, namely: the demonstrations set forth in his chapter proving the existence of God, namely: the demonstration of the existence of a First Cause of the universe who is necessarily existent by virtue of Himself, the demonstration that only one being necessarily existent by


95. Guide 1.68.


97. Stated in Pines’ introduction to his translation of the Guide xcvi–xcvii, which was written before Pines arrived at his final radical thesis regarding metaphysical knowledge in Maimonides.


virtue of itself can exist, and the demonstration that the necessarily existent by virtue of itself can contain no composition whatsoever, together with the corollaries that the necessarily existent by virtue of itself is not composed of matter and form, and is hence incorporeal. 100 The demonstration of the existence of a being necessarily existent by reason of itself is, in Maimonides' opinion, so clear and convincing that it admits of "neither doubt, rebuttal, nor dispute, except on the part of those who do not understand the demonstrative method."

Maimonides' insistence upon describing God only through negation therefore not merely does not, by his declaration, exclude knowledge of propositions about God; his stand on attributes is, on the contrary, grounded in a goodly set of knowable propositions about God and in a set of philosophic demonstrations establishing those propositions. Two further corollaries deduced by Maimonides from the demonstration of the existence of a non-composite being, necessarily existent by virtue of itself are—whether or not we think Maimonides should have made the deductions—that since such a being is incorporeal it can consist in nothing but pure, actual intellect; and that since such a being is eternally in a state of pure actuality, the three moments in intellect—which, it has been "demonstrated," coincide even in actual human intellect 102—coincide eternally in Him.

The propositions that the universe has a First Cause, that the First Cause is necessarily existent by virtue of itself, that the necessarily existent by virtue of itself is one, incorporeal, and noncomposite, are, it is also to be noted, metaphysical, and the demonstrations establishing those propositions are metaphysical demonstrations.

(g) Pines discovers an additional proof of his thesis in Guide 1.54, and 3.54.

Guide 3.54, the final chapter of the book, observes that philosophers have recognized four human perfections. The first two are the perfection of "possessions" and the perfection of man's bodily "constitution and figure."

100. See Guide 2.1 (3); H. Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy (N.Y., 1987) 380-383. The reason why the necessarily existent by reason of itself must be noncomposite is that it can have neither internal or external causes making it what it is, and components would be internal causes of its essence. I can see no basis for the distinction drawn by Stern 157, between different reasons given by Maimonides for rejecting affirmative attributes.


102. Guide 1.68.

Maimonides gives short shrift to each, to the former because it is not part of a man at all, and to the latter because it belongs to a man only insofar as he is a member of the animal genus, not insofar as he is human. The third human perfection is "the perfection of ethical virtues." It too is dismissed by Maimonides, on the grounds that it serves not the man who possesses it, but someone else, and it is not an end in itself. . . . For ethical matters all concern the relationship between one man and another. It is as if through perfection in ethical qualities an individual disposes himself for the utility of mankind and becomes an instrument to serve others. Should an individual man be assumed to exist alone and never have dealings with anyone else, his ethical virtues would be idleness, vanity, and uselessness. Ethical virtues perfect his own person in nothing . . . and their utility touches him solely in respect to others.

The fourth perfection, the "true human perfection," consists in "having rational virtues, that is, in the conceiving of intelligible thoughts, which give rise to correct beliefs regarding metaphysical [or: divine] subjects."

This is the ultimate end. . . whereby the individual is truly perfected. It pertains to him alone, it gives him permanent existence [i.e., immortality], through it man is [truly] man. If you consider the previous three perfections, you find that they pertain to what is other than your [true] self. . . . Therefore you should strive to attain this, which is permanently yours, and not fatigue yourself and make yourself miserable for the sake of others.

After playing on scriptural and rabbinic texts that rank knowledge of God as the highest human perfection, that subordinate even the observance of the religious commandments to knowledge of God, and that exhort the man of knowledge to "imitate" God's ways by performing acts of loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, Maimonides concludes, in the loose syntax typical of the Guide: The "perfection of man in which one can truly glory" is "he who has attained cognition of God to the extent of his ability, and cognizance of God's providence over His creatures." "The rule of conduct of such a man, after that cognition of God, will be for him continually to keep in view: . . . loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, in imitation of God's actions."

Guide 1.54, explains that God's actions flow from Him in a completely dispassionate manner. The key sentence here for Pines' exegesis reads: "The
ultimate virtue of man is to become like unto God [or: to imitate God]...as far as he is able; that is to say, to make our actions like unto His."

Pines takes the last quoted sentence to affirm that "to become similar to God in respect of the attributes of action constitutes the highest perfection of man." The passages quoted from Guide 1.54 and 3.54, in conjunction with the other passages we have encountered, reveal to him that for Maimonides "the only positive knowledge of God of which man is capable is knowledge of the attributes of action, and this leads and ought to lead to a sort of political activity which is the highest perfection of man. The practical way of life, the bios praktikos, is superior to the theoretical."100 Doubts about metaphysical knowledge cause Maimonides to rank the practical above the theoretical mode of life. Pines does not explain how Maimonides could have known God's attributes of action, if he doubted the possibility of any genuine human knowledge about God.

The statements in Guide 3.54 about ethical perfection and intellectual perfection unquestionably pose a puzzle: Maimonides belittles ethical perfection because it does not serve the person who possesses it, and he stresses that true human perfection consists exclusively in intelligible thought and correct beliefs. Then he turns around and asserts that intellectual perfection must be followed by loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, which would appear to be nothing other than forms of ethical behavior. The statements have elicited a variety of interpretations, and the present writer also has tried his hand at the subject.104

In ascertaining an author's intent, even an author who indulges in esoteric expression, the starting point surely should be what he himself says. Maimonides says two things unambiguously. First, he tells us that true human perfection consists in intelligible thoughts which give rise to correct beliefs regarding metaphysical subjects. The subsequent remarks about a rule of conduct wherein man keeps in view loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, do not describe such conduct as either human perfection or a part thereof. If further evidence is needed, Maimonides provides it elsewhere in the Guide, when he states categorically that man's "final perfection contains neither actions nor ethical qualities."105 Secondly, Maimonides repeatedly affirms, or, to be more precise, presupposes, that any activity or quality

wherein a man serves others rather than himself cannot conceivably be the true human perfection and the ultimate human end. True perfection, he writes, has to be an end in itself; the ultimate human perfection pertains exclusively to the man who possesses it; ethical virtue cannot be man's goal, because it serves others and not the possessor of the virtue; ethical qualities are of small value because they only prepare a person for the utility of mankind and render him an instrument to serve others; one should not fatigue oneself in the acquisition of qualities that are for the sake of others; and so on. Maimonides' rationale is undoubtedly that if an ultimate goal were a stepping stone to another goal, it would not be the ultimate goal after all. The political life in the pure sense—not, of course, as more than one politician whom we know regards it—is a prime instance of a man's serving others, of his acting for the utility of mankind. Maimonides therefore has ruled out any possibility of the political life's being the end of human existence, the ultimate human perfection.

In a word, not only does the final chapter of the Guide not rank the practical life above the theoretical life, and not only does it not state that the political life is the highest human perfection; the chapter unambiguously and repeatedly excludes anything of the kind.

There remains the sentence in Guide 1.54, to the effect that man's "ultimate virtue" is to imitate God by assimilating human actions to God's actions.

The sentence does not say that assimilating human actions to God's actions constitutes ultimate human perfection. Doing so constitutes the ultimate human virtue. Maimonides, like other philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition, recognized two kinds of virtue, ethical and intellectual. Since the imitation of God's actions is plainly not an intellectual virtue, Maimonides must be talking about ethical virtue. I would venture a qualification and suggest that he is, to be precise, talking about quasi-ethical virtue. Whereas traditional Aristotelian ethical virtue is a matter of intermediate psychological characteristics, the Guide, in a departure from Maimonides' earlier writings, relegates that familiar sort of ethical virtue to an inferior level of morality; hence the belittling statements regarding the third of the four human perfections. The Guide prescribes, for the highest level of morality, not intermediate psychological characteristics, but the extirpation of all psychological characteristics; and the actions it demands of the perfect man

105. Guide 3.27.
are to be wholly dispassionate. The sentence to the effect that ultimate human virtue consists in assimilating man’s actions to God’s actions thus means that the highest, quasi-ethical human virtue—a quasi-ethical virtue flowing from human intellectual perfection—expresses itself in dispassionate actions similar to God’s actions, they too being dispassionate.

*Guide* 1.54 and 3.54, then, unequivocally rank the theoretical life above all other modes of human existence. The unadulterated theoretical life constituting human perfection consists in having theoretical thoughts that give rise to correct beliefs specifically in the area of metaphysics. Maimonides dismisses out of hand the notion that any mode of human life, such as the political mode, in which a man serves others, might be the ultimate human goal and perfection.

To summarize: Pines has certainly performed an invaluable service in calling attention to passages in the *Guide* which throw light on previously ignored aspects of Maimonides’ thought. But if we respect Maimonides’ words and refrain from interpreting him as perversely meaning the opposite of whatever he says—as meaning that the existence of God is unknowable, when he in fact prides himself on having demonstrated the existence of God in four different ways; as meaning that no inference can be drawn from the motion of the celestial spheres to a mover of the spheres, when he asserts on the contrary that at least one incorporeal mover can be inferred demonstrably; as meaning that man cannot attain metaphysical knowledge, when he repeatedly advances demonstrations of metaphysical propositions and repeatedly defines man’s highest, only true perfection as the acquisition of metaphysical knowledge; as meaning that the goal for man is the political life, when he iterates and reiterates that any activity wherein man acts for the sake of others cannot conceivably be the ultimate human goal—the passages fall into a comfortable and consistent pattern.

Maimonides delineates the extent to which man can attain knowledge of the incorporeal and celestial realms as follows: Man can demonstrate the existence of God, that is to say, the existence of a single first incorporeal cause of the universe. The demonstration of the existence of God as a being necessarily existent by virtue of itself is especially clear and convincing; it admits of neither doubt, rebuttal, nor dispute. That God consists in actual intellect is demonstrable as well; the reasoning is that a noncomposite and incorporeal substance can be nothing other than actual intellect. Although man can demonstrate the existence of God and can know that God consists in pure intellect, God’s essence is unknowable. That is to say, the content of His intelligible thought, which constitutes His essence, is completely beyond human comprehension. Maimonides insists that the proper way of expressing what man can know demonstrably about God is through negative attributes. He admittedly does not give us his negative reformulation of some propositions about God, most notably, the proposition that God consists in pure intellect.

Man can further demonstrate the existence of multiple celestial spheres. From the movements of the spheres he can prove that each sphere has a soul, and also that the spheres depend for their movement upon at least one incorporeal mover. Finally, man can prove the existence of a transcendent active intellect, which is the source of all actual human thought and all actual natural forms in the sublunar world. Man apparently cannot demonstrate the existence of multiple incorporeal intelligences, which move the celestial spheres. With the possible exception of the greatest of the prophets, man cannot know the essence of the incorporeal intelligences, just as he cannot know the essence of God. Nor, again with the possible exception of the greatest of the prophets, can man know anything of the essence of the spheres beyond the single proposition that they are composed of a different matter and form from the matter and form of the sublunar world.

The ultimate goal of human life is theoretical perfection and in particular, the acquisition of as much metaphysical knowledge as is humanly possible. In the following section, I try to show how Maimonides might have envisaged the acquisition of such knowledge.

4. The acquisition of metaphysical knowledge.

Certain statements of Aristotle may be read as affirming that human knowledge begins with concepts, and that after man possesses concepts, he proceeds to combine them into propositions. That reading of Aristotle has recently been challenged, however, and Aristotle has been interpreted as maintaining instead that the simplest mode in which man has knowledge is

propositional, concepts being known to man solely within the propositions containing them.\(^{108}\) When Aristotle treated of divine, as distinguished from human, thought, he implied that God has His own intellect as the object of His thought. Here, Aristotle's meaning had to be that God's thought consists in a concept of itself.\(^{109}\)

The tradition of medieval Arabic Aristotelianism in which Maimonides worked takes for granted that, with the exception of the first principles of thought which are propositional, and which for some Arabic Aristotelians man receives immediately in their propositional form, man does begin with concepts and then proceeds to combine the concepts into propositions. By the consensus of the Arabic Aristotelians, the First Cause and the incorporeal intelligences consist in intelligible thought which is exclusively conceptual.

The same Arabic Aristotelian tradition further read Aristotle's *De anima* 3.4, as affirming the existence of a transcendent active intellect, which effects the passage of the human intellect from potentiality to actuality. Two models were put forward to explain the active intellect's role in human thought. In the model employed by Alfarabi, Ibn Bājja, and Averroes, the active intellect casts a kind of light, or is itself a kind of light, which illuminates both the potential human intellect and images in the human imaginative faculty; when both the images and the human intellect are illuminated, the human intellect is able actually to discern the intelligible thoughts latent in the images.\(^{110}\) In the model advanced by Avicenna, human intelligible thoughts are emanated directly from the active intellect. The human soul, in Avicenna's system, prepares itself for thinking an intelligible thought by contemplating images in its imaginative faculty. When a human soul is properly prepared for the given thought, it "conjoins" with the active intellect, receives the active intellect's undifferentiated emanation, and differentiates out the appropriate thought for itself.\(^{111}\)

We have seen that Maimonides, like his Arabic predecessors, recognized the existence of a transcendent active intellect responsible for leading the human intellect from potentiality to actuality. Maimonides' writings never go into detail regarding the manner in which the active intellect performs its role in human thought, but a few remarks show that he accepted Avicenna's model. Most notably, he writes that actual human intelligible thought comes "from the emanation of the active intellect;\(^{112}\) and again that man obtains intelligible thought through "conjunction (itiṣāl; hiddaḇeq) with the divine [active] intellect, which emanates upon him and from which the form [i.e., the intelligible thought] comes into existence."\(^{113}\) Both statements clearly characterize thoughts as themselves coming from the active intellect and its emanation, and the latter statement echoes Avicenna's account of the process by which man receives thoughts.

The intelligible thoughts acquired by man directly from the active intellect include, according to Avicenna, the first principles of thought, such as the rule that "the whole is greater than the part" and the rule that "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." Those plainly are propositions. As human intellectual development continues, the active intellect's emanation furnishes man with a corpus of concepts.\(^{114}\) Man can combine the concepts he receives from the active intellect into propositions, combine the propositions into

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112. *Guide* 2.4 and 37.

113. *Guide* 3.8. Altmann, *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung* 80–81, 83, takes note of Maimonides' statements, but does not accept what they expressly say, in order to avoid reading Maimonides as tracing all actual human thought to an emanation from the active intellect. Following Pines' translation of the *Guide*, Altmann renders the term faid as "overflowing" rather than as "emanation," and that helps cloud the issue. B. Kogan, "What Can We Know. . . . Maimonides on the Active Intelligence and Human Cognition," *Moses Maimonides and His Time*, ed. E. Ormsby (Washington, 1989) 127, interprets Maimonides in what I consider to be the correct way, but the passages that he quotes from Maimonides in order to prove the point are compatible with Alfarabi's model of the active intellect’s role in human thought.

syllogisms, and draw conclusions. Avicenna identified the cogitative faculty (mufaklāt, ḥikrā) of the soul as the faculty that establishes conjunction with the active intellect, that differentiates concepts out of the active intellect’s emanation, that combines the concepts into propositions and the propositions into syllogisms, and that draws conclusions.115 As far as I could discover, Maimonides never touches on those aspects of the subject.

Maimonides, in sum, understands that the human intellect passes from its original state of potential thought to a state of actual thought through the offices of a transcendent active intellect. He moreover accepted Avicenna’s model, according to which the active intellect performs its role in human thought by continually emanating intelligible thoughts; properly prepared human intellects receive actual thought from the everpresent emanation of the active intellect. The tradition in which Maimonides worked assumed that, with the possible exception of the first principles of thought, man starts with concepts, combines the concepts into propositions, and combines the latter into syllogisms. Now, nothing in human experience can prepare a human intellect to receive the concept ‘God’ out of the emanation of the active intellect. And yet Maimonides tells us that the existence of ‘God’ and various propositions about ‘God’ can be demonstrated. We can only conjecture how Maimonides envisioned the construction of a body of demonstrated knowledge about the deity, seeing that man has no way of obtaining the concept. The following is a suggestion as to how Maimonides envisioned the procedure.

The human imaginative faculty presents images to the soul. By contemplating the images, the soul prepares itself to enter into conjunction with the active intellect. Conjunction with the active intellect enables the soul to receive the active intellect’s emanation and, from the emanation, the first principles of thought116 as well as forms, or concepts. An example employed by Maimonides for a concept possessed by the human intellect is the form of a natural physical object, wood.117 So much is fairly clear.

By continuing to differentiate thoughts out of the active intellect’s emanation, the human intellect would expand its corpus of concepts of physical objects, go on to assemble a corpus of mathematical concepts, and also proceed to higher level abstractions, such as the concepts cause, corporeal, time, space. Even Avicenna, who analyzes the role of the active intellect in the human intellectual process with considerable care, does not explain how, and indeed whether, the soul obtains higher level abstractions directly from the active intellect. And there is no way whatsoever of telling whether Avicenna understood that higher level negative abstractions come directly from the active intellect. If, for example, he is assumed to have understood that a concept such as incorporeal is emanated directly from the active intellect, there is no way of knowing whether he also took the abstraction incorporeal to be emanated, or whether he supposed instead that the human soul receives the concept incorporeal from the active intellect, adds the negative sign on its own initiative, and thereby coins the negative concept incorporeal. Maimonides betrays no hint of the manner in which he might have handled such cases.

What is important for us is that man can, by looking at images in his soul which are refined out of sense perceptions, by receiving concepts from the active intellect, and perhaps by coupling already obtained concepts with one another, develop a set of abstract concepts such as first, one, corporeal, incorporeal, motion, time, finite, infinite, existent, possible, necessary, intellect, but not including a genuine concept of God. For nothing in human sense perception could be refined into an image that might prepare the soul for the emanation of the concept of God, nor could any linking of concepts give rise to that concept. By combining concepts in its possession, the human soul would proceed to formulate propositions, as for example, ‘all animals are percipient’ and ‘every moving object has a cause of its motion’,118 but not philosophically usable propositions with ‘God’ as subject or predicate, since man does not have an adequate concept of God.

The human soul of a man with a philosophic bent would combine propositions into syllogisms, draw conclusions, and construct a science. As long as the philosopher works in physical science, the terms in the propositions and syllogisms he frames would reflect concepts that he received from the active intellect or that he coined by combining concepts already in his possession. When however, the philosopher passes to the science of supernatural incorporeal beings, he would lack some of the requisite concepts, most notably, an adequate concept of God. Nevertheless, the philosopher could use the concepts one, first, incorporeal, cause, motion, necessary, existence, to

115. Avicenna, Shifa': De anima 241, 243, 247; Mouhaddith in Aristi 'inda al-'Arab, ed. A. Badawi (Cairo, 1947) 199.
116. Examples of first principles of thought in Maimonides, Milot ha-Higgayon 8, are the propositions “the whole is greater than the part, two is an even number, and things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.”
117. Guide 1.68.
118. Milot ha-Higgayon, chap. 7; Guide 2, introduction, (17).
frame demonstrations of the existence of a single, first, incorporeal cause of the motion of the universe, of a single, first incorporeal cause of the existence of the universe, or of a single, noncomposite being necessarily existent by virtue of itself. Without ever possessing an adequate concept of God and with no inkling of God's essence, the philosopher could frame a demonstration of the existence of the being represented by descriptive phrases that refer, in effect, to God. Similarly, although lacking any prior adequate concept of the **active intellect**, the philosopher could frame a demonstration of the existence of a being represented by the descriptive phrase **incorporeal cause of human thought and of sublunar natural forms**. And to whatever degree the philosopher can formulate propositions about the individual incorporeal movers of the spheres, he would do so using descriptive phrases rather than an adequate concept of an **incorporeal-intelligence**. The philosopher could, moreover, demonstrate additional propositions about the First Cause of the universe and the active intellect, without ever comprehending the essence of either—although, as Pines points out, Maimonides may have believed that the prince of prophets did attain knowledge of the essence of beings in the incorporeal realm, and although we shall find Maimonides affirming the possibility of the human intellect's ultimately having the active intellect as a direct object of thought.

Propositions that in effect concern God and the active intellect would therefore be possible, without knowledge of the essence of either God or the active intellect.

5. **Having the active intellect as an object of thought; conjunction with the active intellect.**

The Arabic Aristotelians understood that upon reaching the culmination of its development, the human intellect has the active intellect itself as the direct object of its thought, conjoins with the active intellect, and perpetually remains in that condition. Having the active intellect as an object of thought meant not merely thinking propositions about the active intellect, but taking hold of the active intellect's very form, as the human intellect does when thinking the form of a rock or a tree, but with the difference that the form of the active intellect does not have to be abstracted from matter, since the active intellect possesses no matter.

Alfarabi's published works, Ibn Bājja, and Averroes, affirmed both the possibility of man's having the active intellect as an object of thought and the possibility of the human intellect's conjoining with the active intellect, although the three differed on particulars. They differed, for instance, on the question whether the two phenomena are concomitants following upon human intellectual perfection or whether they themselves constitute intellectual perfection; and on the question whether having the active intellect as an object of thought and conjoining with the active intellect entail complete identification of the human intellect with the active intellect—in accordance with the rule that intellect is identical with whatever thought it thinks—or whether identification with the active intellect is not entailed. **Avicenna,** as already mentioned, regarded conjunction with the active intellect as a precondition of man's thinking any intelligible thought whatsoever. He nonetheless joined his compatriots in recognizing an additional, "permanent conjunction" with the active intellect, a conjunction occurring upon the culmination of human intellectual development. **And he too held that in its crowning stage, the human intellect has the active intellect itself—or more precisely, a simulacrum of the active intellect, for he was adamant on the human intellect's not becoming identical with the active intellect—as an object of its thought.**

On Pines' thesis, Maimonides did not accept the possibility of the human intellect's having the active intellect as a direct object of thought or the possibility of the human intellect's conjoining with the active intellect; if Maimonides doubted the possibility of non-empirical scientific knowledge, he perforce doubted the very existence of a transcendent active intellect. We have seen that Maimonides, in fact, expressly affirms the provability of the existence of a transcendent active intellect. Although he never addresses the subject formally, occasional remarks show that he also recognizes the possibility of the human intellect's having the active intellect as an object of thought. As noted earlier, Maimonides followed Avicenna in making all human intelligible thought dependent on a conjunction with the active intellect. One or two remarks suggest that he recognized the possibility of a final permanent conjunction with the active intellect as well.

119. Cf. above, pp. 55, 60-61, 63-64.
121. Avicenna, *Mudafā‘thāt al-‘inā‘āt ilā’-Arab.* ed. A. Badawi (Cairo, 1947) 134, 135. In one passage, it is the active intellect that is the direct object of human thought, and in the other passage, it is "incorporeal beings" that are.
122. See above, nn. 74, 76, 79.
Maimonides speaks several times of human “cognition (idrāk)” of the active intellect. The location in itself does not settle matters, since he likewise speaks of human “cognition (idrāk)” of God, without intending that God can be a direct object of man’s thought. For example, after stating that “cognition of the true nature of God’s essence” is impossible for man, he asks himself how some people nonetheless come closer to “cognition” of God than others; and he answers that the more a person knows what God is not, the more the person can be said to have cognition of Him. Since cognition of God here means knowing what God is not, it hardly involves having God as a direct object of thought. Again, Maimonides writes that “nearness to God consists in having cognition of Him, while distance from God falls to the lot of those who are ignorant of Him; and [when nearness and distance are taken] in this sense [i.e., in the sense of knowledge and ignorance] there are many differences in degree both in being near and being distant.” Inasmuch as the cognition under discussion has gradations, it must be discursive, and not direct, knowledge; discursive knowledge admits of gradations, but possession of the concept of an essence would not, for one would either possess the concept or lack it. Seeing that in Maimonides human cognition of God can mean, and presumably always does mean, indirect and discursive knowledge about the First Cause of the universe, rather than having God as a direct object of thought, human cognition of the active intellect might also mean discursive knowledge about the active intellect, rather than having the active intellect as a direct object of thought.

Several passages in which Maimonides speaks of cognition of the active intellect differ, however, from those in which he speaks of cognition of God. Two passages in the Guide are especially pertinent.

The first, an encomium of “divine science,” in other words, of the science of metaphysics, contains the following statement: “In the books composed on the divine science [i.e., the science of metaphysics], it has been proved that this science is not subject to forgetting; that is to say, cognition of the active intellect [cannot be forgotten].” Maimonides does not explain either why metaphysical science cannot be forgotten or how it is equivalent to cognition of the active intellect. His apparent source—as was noted by Moses Narbion, Shem Tob Falaquera, and Munk—is a work of Ibn Bajja’s, and the parallel in Ibn Bajja throws light on what Maimonides wishes to say.

Ibn Bajja took up the question whether man can ever attain permanent pleasure. He reasoned that human knowledge of the “sciences,” not to speak of lower levels of human consciousness, are subject to “forgetting” and are hence impermanent. But, he went on, “it has been proved that the ultimate science, which is the conception [by man] of the [incorporeal active] intellect—this constituting [in man] the presence of acquired intellect—is not subject to forgetting.” As will be noted, the phrases “it has been proved” and “not subject to forgetting” reappear in the statement of Maimonides’ quoted in the previous paragraph.

Ibn Bajja’s “ultimate science” was seen earlier to be a supreme stage of human thought transcending metaphysics, a stage wherein all men have a single, common thought, identical with the thought content of the active intellect and therefore with the active intellect itself. That stage alone, and not human intellect at the lesser stage of metaphysics, is considered by Ibn Bajja—in the passage just quoted from him as well as in the previous passage—to be immune to forgetting and immortal. Maimonides’ statement either deliberately or inadvertently omits the science transcending metaphysics; it consequently leaves us puzzled as to why metaphysical science is not subject to forgetting and how metaphysical science is equivalent to cognition of the active intellect. With Ibn Bajja’s focus on a crowning degree of human knowledge as background, we may assume that Maimonides was speaking, at the very least, of comprehensive metaphysical science. He meant that human mastery of all metaphysics, as distinct from some lesser degree of metaphysical knowledge, constitutes cognition of the active intellect, and only when men master the entire science of metaphysics do they no longer forget what they have learned. At all events, the “conception of the intellect” in Ibn Bajja’s statement is plainly human thought with the active intellect as its direct object. The “cognition of the active intellect” in Maimonides’ statement is presumably the same. Maimonides hence recognizes a level of human intellectual development in which the active intellect itself becomes, and permanently remains, the direct object of human thought. It must be

127. Above, pp. 63–64.
noted, here, that Altmann, who was cognizant of the parallel in Ibn Bâjja, interprets Maimonides' statement about the cognition of the active intellect which cannot be forgotten in a manner avoiding the conclusion I have drawn.  

The second pertinent passage in Maimonides regarding cognition of the active intellect appears in a chapter where he does not distinguish sharply between his own views and those of "Aristotle," that is, of the Arabic Aristotelians, yet where he also does not disassociate himself from any of the Arabic Aristotelian positions he reports. The passage, which consists in an analogy between different stages of intellect, presupposes the existence of a distinct incorporeal intelligence for each celestial sphere, something that, we saw, Maimonides may not have considered demonstrable; but the analogy can stand even if the existence of multiple intelligences is not demonstrated.

The passage reads: "Actual intellect existing in man—which is from the emanation of the active intellect, and by virtue of which man has cognition of the active intellect—has the same relationship as the intellect [i.e., the rational soul] belonging to any celestial sphere and existing in the sphere—which [intellect] is ... from the emanation of the incorporeal [intelligence governing the sphere], by virtue of which it [i.e., the sphere] has a cognition and concept of the incorporeal [intelligence], and by virtue of which the sphere desires to imitate the intelligence, with the consequence that the sphere undergoes motion."  

The style is rather heavy, but the point is clear. The term actual intellect, which was sometimes used by Maimonides in the sense of the human intellect's possession of any actual thought, was sometimes also used by him in the sense of man's "final perfection," the state wherein a person "knows everything within the power of man to know"; and, the context shows, the present passage employs the term in the latter sense. Maimonides is saying that actual intellect in the sense of man's final intellectual perfection comes from the emanation of the active intellect, all human intelligible thought being emanated by the active intellect. The cosmic counterpart of actual intellect in the sense of man's final intellectual perfection is the permanently actualized rational soul of each given celestial sphere, the soul that is emanated by the incorporeal intelligence governing the sphere. And the human actual intellect enjoys cognition of the active intellect, as the rational soul of the sphere enjoys cognition of its incorporeal intelligence and a concept of its incorporeal intelligence. Earlier in the same chapter, Maimonides explains that the rational soul of each celestial sphere has the intelligence governing the sphere as a direct object of its thought, the resulting concept being what inspires the sphere to perform continual spherical motion. The human actual intellect's cognition of the active intellect, which parallels the thought that the soul of each sphere has of the corresponding intelligence, must therefore consist in the human intellect's having the active intellect as a direct object of thought. I should add that in the present instance too, Altmann offers an interpretation of Maimonides which avoids drawing what I regard as the unavoidable inference.

There is a corroborative passage. Maimonides' commentary to Pirqei Abot contains the statement: Man has "cognition" of "intelligible thoughts" in two ways: either by "abstracting the form and having intelligible thought of it"; or by "having cognition of forms that are incorporeal in their being (wujûd)" without the need for man to "transform them [i.e., the incorporeal forms] into intellect, since they are [already] intellect in their being." The statement has in view not discursive knowledge, but the human intellect's receiving the form, or concept, of an object. The sole objects in Maimonides' universe which are incorporeal by their own nature are God, the incorporeal substances, that is, the intelligences and the active intellect, God and the active intellect being the only two whose existence is truly demonstrable. Cognition of a form that is intelligible without having to be abstracted from matter, since the form already exists without matter, must therefore be the taking hold of the concept of an incorporeal substance, in other words, having the incorporeal substance as a direct object of thought. The incorporeal substance of which man is most obviously able to have a direct concept would be

128. Altmann, Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung 118.  
129. Guide 2.4.  
130. Guide 1.68.  
131. Guide 3.27.  
133. Altmann, Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung 84.  
134. Maimonides, Commentary on Mishnah, Abot 3.20. I used the Arabic text in volume four of Y. Kafâ’s edition (Jerusalem, 1964). The passage was brought to my attention by Altmann, Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung 76–77. Altmann also cites a parallel in Alexander of Aphrodisias, which explains Maimonides' reference to multiple forms—rather than just one active intellect—which are incorporeal in their being and able to be thought by man. Nevertheless, as in the previous instances, Altmann—aided by an unnatural translation of the term wujûd—avoids drawing the conclusion that I find unavoidable.
the active intellect, the being that governs the sublunar world and leads the human intellect to actuality.

One further pertinent passage is furnished by the chapter in the Guide where Maimonides explains the midrashic image of death through God's "kiss." Death through the kiss, he writes, is a poetic representation of the death of the perfect person, whose "cognition," "love for the object of cognition," and intellectual "joy," reach their peak, and whose "soul then departs the body in that state of pleasure." When a soul, or to be more precise an "intellect," departs the body under those conditions, it will "remain [permanently] in that immense pleasure." The language, as Munk noted, echoes the passage quoted a little earlier from Ibn Bajja on the subject of permanent pleasure. Maimonides appears to be interpreting death by a divine "kiss" as death when man has reached intellectual perfection, enjoys the active intellect as a direct object of thought, and very likely is in a state of conjunction with the active intellect; a kiss is a most apt and appealing metaphor for conjunction. Earlier in the same chapter of the Guide, Maimonides writes that when Moses and the three patriarchs of the Israelite nation reached a supreme level of intellectual perfection and "nearness" to God, their "intelligents" were in "union. . . . with cognition of Him." The language, although it falls short of technical precision, again suggests a final conjunction with the incorporeal realm.

Maimonides, in sum, recognizes the possibility of human thought with the active intellect itself as a permanent object, and he suggests that when the human intellect achieves such thought, it enters a state of permanent conjunction with the active intellect.

6. Conclusion.

The rejection of metaphysical knowledge in Alfarabi's lost Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics is questionable. The newly discovered Ibn Bajja text, when it speaks in its own name, explicitly affirms that philosophy can establish the existence of incorporeal beings; Pines' interpretation to the contrary conflicts with what the text expressly states. There is, moreover, no evidence at all that Maimonides had knowledge, of the Ibn Bajja text. Alfarabi therefore is an unlikely source of Maimonides' purported rejection of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, and Ibn Bajja is the most farfetched of sources.

The passages adduced by Pines from the Guide to support his thesis bring to the fore a significant point that has escaped other commentators: Maimonides apparently doubted that the existence of multiple incorporeal movers of the spheres can be demonstrated. But the passages are consistent with themselves and with the rest of the Guide in maintaining that philosophy can demonstrate the existence of God, although not His essence, that it can prove the existence of the celestial spheres, although not their nature, and that it can prove the existence of the active intellect.

Maimonides states over and over again that no endeavor wherein a man serves others can conceivably be the ultimate human goal; it follows that the political life cannot conceivably be the ultimate goal for man. Man's goal in life, Maimonides stresses from the beginning of the Guide to the end, is to develop his intellect and to acquire as much metaphysical knowledge, as much knowledge about God, as lies within human power. At the culmination of its development, the human intellect has the active intellect itself as a permanent direct object of thought. Maimonides very probably also recognized a final, permanent conjunction of the fully accomplished human intellect with the active intellect.

Appendix

Toward the end of Guide 2:24, Maimonides writes that "everything Aristotle says about the sublunar region follows the syllogistic method; . . . but of what is in the heavens, man can comprehend merely a small amount, mathematical in character"; "God alone" has "complete" knowledge of "the true reality, nature, substance, form, motions, and causes, of the heavens." Maimonides thereupon makes the problematic statement that I propose to examine here. I give the original Arabic and the translations of Munk, Pines, Al-Harizi, Ibn Tibbon, and Kafah.

(a) The original, according to I. Joel's edition, p. 228:

135. TB Baba Batra 17a. Parallels in the midrashic literature are listed by Yefé 'Ensyan ad locum.
137. Note to his translation of Guide 1.62.
138. Cf. Zohar 1: 168a: Death by the divine kiss is "the conjunction of the soul with its root."
The obvious problem in the passage as al-Harizi, Munk, and Pines translate it is that Maimonides is made to contradict what he wrote in Guide 2:1. In that chapter he offers four proofs for the existence of God, one of which reasons from the motion of the heavens to an incorporeal mover of the heavens; and Maimonides described all four proofs set forth in that chapter as “demonstrations.” In Guide 2:24, Maimonides is represented by al-Harizi, Munk, and Pines as, on the contrary, asserting that the proof of the existence of a mover of the heavens is something that cannot be known. Scholars on watch for contradictions in the Guide may of course be delighted to find yet another significant specimen. The contradiction given us by the al-Harizi, Munk, and Pines translations is not, however, of the sort that Maimonides promised. Maimonides wrote in the introduction to the Guide that sometimes he, like other authors, will have to conduct his discussion in one part of the book on the basis of “a certain premise” and to conduct his discussion in another part on the “basis of a premise that contradicts” the earlier one. “And the common folk must by no means be allowed to sense the contradiction between the two [premises]. The author must use every tactic to avoid that”—to avoid the possibility of unenlightened readers’ getting wind of the contradiction. What Maimonides promised was therefore contradictions between premises underlying discussions taking place in different parts of the book, whereas, on the al-Harizi, Munk, and Pines translations, it is not underlying premises that contradict one another, but open statements. Moreover, instead of resorting to every possible tactic to hide from unenlightened readers what would plainly be a provocative contradiction, Maimonides, on their translations, trumpets his contradiction to the heavens.

Ibn Tibbon sensed the problem and his translation removes the contradiction by adding a few words. Instead of having Maimonides state, as in Munk, that the general proof to be drawn from the heavens, [namely,] that they prove to us the existence of their mover, is something unknowable to human minds, Ibn Tibbon has Maimonides state that the general proof from the heavens [is] that they prove to us [or: show us] their mover, [whereas other things regarding the heavens] are something unknowable to human minds. The words “whereas other things regarding the heavens” are not attested to in the manuscripts cited by any of the editors of the Arabic text and undoubtedly were added by Ibn Tibbon as his own interpretation or fleshing out of the text.

Kafah cut the knot in another fashion. He gave a pivotal word in the
and the words “wal-istidāl al-āmm. . . mubarrikih” are a parenthetical circumstantial (ḥāl) clause. Ibn Tibbon may well have read the text in precisely that way and have made his small addition in order to render the point clear. The passage can, without Ibn Tibbon’s addition, be translated: “The causes [i.e., the logical principles1] from which proofs can be drawn up (aṣbāb al-istidāl) regarding the [nature of the] heavens are beyond our grasp. They [i.e., the heavens] are at a distance from us and exalted in place and in rank—the general [enterprise of] drawing up a proof from them consisting [solely] in this, that they show us [or: prove to us] their mover—indeed they [i.e., the heavens] are something to the knowledge of which human minds cannot attain.” The syntax is anacoluthic, but we have already seen that the beginning of the passage also discloses loose syntax. A passage from the end of Guide 3:54 which was discussed in Section 3 (g) of the present article furnished another instance of the loose and choppy style characteristic of the Guide.

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1. Maimonides uses the term frequently. See Guide 1.5 (beginning) and commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4.5, which make clear that the term denotes a process of reasoning and not the result of reasoning.

2. See above, Section 3 (d), of the present article.
IS THERE AN EARLY STRATUM IN THE *GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED*?

by

HANNAH KASHER

In his Introduction to the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides lists seven reasons for the presence of contradictions in books, the second of which is:

The author of a particular book has adopted a certain opinion that he later rejects; both his original and later statements are retained in the book. (Introduction 17)

Maimonides has in mind that a certain change has taken place in the opinions of an author over the course of his life, so that we have expressions of the “later X” as against those of the “earlier X.” In the case of his own work, Maimonides does not list this kind of contradiction, since, as he tells his reader, the book has undergone a strict and thorough editing. This would justify the synthetic exegetical method of “comparing its chapter with one another” (Introduction 17). Nevertheless, it is well known that there are differences between the positions expressed by Maimonides in the halakhic works written before the *Guide*, such as the *Commentary on the Mishnah* and *Mishneh Torah*, and those presented in the *Guide* itself.

1. The citations appearing below are taken from *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines (Chicago, 1963). The present article is largely based upon a lecture given at the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, 1989). I wish to express my thanks to my teachers and colleagues who were present at this lecture and who contributed their comments.

2. Much has been written about the differences between the opinions expressed by Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah* and those in the *Guide*. For a comprehensive survey and analysis of this problem, see A. Ravitzky, “The Esoteric Doctrine of the *Guide of the Perplexed*” (Heb.), *Mekharei Terushalaim be-Mahshevet Yisra’el* 5 (1986): 59-66.
If one undertakes a close reading of parallel passages in the *Commentary on the Mishnah* and the *Mishneh Torah*, on the one hand, and of the *Guide*, on the other, one discovers that there is a core of texts, within the first forty-nine chapters of the *Guide*, which has an affinity to opinions expressed by Maimonides in his halakhic writings. This combined group will henceforth be referred to as Layer A. By contrast, one can discern clear differences between this unit and the remaining chapters of the *Guide* (1.56-3.54). These latter chapters will hereafter be referred to as Layer B. Other differences exist as well, within the *Guide* itself, between the core contained in those chapters belonging to Layer A (1.1-49) and the rest of the book. These differences, as we shall see, need not necessarily be understood as contradictions or oppositions; hence, there is no need to interpret them in a forced or dialectical manner, utilising the fifth or seventh causes for contradiction listed by Maimonides in his *Guide* (Introduction 17-18). An examination of these differences is likely to lead to the conclusion that there is present, in the *Guide*, an early stratum in which Maimonides expresses opinions having an affinity to those expressed in his halakhic works and which differ from those expressed in the rest of the *Guide*. This would also seem to indicate that Maimonides changed his mind on certain issues between Layer A and Layer B.

Our discussion will proceed according to the following scheme:

1. Presentation of various differences supporting the claim that there are two significantly different strata—Layer A, found in *Guide* 1.1-49, and Layer B, the remaining chapters of the *Guide*.

2. The philosophical significance of these differences, which are seen as corresponding to the transition from the "early Maimonides" to the "later Maimonides."

3. A suggested literary explanation for the presence of an early stratum within the *Guide* namely, that this stratum contains the "Book of Prophecy" which Maimonides began writing in his youth.

4. General conclusions.

The differences between the two strata (schematized in the chart below) are the following:

1. Maimonides interprets the incident of the Cleft of the Rock (งรมן רגא) (in Exodus 33, where Moses asks God, "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory") in a number of different writings: in the *Commentary on the Mishnah* (Eight Chapters, ch. 7); in the *Mishneh Torah* (Yossef ha-Torah 1.10); and in the *Guide of the Perplexed* (Part 1). Maimonides proposes two distinct explanations in the first part of the *Guide*: his own, and that of Onkelos. His own interpretation appears in two versions: the first in *Guide* 1.21, 37, 38 (Layer A), and the second in *Guide* 1.54, 64 (Layer B). There are likewise discernable differences between statements made in the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Commentary on the Mishnah* (i.e., the earlier, halakhic, writings), and what appears in *Guide* 1.54, 64 (the second commentary offered in the *Guide*, in Layer B). The first interpretation given in the *Guide* (1.21, 37, 38) discloses a clear relationship to that offered by Maimonides in his earlier, halakhic, writings. These differences may be illustrated by the following two examples:

a. According to all three sources of Layer A (*Commentary on the Mishnah, Mishneh Torah*, and *Guide* 1.21, 37, 38), Moses made only one request, namely the "seeing of [God's] Glory," which is identified with "seeing the Divine face". This request was rejected. Instead Moses was granted a substitute, namely the vision of God's "back". This interpretation itself relates to the passage in Ex. 33:17-23.

b. Onkelos' commentary to the story of the Cleft of the Rock appears in *Guide* 1.21, 37.

5. "He sought to apprehend God... and said: 'Show me, I pray, Thy glory' (Ex. 33:18). Then God, may He be exalted, made known to him that this was impossible... And God did good to him... But he, of blessed memory, apprehended slightly less than this, and this was what was called, 'And you shall see My back'" (*Commentary on the Mishnah*, Eight Chapters, Ch. 7).

6. "What is that which Moses our teacher sought to apprehend when he said: 'Show me, I pray, Thy glory' (Ex. 33:18)?... And He, blessed be He, replied that this is not within the power of the mind of a living man... And He, blessed be He, made known to him that to which no man before or since knew... And it is to this that Scripture alludes when it says: 'and you shall see My back, but my face shall not be seen'" (*Mishneh Torah*, Yossef ha-Torah 1.10).

7. "... that Moses, peace be on him, demanded a certain apprehension... and was promised an apprehension inferior to that which he had demanded." (*Guide* 1.21:48).

8. "But My face shall not be seen" (Ex. 33:23), meaning that the true reality of my existence as it veritably is cannot be grasped." (*Guide* 1.37:86).

In this sense it is said, 'and thou shalt see My back' (Ex. 33:23), which means that thou shal
According to Layer B (Guide 1.54, 64), Moses made two separate requests (“make known to me Thy ways” and “show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory”). The former request, knowledge of God’s ways, was granted when God passed “all of His goodness” before him, namely, the thirteen attributes of mercy. The second request, the vision of the Divine glory, was rejected. This interpretation is based on a larger section of the biblical text, namely, Ex. 33:12–23. In other words, the textual units considered in Maimonides’ two interpretations of the story of the Cleft of the Rock are different in scope.

b. According to Layer A (again, all three sources), Moses sought to apprehend the “true reality” of the God’s existence. The same formula is used in Hebrew (תנאה התה) and in Arabic (تفرعت التن) in all three places. According to Layer B, by contrast, Moses wished to apprehend the “essence and true reality” (Arabic: פסוקה נשמה) of God, both in Guide 1.54 and 64.

Can the meaning of the “true reality of God’s existence” be fully equated with His “essence and true reality”? At first blush, the two expressions seem to be merely synonyms, God’s existence being identical with His essence. However, the consistency in the use of these formulae invites comment.

apprehend what follows Me, has come to be like Me, and follows necessarily from My will.” (Guide 1.38:87).

6. “Moses our Master . . . made two requests. . . One request consisted in his asking Him, may He be exalted, to let him know His essence and true reality. The second request, which he put first, was that he should let him know His attributes... His request regarding the knowledge of [God’s] attributes is conveyed in his saying: ‘Show me now Thy ways’ (Ex. 33:13). . . Then he asked for the apprehension of His essence, may He be exalted. This is what he means when he says: ‘Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory’ (Ex. 33:18), whereupon he received a [favorable] answer with regard to what he had asked for at first... For he was told, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before Thee’ (Ex. 33:19). In answer to his second demand, he was told: ‘Thou canst not see My face’ (Ex. 33:20).” (Guide 1.54: 123–24).

7. “he sought to apprehend God according to His true reality.” (Eight Chapters, ch. 7) “He sought to know His true reality.” (Yesodei ha-Torah 1.10)

But my face shall not be seen” (Ex. 33:23) meaning that the true reality of My existence as it vitally is cannot be grasped.” (Guide 1.37:86)

8. “. . . to let him know His essence and true reality. . . and teaching him that His essence cannot be grasped as it really is. . . Then he asked for the apprehension of His essence, may He be exalted.” (Guide 1.54: 123–24)

“The expression is sometimes intended to signify His essence and true reality, may He be exalted, as when he says, ‘Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory’ (Ex. 33:18).” (Guide 1.64:156)

“The glory that is spoken of here is His essence, and that [Moses] saying Thy glory is by way of honoring Him.” (Guide 1.64:157).

Indeed, in accordance with their respective contexts, one detects significant distinctions between the two formulae. Examination of Maimonides’ commentaries on the story of the Cleft of the Rock in Layer A indicate that their main intention is to assert that man cannot know God as He is; “His apprehension, may He be blessed, in truth” (Commentary on the Mishnah), “His true existence as it is” (Mishneh Torah); “the true reality of My existence as it vitally is” (Guide 1.37:86). According to the statements on this subject made in the Commentary on the Mishnah or the Mishneh Torah, even Moses only partly succeeded in apprehending God. In Layer B, by contrast, it is utterly impossible to apprehend God Himself at all, either wholly or partially.

2. In the earlier writings of Maimonides, the angels are explicitly identified with either the separate (incorporeal) intellects or with the prophets, because of their stature as “men of God.” Only in Guide 2.6 does Maimonides identify the angels with natural forces as well, citing both interpretations alongside one another.

The following differences between the two strata may be explained on this basis:

a. The verse, “Who maketh winds His messengers, the flaming fire His ministers” (Ps. 104:4), is explained in two different ways:

In Yesodei ha-Torah 2.6, Maimonides argues, on the basis of this verse,

9. For example: “The Hayyot ha-Qodesh and the other rank, of the angels. . . from the angels and the stars and the spheres and the elements. . . until he [Moses] attained the angelic rank, was on the level of the angels. . . and the existence of angels, and the difference in their rank before the Creator need to be explained...” (Commentary on the Mishnah, Introduction to Heikhal).

“... which are created as form without matter at all, and these are the angels, for the angels have no body or matter, but are forms distinct from one another.” (Yesodei ha-Torah 2.3) Likewise: “The angels too are not endowed with bodies, but are intellects separate from matter.” (Guide 1.49) See Z. Blumberg, “The Separate Intellects in Maimonides’ Teaching” (Heb.) Torath 40 (1971): 216–25.

10. “And I say that a man who is described thus is also called ‘an angel of God,’ as it is said, ‘And the angel of the Lord came up’ (Jud. 2:1)... And Scripture has already explicitly stated that a person who has all the intellectual and moral virtues is called ‘an angel of God’” (Commentary on the Mishnah, Avot 5:13). In the Eight Chapters, ch. 7, Maimonides already notes that the prophet is one who is perfect in his intellectual and moral virtues. The description of the prophet as an angel of God likewise appears in Guide 2.42.

11. “... that God has placed in the sperm a formative force shaping the limbs and giving them their configuration and that this force is the angel, or that all the forms derive from the act of the Active Intellect, and that the latter is the angel and the prince of the world constantly mentioned by the Sages.” (Guide 2.6:263-64)
that the angels (i.e., the separate intellects) are revealed to human beings through concrete images (“parables and riddles”) of wind and fire:

And what do the prophets mean when they say that they saw an angel of fire and with wings? It is all in prophetic vision and by way of allusion, to say that it is not a body... as it is said, “Who maketh His angels winds.”

Likewise, in Guide 1.49:

The angels too are not endowed with bodies, but are intellects separate from matter... The Sages say in Genesis Rabbah: “‘The flaming sword which turns every way’ (Gen. 3:24) is called thus with reference to the verse, ‘His ministers a flaming fire (Ps. 104:4).’” (Guide 108)

On the other hand, in Guide 2.6, Maimonides identifies all of the forces of nature, including the four elements (earth, water, air and fire) as angels, relying upon the same verse that he had used earlier:

Even the elements are in their turn called angels, thus: “He maketh the winds His angels, the flaming fire His ministers” (Guide 262)

The identification of “winds” with “angels,” based upon this verse, also appears in the commentaries of Abraham ibn Ezra.2

b. It is well-known that the story of Jacob’s ladder is interpreted in the Guide in two ways:12 In Layer A (Guide 1.15), the “angels” who ascend and descend are the “prophets;” while in Layer B (Guide 2.10), the “angels” are the “four elements,” two of which (air and fire) ascend and two of which (water and air) descend. It follows that the object of Jacob’s apprehension belong to a lower level in layer B.

It might be noted that, in the Mishneh Torah, the object of the parable is the four kingdoms and their defeat, while in the Midrash which is its source, the angels refer to the princes of the various nations.14 According to the

former interpretation there may be a relationship between the princes of the nations and the sublime angels.

3. It has been noted that the imaginative faculty does not appear explicitly in the descriptions of prophecy in the Commentary on the Mishnah and the Mishneh Torah.15 One may therefore plausibly argue that, in the Commentary on the Mishnah, the angel who mediates between God and the prophet is the angel Gabriel:

Even if another prophet should receive a vision of God through an angel... When, for example, Daniel was addressed by Gabriel in a vision...16

As is known, the angel Gabriel symbolizes the Active Intellect. The present biblical example, the revelation of Gabriel to Daniel, also appears implicitly, in a parallel context, in the Mishneh Torah.17

Only in Guide 2.45 does Maimonides designate the imaginative faculty by the name “angel.” This faculty serves as a means of mediation in the prophecy of all prophets other than Moses.18

Maimonides’ description of prophecy in his earlier writings (in which the angel is equated with the Active Intellect) corresponds to Al-Farabi’s opinion in his book, Political Regimes (al-Siyasat al-Madaniyya): “For the First Cause gives prophecy to man by means of the Active Intellect.”19 Abraham ibn Daud (Rabad I) identifies the Active Intellect with the angel Gabriel in his Emunah Ramah: “The intermediary—Gabriel, in the language of the Ishmaelites.”20 In practice, one finds in the writings of Islamic theologians a distinction drawn between prophecy by means of the angel Gabriel and that which occurs

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17. Yeosedi ha Torah 7.2.
19. Al-Farabi, Hathalot ha-Nintsa'im, ed. Z. Philipowski (Leipzig, 1849) 41.
directly from God, the latter being, confined to Mohammed and to Moses. This description of Moses’ prophecy also seems to appear in Maimonides’ earlier writings:

... He [Moses] surpassed the normal human condition and attained the angelic... he spoke to God without angelic mediation. (Introduction to Peresq Helek 419)

The description of Moses’ level of prophecy in Maimonides’ teaching corresponds to Al-Farabi’s statement in the Political Regimes:

...that man should reach the level of the Active Intellect... and remain in this perfection permanently.

It may be that, because of this perfection, Moses did not need parables and images in his prophetic experience.

On the other hand, the identification of the mediating angel with the imaginative faculty, as it appears in the Guide, corresponds to Al-Farabi’s remarks in his, “The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City.”

The fact that Maimonides included the imaginative faculty among the components of prophecy only in his later teachings may help to explain the differences among his various interpretations of the verses describing prophecy. These differences correspond to the characteristics of the two layers mentioned above:

a. The verse, “Look now toward heaven and count the stars” (Gen. 15:5) is interpreted in two different ways. In Guide 1.4 (Layer A), “looking” is interpreted as intellectual apprehension of the prophetic vision:

The word [to look] is also used figuratively to designate the mind’s turning (ראות) and directing itself to the contemplation of a thing until it grasps it... The word likewise has this meaning when it says: “Look now toward heaven” (Gen. 15:5); for this was in a prophetic vision.” (Guide 28)

b. The verse, “and the Lord appeared unto him” (Gen. 18:1) is likewise subjected to a dual interpretation. In Layer A (Guide 1.4), it is understood as referring to intellectual apprehension:

Every mention of seeing, when referring to God, may He be exalted, has this figurative meaning... “and the Lord became seen to him” (Gen. 18:1)... all this refers to intellectual apprehension (ראותisicing). (Guide 27-28).

In Layer B (Guide 2.42), it is understood as referring to perception by means of the imaginative faculty:

For after he [Abraham] had first propounded the proposition that God manifested Himself to him, he began to explain what the form of this manifestation was; and he said that at first he saw three men (Guide 389).

4. The “Account of the Chariot” (صحابה המ STANDARD) as described in Layer A involves higher, more sublime beings than that described in Layer B. As will be seen, in Layer A, the Throne of Glory is interpreted as a symbol for God Himself, while the Hayyot ha-Qodesh are seen as the Supreme Intellect. By contrast, in Layer B the Throne of Glory is equated with the highest sphere, while the Hayyot are seen as the celestial spheres. This interpretation may be related to the two meanings of “Glory” discussed below: i.e., as a representation of God Himself, and as a metaphor for the Active Intellect.

a. The earlier, radical exegetes claimed that the seventh contradiction was entailed in the various interpretations of the verse: “Thou, O Lord,
art enthroned forever, Thy throne is from generation to generation” (Lam. 5:19).25 According to the interpretation proposed here, this verse, in Guide 1.9 (Layer A), is to be understood as indicating two parallels, God’s Throne being identical with His Essence:

For it states explicitly: “Thou, O Lord, sittest for all eternity, Thy throne is from generation to generation” (Lam. 5:19); whereby it indicates that the throne is a thing inseparable from Him. . . His sublimity and greatness. (Guide 35)

In the Mishneh Torah (Yesodei ha-Torah 2.7), the Divine Throne is likewise identified with the Divine Essence, whereas the Ḥayyot ha-Qodesh below it are the highest separate Intellect:

A level above which there is none higher except the level of God Himself, blessed be He, is that of the form called Hayyot. Therefore, it is said in prophecy that they are beneath the Throne of Glory.

Similar remarks are made in Yesodei ha-Torah 7.1 with regard to prophetic apprehension: “. . . connected beneath the Throne of Glory, to understand those selfsame holy and pure forms.”

In Guide 2.26 (Layer B), the Throne is described as “belonging to the created things,” while the verse “Thy throne is from generation to generation” affirms its future eternity. The Throne evidently symbolizes the outermost sphere. An explicit identification of the Throne of Glory with the outermost sphere appears in Guide 1.70, in which it is depicted as existing above the creatures, which represent the celestial spheres.

b. The verse, “and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:34) is explained in two places. In both the “glory of the Lord” is identified with “the created light.” In Guide 1.19 (Layer A), this identification appears as an exegetical alternative, receiving only mild support:

In this sense it is said: “The whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa. 6:3); the meaning of the verse being that the whole earth bears witness to His perfection, that is, indicates it. Similar is its dictum: “and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:34). . . However, if you wish to consider that the glory of the Lord is the created light that is designated as glory in every passage and that filled the tabernacle, there is no harm in it. (Guide 46)

This identification appears alongside Maimonides’ own interpretation, in which the Glory is identified with the essence of God Himself.

In Guide 1.64 (Layer B), the identification of the “glory” with the “created light” is presented as the exclusive interpretation, proposed by Maimonides himself:

Similarly, the glory of YHVH is sometimes intended to signify the created light. . . “And the Glory of YHVH filled the tabernacle”. . . “The whole earth is full of His glory,” this being equivalent to the dictum, “And the earth is full of His praise” (Hab. 3:3), for praise is called glory. (Guide 156–57).

Maimonides again refers to the verse, “the whole earth is full of His glory” at the end of the Guide (3.52), where the glory is associated with the light, the Divine Presence (Shekhinah), and the king of the parable appearing in this chapter—each of which symbolizes the Active Intellect.

5. Maimonides devotes two linguistic discussions to the [Divine] Name Elohim. In the first of these, in Layer A, he states:

The term Elohim is equivocal, designating the deity, the angels, and the rulers governing the cities [including judges]. (Guide 1.2/23)

In other words, the word Elohim fulfills a three-fold function: Maimonides first notes that it is a name of God, but it also refers to the angels and to a particular group of human beings—namely, the judges, who perform a leadership function.

Maimonides is not satisfied with the fact that the term Elohim is used to refer to judges, and adds that they are “rulers governing the cities.” This additional comment is evidently intended to explain the inclusion of all three—God, the angels, and the human judges—under the rubric of an “equivocal name”: i.e., that they are all rulers. We therefore find here, not only a “common name,” but a certain shared semantic content. This sublime meaning of the name Elohim (i.e., leaders), in which God is mentioned first (“to God, to the angels and to the judges”), corresponds to Maimonides’ statement in Yesodei ha-Torah 6.2 (Layer A) that this name is sacred even though the angels are also referred to by the term Elohim (in Yesodei ha-Torah 1.7).
The second linguistic description of the name *Elohim*, in Layer B, is somewhat different:

*Elohim* is a term applied to judges. . . . For this reason this word is applied figuratively to the angels and to the deity because of His being a judge of the angels. (*Guide* 2.6:26)

In this passage the basic meaning of the word *Elohim* is a secular one, referring to the activity of judging. However, the name is also applied to a sacred context, by which the angels and God are designated. Likewise, in *Guide* 2.30, he states: “He is *Elohim*—that is, He who governs.” This name does not explicitly designate the attributes, either of lordship (*Guide* 2.6) or of rulership (*Guide* 2.30). However, this description does suit the statement that *Elohim* is essentially an adverb applied to God (*Guide* 1.61), describing the Divine activity by analogy to that of human beings (*Guide* 1.54, 3.53).


uve-nimusei 'amemaya azlin—1.7 (Layer A);
uve-nimusei 'amemaya yahakhan—2.11 (Layer B).

Although the distinction between the two is a formal—technical one (both versions may best be rendered in English as “and they walk according to the laws of the Gentiles”), it may be added to the other distinctions between the two strata.
We have presented a list of differences, including some which distinguish between Maimonides’ earlier writings and his *Guide of the Perplexed*. The late S. Pines has listed certain other differences in some of his last articles, in which he attributed them to a change in Maimonides’ intellectual profile, reflecting the philosophical literature by which he was influenced at different periods of his life. According to Pines, this change is primarily expressed in an epistemological scepticism regarding man’s ability to attain metaphysical knowledge.

Most of the differences suggested above also fit Pines’ proposed distinction between the early Maimonides and the late Maimonides; by means of them, this point may be illustrated item by item. According to the later Maimonides, Moses did not at all apprehend the essence of God, but only the attributes of His action within the world (see Table, 1b). The angels are not only separate intellects, but natural forces in the concrete physical world (Table, 2). Likewise, in keeping with this approach, the vision of Jacob’s ladder, in which the angels are revealed, does not refer to the prophets, who are men of God, but to the four basic elements of the physical world (Table 2b). The Account of the Chariot in the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel is concerned with the world of celestial spheres, and not with God and the separate intellects (Table, 4a). Prophetic apprehension generally relies upon the mediating power of the imagination (Table 3), which obscures the clarity of conceptual intellectual attainment. “The glory of God” does not necessarily refer to God Himself, but to a created being (Table 4b). At the end of the *Guide*, the glory is apparently identified with the Active Intellect, the tenth among the intellects emanated from God.

To summarize: from all of the above-mentioned examples, it becomes clear that a certain change has taken place in Maimonides’ understanding of the phenomenon of prophecy. The prophetic powers and the object of prophecy are no longer seen as exclusively intellectual powers and their object, by means of which the prophet is enabled to achieve sublime metaphysical apprehension. The reliance upon the power of the imagination, the apprehension by means of images rather than by means of abstract concepts, the impossibility of apprehending in any way either God or the separate intellects—all these indicate a sceptical approach to man’s ability, — even that of Moses, the greatest of prophets,—to achieve metaphysical apprehension.

This sceptical turn in Maimonides’ thought may explain a considerable number of the differences we have enumerated; these differences in turn create a certain connection between the first chapters of the *Guide* (1.1–49) and Maimonides’ earlier writings. But there are two other distinctions in the list mentioned above which are more difficult to describe using the typology suggested. The first of these is expressed in the fact that the biblical text of the narrative of the Cleft of the Rock interpreted in Layer B differs from that interpreted in Layer A, in all three places (Table, 1a). The second difference is a formal-linguistic one, namely, that Targum Jonathan on Isa. 2:6 is different in the two units (Table, 5): in Layer A *yaspi* is translated as *azlin*, while in Layer B it is rendered as *yahakhun*, there being no significant semantic difference between *azlin* and *yahakhun*.

The presence of these distinctions, which it is difficult to explain in theological-philosophical terms, bears upon our question: they force us to reject the possibility of using the “fifth cause” or “seventh cause” for contradictory statements [e.g., the use of contradictions for pedagogic purposes, or to conceal certain esoteric teachings from the masses; see *Guide* Introduction: 17–18] in order to explain this list of differences in full. One could argue that Maimonides sought to hide his own position, according to which even the greatest of the prophets did not attain the highest level of metaphysical apprehension, and therefore

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felt constrained from articulating this in his halakhic writings or in the
beginning of the Guide. But it is difficult, in terms of such an argument,
to explain why the turning point between the early Maimonides and
the later Maimonides took place abruptly in the fifth chapter of
the Guide. The presence of layers A and B with their formal-technical
difference are to be seen as the result of the "second reason" for
contradictions: the composition of the various chapters of the Guide at
different periods in time.

III

We may assume that the first forty-nine chapters of the Guide contain
a core, constituting the earliest stratum. As we have shown above, this
core displays great similarity to Maimonides' earlier writings, the
Commentary on the Mishnah and the Mishneh Torah; the approach to prophecy
exemplified therein is characteristic of the earlier Maimonides rather
than of the later Maimonides.

Nevertheless, the first forty-nine chapters cannot be entirely isolated
from the other sections of the Guide, the whole having been edited by
Maimonides' artful hand. Among the explicit signs of this editing are
the references to other places in the Guide, using such phrases as, "as we
will explicate in one of the chapters of this book." The formulation of

27. See, for example: "Hence the term throne signifies, in this passage and in all
those similar to it, His sublimity and greatness that do not constitute a thing existing
outside His essence, as will be explained in some of the chapters of this treatise" (Guide
1.9:35); "I shall explain the matter of these gradations in apprehension in one of
the chapters of this Treatise" (Guide 1.18:15); "Perhaps my saying ... creates a difficulty
for you... That notion is His essence and nothing outside this essence. Chapters on
the name and attributes will reach you later" (1.20:47); "Scripture accordingly says in
this passage that God, may He be exalted, hid from him the apprehension called that
of the face, and made him pass over to something different; I mean the knowledge of
the acts ascribed to Him, may He be exalted, which, as we shall explain, are deemed
to be multiple attributes. When I say he hid from him... as we shall explain in one of
the chapters of this treatise" (Guide 1.21:49); "We have gone beyond the subject of
this chapter in order to deal with a matter that will be made clear in other chapters. I
shall now return to the subject of this chapter... it certainly is incumbent upon me in
accordance with the purpose of this Treatise to interpret something of this parable... A
pointer to his marvellous interpretation was only given to me by a dictum of Rabbi
Eliezer ben Hyrqa's that I came across. You will see it in one of the chapters of this

these phrases in the future tense (e.g., "we will explicate") could mean
that the reader will find them in a subsequent chapter of the Guide; but
they could also mean that they were added after the Guide had already
been composed. It may also be that, among the later additions inserted
at the time the Guide was edited, one should include the commentaries
of other authors cited here in addition to the interpretations which
Maimonides himself proposes in these chapters, which bring about a
situation in which there are double interpretations. The source of these
interpretations is sometimes stated explicitly (e.g., Onkelos) and
at others not. Maimonides seems to have utilized Abraham bar Hiyya's
interpretation of the word islem as an alternative interpretation
(Guide 1.1); elsewhere, the commentary by Abraham ibn Ezra on the
verse, "you shall rise" is suggested as a view additional to his
own interpretation. The interpretation which assumes the existence
of the "Created Light," already mentioned above, may also be viewed
as an added exegetical alternative. It would seem that when writing
the earliest chapters, Maimonides interpreted scriptural verses in an
unequivocal way, while later on, during the course of editing, he added
additional commentaries appropriate for the readers who were not
philosophers.
In light of all these factors, one needs to be cautious and state that, if there in fact does exist an earlier stratum within Guide 1.1-49, it is not to be identified with the totality of these chapters. This stratum itself underwent editing, and was unified with the Guide as a whole.

Phillip Bloch argued in 1908—though without detailed documentation—that the “Book of Prophecy” which Maimonides began to write in his youth is incorporated within the group of lexicographical chapters in Guide 1.1-49. It may be possible for us to confirm this thesis to a certain extent. What was meant to be the nature of this book?

The “Book of Prophecy” was one of three theoretical works which Maimonides intended to write, the other two being the “Book of Homilies” or “Book of Correspondence,” treating the Rabbinic agadah; and The Book of Principles.” It is possible for us to reconstruct, to a certain extent, the stages of development of the Book of Prophecy on the basis of references made to it in the writings of Maimonides.

1. In his Introduction to the Commentary on the Mishnah, Maimonides enumerates the qualifications of the prophet:

that he be among those possessing wisdom, the fear of God, asceticism, intelligence, and all the virtues in accordance with the known principle: “Prophecy does not rest upon a person unless he is wise, brave, and wealthy” (Shabbat 92a). And there are many particulars of this matter which it is impossible to include, for to speak of them and to prove each one of them from the Bible and from the words of the Sages, would require a book in its own right. And perhaps God will help me to do that which needs to be added to this topic.

Maimonides does not write anything explicit here: he does not describe his program in an unequivocal way (“perhaps God will help me to do that”), nor does he even give the name of the projected book. He only alludes to the fact that a detailed discussion of the subject of prophecy, including the pertinent support from biblical passages and rabbinic dicta, would require a book in its own right. Such a book, were


he to write it, would include further relevant material which he does not detail (“that which needs to be added to this topic”)

2. In his discussion of the seventh principle, of belief, that relating to the prophecy of Moses, Maimonides, in the “Introduction to Hilkhot,” states:

This is what is meant by saying that he spoke to God without angelic mediation. I should have wished to explicate this wondrous matter (לעשון שלגין) from Biblical sources, explain such verses as “[God spoke to Moses] mouth to mouth” (Num. 12:8), for this verse and its like are pertinent to our subject; but I see that these matters are exceedingly subtle, and require a great many preparatory comments about the remarkable existence of angels, which derives from God, and about the soul and all of its faculties. And the discussion would have to be widened to include the prophetic descriptions of the Creator and the angels, including the Shi’ur Qomah of which even the briefest description would require a hundred pages. I have, therefore, left these matters to my exegetical book (i.e., the “Book of Homilies”), which I have promised to write, to the book on prophecy on which I am working, or to a book which I hope to write some day explaining these fundamental principles.

This passage seems to imply that he had already begun writing the “Book of Prophecy,” whose planning was alluded to earlier in the Introduction to the Mishnah. At the same time, it is clear that Maimonides had already divided his planned theological writings among three works, the boundaries among which were not yet entirely sharp and clear. Maimonides had not yet determined which of these works would contain a comprehensive discussion of the prophecy of Moses, including the pertinent biblical interpretations and rabbinic sayings, and philosophical-metaphysical discussions which would elucidate the nature of the prophecy of Moses.

The difficulty of determining the boundaries of the discussion within these three books comes about as a result of the lack of any consistent criterion for distinguishing among them. The “Book of Prophecy” was intended as a monograph on prophecy addressing two kinds of literary strata, namely biblical verses and rabbinic saying. The “Book of Homilies” was meant to relate to only one kind of literary stratum, namely, rabbinic homilies. The “Book of Principles” was intended to explain the principles of the Jewish
religion. In the case of the latter, at least one of the principles, that dealing with prophecy, would be likely to overlap with the contents of the “Book of Prophecy,” and was also likely to deal with rabbincic homilies.

5. At the end of the first chapter of the Eight Chapters (Commentary on the Mishnah, Introduction to Avot), which includes a sketch of the faculties of the soul, Maimonides concludes:

... but this is not the place to speak about form and matter, and the intellects and their number and how they are acquired. And there is no need to discuss these topics in order to discuss what we wish to discuss concerning the virtues. [These topics] are suitable for the Book of Prophecy, as we have mentioned.34

Maimonides distinguishes here between the realm of the discussion of ethics or practical philosophy, which is the concern of the Eight Chapters, and the discussion of metaphysics, concerning form, matter and intellects, which is irrelevant here. It would seem that Maimonides had already decided that he planned to discuss matters of metaphysics, in the “Book of Prophecy,” since he makes no mention of the “Book of Homilies” or “Book of Principles” in the present passage. It should be noted that originally, in the Introduction to the Mishnah (Sect. 1), Maimonides did not include purely metaphysical-philosophical considerations within the “Book of Prophecy.”

4. Further on in chapter 7 of the Eight Chapters Maimonides interprets the story of the revelation in the Cleft of the Rock:

But human apprehension is unable to reach such an apprehension, but he [Moses], of blessed memory, attained slightly less than this, and this is what is referred to by, “and you shall see my back.” And I shall complete this matter in the Book of Prophecy.35

Thus, Maimonides had planned, in the “Book of Prophecy,” to explain further the discussion of Moses’ apprehension, while explicating the verse, “and you shall see my back.”

5. In the Introduction to the Guide of the Perplexed, Maimonides describes the final lot of the “Book of Prophecy,” together with that of the other two books he had planned:

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We had promised in the commentary on the Mishnah that we would explain strange subjects (.study) in the “Book of Prophecy” and in the “Book of Correspondence”... However, when, many years ago, we began these books and composed a part of them, our beginning to explain matters in this way did not commend itself to us... Now it was to the vulgar that we wanted to explain the import of the Midrashim and the external meanings (ologically) of prophecy... With regard to the meaning of prophecy, the exposition of its various degrees, and the elucidation of the parables occurring in the prophetic books, another manner of explanation is used in this Treatise. In view of these considerations, we have given up composing these two books in the way in which they were begun. We have confined ourselves to mentioning briefly the foundations of belief and general truths, while dropping hints that approach a clear exposition, just as we have set them forth in the great legal compilation, Mishneh Torah. (Introduction 9–10)

Some of those subjects which Maimonides had planned to include within the “Book of Prophecy” were included in the Mishneh Torah, composed after the Commentary on the Mishnah. He evidently alludes to the summary discussions of metaphysics in the opening chapters of Hilkhut Yesodei ha-Torah, when he writes in the Guide:

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It will be remembered that Maimonides had intended to include in his “Book of Prophecy” a discussion of matter and form, of the faculties of the soul, of the separate intellects and their relation to God.

As we mentioned above (Section II), Maimonides was undecided about the proper place in which to discuss the verse “mouth to mouth [God spoke to Him]” (Num. 8:12). At the end of Guide 2.45, he argues that the interpretation of this verse already appears in Mishneh Torah; he evidently refers there to Hilkhut Yesodei ha-Torah 7.6.

From Maimonides’ statement, “with regard to the meaning of prophecy, the exposition of its various degrees, and the elucidation of the parables occurring in the prophetic books, another manner of explanation is used in this treatise” (Guide, Introduction 10) it seems to follow that he composed a new version of the envisaged monograph on prophecy which he then incorporated.

34. Perush ha-Mishnah, 4:376.
religion. In the case of the latter, at least one of the principles, that dealing with prophecy, would be likely to overlap with the contents of the "Book of Prophecy," and was also likely to deal with rabbinic homilies.

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in *Guide* 2.26–48. Despite the fact that these chapters conclude with the words, “this is the end to which my discussion of prophecy, its parables, and its expressions, has finally led me” (2.48:412), one should not assume that we find here the Book of Prophecy which Maimonides had planned to write in his youth. The latter thesis was proposed by Rabinowitz in his commentary to Maimonides’ *Commentary on the Mishnah,* and by Leibowitz in his glosses to the Eight Chapters, but there are a number of reasons for rejecting this theory:

1. The description of prophecy found in Part II of the *Guide* is different from that appearing in Maimonides’ earlier writings in that it includes a discussion of the role of the imaginative faculty in the prophetic process and the dependence of prophecy upon the Divine will. According to his remarks in the Introduction to the *Guide,* the “Book of Prophecy” was not intended to be an esoteric work. Thus, the differences between the description of prophecy in the chapters of the *Guide* and that in the halakhic works cannot be explained simply on the basis of the fact that each of these was intended for a different community of readers.

2. From repeated references in the *Commentary on the Mishnah* and the *Mishneh Torah,* it would seem that in the “Book of Prophecy” Maimonides intended to deal with the prophecy of Moses, whereas in the chapters on prophecy in the *Guide,* Maimonides repeatedly states that he will not deal with this subject in these chapters (*Guide* 2.35).

3. In the Eight Chapters, Maimonides promises to discuss the significance of the “seeing of the back” in detail in the “Book of Prophecy.” Such a discussion does not appear in Part II of the *Guide.*

On should also take note of an additional stage in the planning of the books of Maimonides, as implied in the Introduction to the *Guide.*

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39. Maimonides evidently alluded to the works he planned in his youth when he wrote: “Now it was to the vulgar that we wanted to explain the import of the Midrashim and the external meaning of prophecy” (*Guide,* Introduction 9–10).
40. “But he, of blessed memory, apprehended somewhat less than this, and it was this that was designated by, ‘and thou shalt see my back’ (Ex. 33:23). And I shall complete this matter in the Book of Prophecy.” (Eight Chapters, Ch. 7).

In the Introduction, the “Book of Prophecy” is mentioned alongside the “Book of Correspondence” (i.e., the “Book of Homilies”), both of which were intended to include “wondrous matters” (נזקיקות נראות). One “wondrous matter” (הנחות והלומד) was already mentioned above in this connection: Moses clinging to God. But together with the common subject matter of these books, one must also note a criterion meant to distinguish the “Book of Prophecy” from the “Book of Homilies” namely, that these books were meant to deal with different literary levels—the “import of the Midrashim the external meaning of prophecy.” If indeed the “Book of Prophecy” included an exegetical discussion of prophetic verses, Maimonides may have later made use of this youthful work, placing it in the first part of the *Guide,* in the lexicographical chapters. Indeed, as may be seen from the previous discussion, these chapters do include a core stratum reflecting the outlook and opinions which Maimonides expressed in his earlier writings concerning his earlier view of the phenomenon of prophecy.

### IV

It is now possible for us to suggest a specific explanation for the change in Maimonides’ literary plans.

In his youth, Maimonides intended to write a monographic work on the phenomenon of prophecy, that peak of intellectual apprehension whereby a human being is transformed into a “man of God.” At a later stage in his life, Maimonides wrote the *Guide of the Perplexed.* This book is clearly marked by a different tendency: rather than serving as an instrument for an expression of his own thought, it comes to fulfill a need of its intended reader. According to his statement in the Introduction to the *Guide,* Maimonides put aside the “Book of Prophecy” because it had become clear to him that the way in which he had written that book was not suited to the ability of his community of readers to understand it. He put away the “Book of Homilies” at the same time, because he felt that there was no great need for it on the part of the public: the goal of defending the honor of the Talmudic Sages and demonstrating the coherence of their dicta did not justify the writing of a book. This utilitarian consideration, expressed in the choice of the “good and excellent actions” (*Guide* 3.25:502) which are necessary or very beneficial, is a significant characteristic of the manner of writing of the *Guide.* As opposed to Maimonides’ earlier drafts (i.e., of the “Book of Prophecy” and
MAIMONIDES ON THE LOVE OF GOD

by
NORMAN LAMM

Immediately after the profession of divine unity in the Shema', the Torah introduces us to one of the fundamental precepts of Judaism, namely, ahavat Hashem, the Love of God: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy might"—Deut. 6:4. It is self-understood that so powerful and central a theme in religion in general, and especially in Judaism,1 has engaged the attention and careful scrutiny of almost every Jewish thinker.2 Certainly, we expect the subject to be treated by Maimonides, and our expectations are not disappointed. No serious consideration of any aspect of Jewish thought or philosophy can or may avoid considering the views of Maimonides.

Before proceeding to the more analytic interpretations of our key verse, all of which concern the nature of the Love of God, it is appropriate to mention a midrash that gives an entirely different “spin” to the commandment to “love the Lord thy God.” The Sifrei takes the verb ve’ahavta, “and thou shalt love,” in the causative sense:

Another explanation of, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” (Deut. 6:4): Cause Him to be beloved by humans, even as your father Abraham did, as it is written, “(And Abram took Sarai his wife, and his brother’s son Lot and all the substance that they had gathered) and the souls that they had gotten in Haran” (Gen. 12:5).3

In an old and well-known midrash, “the souls that they had gotten in Haran” is interpreted by the Sages as referring to the proselytes whom Abraham and

1. "All the Torah is included in the commandment to love God, because he who loves the King devotes all his thoughts to doing that which is good and right in His eyes"—Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (Venice ed., reprinted in Jerusalem, 1960), Pos. Com. 3, p. 96b.
2. The most comprehensive work on this subject is that of Georges Vajda, L’amour de Dieu dans la théologie Juive du Moyen Âge (Paris, 1957).
Sarah had brought from paganism to monotheism. Hence, to love God means so to act as to make Him beloved of others.

In a parallel text in the Talmud, this same theme is recorded elaborately:

Abaye cited a barei'a: "'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' (Deut. 6:4) means that because of you the Name of Heaven will become beloved." (This means) that if a person studies Scripture and Mishnah and attends on scholars of the Torah, and his business dealings are honest, and he speaks pleasantly with people (im ha-beriyyot)—what do people say about him? (They say): "Happy is his father who taught him Torah; happy is his teacher who taught him Torah; woe to those who have not studied Torah. Have you seen so-and-so who studied Torah? How beautiful are his manners! How refined are his deeds!"

The Sifrei and the Talmud see the Love of God as a functional and societal as well as a personal and affective commandment: We are to live and act so that others (whether Jews or non-Jews, believers or non-believers; note the use of beriyyot, literally "creatures," and thus the word for human beings in general) turn to Him in love.

That we have here not only a charming homily but also an important principle is evident from the space that Maimonides devotes to it: he mentions the passage from Sifrei, and expands on it in his Book of Commandments (Sefer ha-Mitzvot), where it takes up fully one half of his description of the mitzvah of the Love of God. To love God, says Maimonides, is to be impelled to bring others to know Him and to love Him. But while this provides us with an important and inspiring insight, it does not touch directly on the content of the precept of the Love of God. It is to that to which we must now turn our attention.

The locus classicus of the Maimonidean views on ahavat Hashem is the passage in his immortal code, the Mishneh Torah:

7. In general, the Talmud and Midrash are more behavioral and practical in their interpretation of the commandment to love God, whereas the philosophically inclined Rishonim tended to a more affective and mystical view, but the line should not be drawn too tightly. See Louis Jacobs, A Jewish Theology (New York: Behrman House, 1973), 154.
8. Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah 2:2.
9. This analysis of Love and Fear of God should be compared with the 19th century Protestant thinker Rudolf Otto who, in The Idea of the Holy (translated by John W. Harvey [New York: Oxford University Press, 1958]) 12-80, wrote of two reactions to Nature; the first is fascination with the divine wisdom implicit in Nature, and the second is terror as man retreats before the Mysterium Tremendum. I do not know if Maimonides influenced him directly, but he certainly preceded him in this almost identical formulation.

What is the way to attain the Love and Fear of God? When a man contemplates His great and wondrous deeds and creatures, and sees in them His unequaled and infinite wisdom, he immediately (miyad) loves and praises and exalts Him, and is overcome by a great desire to know the great Name; as David said, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalms 42:3). And when he considers these very matters, immediately (miyad) he withdraws and is frightened and knows that he is but a small, lowly, dark creature who, with his inferior and puny mind, stands before Him who is perfect in His knowledge; as David said, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers. . . What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (Psalms 8:4, 5). Thus do I explain many great principles concerning the actions of the Master of the Worlds, [namely,] that they provide an opportunity for a wise person to love God. As the Sages said concerning Love, "as a result of this you will come to know Him by whose word the world came into being".

There are several ideas in this passage that are worthy of notice and require careful attention.

First, there is, according to Maimonides, a common origin, even method, for the two religious emotions of Love and Fear: the contemplation of the cosmos. Such deep reflection on creation leads to two apparently divergent religious affects: ahavat Hashem and yirat Hashem. The two, Love and Fear, are different but they are fundamentally linked to each other and one cannot discuss, let alone understand, the one without the other.

Second, Love and Fear differ in that each is the mirror image of the other: Love of God is a centrifugal motion of the self as man, overwhelmed by the wisdom revealed in the marvels of creation, seeks to reach outward and upward towards the Creator the better to know Him. Fear of God is the precise opposite: overwhelmed by the greatness of the Creator, man traumatically realizes his own unimportance, his marginality, and his very nothingness, and in a centripetal psychological motion pulls inward and retreats into himself.

Third, the implicit relationship between Love and Fear: the first reaction to the contemplation of Nature is, instinctively and impulsively, Love. But
this reaching out in a cognitive quest for the Creator is, intuitively and
instinctively, countered and curtailed by the limiting impulse of Fear. The
use of mijyad, which we above translated in its usual sense of “immediately,”
now with regard to Love and again with regard to Fear, must, I believe, be
taken in this sense of an intuitive reaction, one that is immediate in the sense of
being un-mediated.

The role of intuition is significant in the works of Maimonides. In
the Introduction to the Guide, he speaks of momentary flashes of intu-
tion—unmediated by any act of ratiocination—as the mode of apprehension
of both metaphysical knowledge and prophecy. This epistemology, of course,
presents a problem because of Maimonides’ high esteem for metaphysical
deduction and clear, logical analysis. Julius Guttmann, who raises this issue,
offers no solution.10 The most obvious answer, however, is provided by a
close reading of our key passage. Here, Maimonides does not speak of the
intuitive (mijyad, “immediately”) reaction as the first response to Nature, but
the second. Thus, the Love of God comes about after one “contemplates” the
wonders of creation and “sees” in them the infinite wisdom of the Divine,
and only then does he “immediately” love Him, etc. The same pattern holds
for the Fear of God: when man “considers” these matters, i.e., the wonders
of creation, he “immediately” withdraws into himself in fear, etc. What we
have here is a two-step process: First one studies Nature, then this evokes
from him the latent intuitive response of the appropriate religious emotions.
Hence, the study of natural science leads to the intuitive reaction of Love
and Fear to the creation. It is later left for the philosopher to elaborate these
responses in the language of metaphysics. This philosophical elaboration too
involves a flash of insight which is, however, different from the Love and
Fear reaction; it is, as it were, a “normal” epistemological act and one which
must then be set down according to all the rules of metaphysical argument.

Fourth, despite the fact that Love is immediately limited by the emotion
of Fear, Maimonides obviously agrees with the Sages that “one who acts out
of Love is greater than one who acts out of Fear.”11 Thus, he concludes the
halakhah with a comment on Love only, that the Creator does certain things
in order to grant man the opportunity (or will) to love Him. Fear serves a vital

but ancillary role to Love; it is the latter which remains the most significant
and valuable religious quality.

Let us return to the first idea in the Maimonidean passage: the common
origin of Love and Fear in the contemplation of the divine wisdom in His
creation. While Maimonides here focuses on the creation or Nature as the
object of man’s contemplation in order to arrive at Love, he elsewhere elaborates on the object of such contemplation. Thus, in Hilkhot Teshuvah
10.6 he presents his severely rationalistic view of the Love of God, and
declares it to be proportional to one’s knowledge of Him: “One loves the
Holy One only with the mind, thus knowing Him; for Love is in accordance
with knowledge, whether little or much.” This is followed by the advice to
attend to intellectual immersion in the various branches of wisdom which
lead to the knowledge of God (and, thus, to love of Him):

Therefore must a man set aside [time] to understand and comprehend the
[branches of] wisdom and learning which impart to him knowledge of
his Creator, depending on man’s capacity to understand and apprehend, etc.

It should be noted that the branches of “wisdom and learning” are not
necessarily limited to the natural sciences, although they certainly include
them. Maimonides unquestionably intended that the immediate reaction to
nurture must be lead to and be shaped by proper and correct metaphysical
speculation.

The study of Nature (which, as mentioned, is the prerequisite for the
intuitive reactions of Love and Fear) is far less esoteric than metaphysical
speculation. The Talmud requires one who is capable of studying geometry
and astronomy to do so, and “one who knows how to calculate the cycles
and planetary courses but does not do so, of him Scripture says, ‘but they
do not the work of the Lord, nor have they considered the work of His
hands’ (Isaiah 5:12).”12 We find no Talmudic encouragement of the study of
philosophy as such. But Maimonides raises philosophy to the highest
rung in the religious life, higher than that of the natural sciences. Thus, after
introducing chapter 2 of Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah by describing the source of
Love and Fear, Maimonides undertakes to teach the reader about matter and

10. See his Philosophies of Judaism transl. David W. Silverman (Philadelphia: Jewish
Publication Society, 1964), 156f.

11. TB Nedarim 31a.

12. TB Shabbat 75a. See Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York:
Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950) 180–193, on the Talmud’s positive attitude to the need for
scientific knowledge for the proper observance of certain mitzvot; and pp. 100–114 on the ban
on studying Greek “wisdom.”
form, the angels, the nature of divine knowledge, divine unity, etc. All this, he says (2.11), is included in the term ma'aseh merkavah, the highly esoteric study of the “divine chariot.” The next two chapters deal with astronomy and physics. “All these matters are only a drop in the bucket and profound, but not as profound as [the matters taken up in] the first two chapters.” The latter two chapters are referred to as ma'aseh bereshit, literally, the account of creation, which, while it is not popular fare, is not as recondite and restricted as is the study of ma'aseh merkavah (4.10, 11). Hence, the study of Nature is available, even required, of those who have the talent for it, but not for all others, while the study of metaphysics is clearly reserved for those who have both the aptitude and the spiritual preparation for it.14

In his Book of Commandments, the canvas is broadened even further: “for He has commanded us to love Him; and that [means] to understand and comprehend His mitzvot and His actions.” Here Maimonides includes not only “His actions”—which may well embrace the divine guidance of history as well as His governance of nature—but also “His mitzvot,” His commandments. This may be an indirect reference to the study of Torah, repository of the commandments, as a source of inspiration to the Love of God. This is stated explicitly (in his own name) by the author of Sefer ha-Hinukh, who usually follows Maimonides: “That is, along with reflection in Torah necessarily comes a strengthening of Love in the heart.”16

There is further indication that in this passage from his Book of Commandments Maimonides did indeed intend that study of Torah is a source of ahavat Hashem; it was not added as a mere afterthought. The reason for this assertion is the proof-text from the Sifrei. He writes, following the lines we mentioned above:

This is the text of the Sifrei: It is said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” (Deut. 6:4). But (from this) I do not know how one loves Him; therefore is it said, “And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart” (Deut. 6:6)—as a result of this you will come to know Him by whose word the world came into being.17

The antecedent of “as a result of this” is obviously “these words,” and this undoubtedly refers to the words of Torah (or, at the very least, the words of the Shema’) and not to the contemplation of Nature.

However, here we face a dilemma in the exegesis of Maimonides’ thought. Is Nature, the divine creation of the cosmos, the sole object which, when contemplated, leads to the Love and Fear of God—or is the Torah, the direct revelation of the divine Will, equally a source of Love and Fear? In the two passages from his legal code, the Mishneh Torah, the first from Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah (Laws of the Foundations of the Torah) and the second from Hilkhot Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance), he clearly stipulates Nature as the source of such inspiration which leads to the Love and Fear of God. Yet in his Book of Commandments he mentions both the commandments (using two synonyms) and His works, i.e., Nature.

Which, then, according to Maimonides, is the primary object the contemplation of which leads to Love—Nature (and metaphysics which follows upon and elaborates the Love and Fear responses to Nature) or Torah and mitzvot? Is there perhaps a double focus, with each holding equal value? Is the Sefer ha-Hinukh offering a valid interpretation of Maimonides’ view or is the author of this work imposing his own view, one with an apologetic slant?

Viewing all the major passages in which Maimonides discusses the Love and Fear of God, we find the following: In the Mishneh Torah he mentions only Nature as the source of the two fundamental religious emotions. (This, despite the effort by some to find justification for the inclusion of Torah alongside Nature as the source of Love and Fear by reading this into the closing phrase of Maimonides in Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah, cited above, or as an addition to it.) In the Book of Commandments he posits both Torah and Nature, with emphasis on the former.

13. See further in my Torah Umidda: The Encounter of Religious Learning and Worldly Knowledge in the Jewish Tradition (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1990) 77-81 on Maimonides’ views on the study of the sciences and philosophy as part of pardeis.
14. See R. Isaac Simcha Hurewitz, Yed Levi (Commentary to Maimonides’ Sefer ha-Mitzvot) Shorles 1, no. 40 (Jerusalem, 1927) 18a, b.
15. Sefer ha-Mitzvot. Pos. 3. This follows the Heller edition; the Kapah translation has slight but insignificant variations.
We now turn to his major philosophical work, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, and are not all perplexed that our guide, Maimonides, identifies the contemplation of Nature as the source of the emotions of Love and Fear.

The two most important passages in the *Guide* appear in Part III. In Chapter 28, he tells us that the Torah, "in regard to the correct opinions through which the ultimate perfection may be attained," ideas such as God's existence, unity, power, etc., spoke only in general and apodictic terms, without going into much detail:

With regard to all the other correct opinions concerning the whole of being—opinions that constitute the numerous kinds of all the theoretical sciences through which the opinions forming the ultimate end are validated—the Torah, albeit it does not make a call to direct attention toward them in detail as it does with regard to [the opinions forming ultimate ends], does so in summary fashion by saying, "To love the Lord" (Deut. 22:7). You know how this is confirmed in the dictum regarding love: "With all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5). We have already explained in *Mishneh Torah* that this love becomes valid only through the apprehension of the whole of being as it is and through the consideration of His wisdom as it is manifest in it.19

Yesodei ha-Torah, supports that understanding. However, the Netziv adds, one cannot derive ahavat Hashem from the study of Nature alone; such exclusive contemplation may well lead to an appreciation of the greatness of the Creator, but hardly to loving Him. It may be compared to one who knows that another person is great and worthy of love, but he does not know him personally, so that even if he sees him he cannot love him because he does not truly know him. So, the study of natural science can lead to love only if it is preceded by the study of Torah for then, to continue the analogy, one knows the other person directly and can then learn to love him. Note the intellectual honesty and also the breadth of Netziv's own approach—he points to the inadequacy of Nature as a source of ahavat Hashem without disqualifying it altogether, and recommends that both study of science and study of Torah together provide the entire to Love of God, with Torah taking priority over science (a point he makes often, see e.g., *Ha'amek* to Deut. 4:2). Such breadth and intellectual capaciousness, with the accompanying sensitivity to complexity and to subtle nuances, should not be confused with the kind of ambivalence that bespeaks an inability to make up one's mind for fear of making the wrong choice. For more on the attitude of Netziv on this issue, see my *Torah Umadda* 40–41, 44, and 72, n.2. Also see Hannah Katz, *Mishnat ha-Netziv* (Jerusalem, 1990) 109–116; however, her use of the term "ambivalent" for Netziv's breadth of scope and sensitivity to complexity is unfortunate because it implies indecisiveness which clearly was not part of Netziv's personality.


Here, then, Maimonides posits Nature—its study and philosophical elaboration—as the source of Love, as he did in the various passages in the *Mishneh Torah*.

In Chapter 52 of Part III of the *Guide*, Maimonides distinguishes between two categories of commandments: the practical ones, the do's and the don'ts of Scriptural legislation; and the "opinions" or theological propositions taught by the Torah. The former lead to Fear of God, the latter to Love.

As for the opinions that the Torah teaches us—namely, the apprehension of His being and His unity, may He be exalted—these opinions teach us love, as we have explained several times. You know to what extent the Torah lays stress upon love: "With all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." For these two ends, namely, love and fear, are achieved through two things: love through opinions taught by the Torah, which include apprehension of His being as He is in truth; while fear is achieved by means of all actions prescribed by the Torah, as we have explained.20

We have, then, in the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Guide of the Perplexed* the assertion that Nature and the correct philosophical ideas resulting from its contemplation are the source of Love, while the *Book of Commandments* adds, and appears to emphasize, Torah and the commandments. Is this a trivial inconsistency, or is there an idea behind Maimonides' apparent contradictions, which does indeed make him consistent and coherent? I believe that the latter is the case, and the principle is one that characterizes much of Maimonides' thought, namely, the distinction between the masses and the learned elite.21

The average man is expected to observe all the action commandments—the Halakhah—in all their details. These actions, plus the summary of otherwise profound philosophical ideas concerning God that the Torah offers ever so briefly, are enough to give this average person the wherewithal to conduct his life in an orderly, moral, and civilized manner and with an awareness of the basic ideas that distinguish Judaism. The mitzvot will guide


21. In the very beginning of the *Guide*, Introduction to Part I (Pines trans. 8f.), Maimonides holds that the deeper understanding of the Torah, which he identifies with philosophic truth, was available to the intellectual elite, and was not to be revealed to ordinary folk. However, this does not result in disdain for the benighted masses; the latter are granted, in simple and uncomplicated fashion, certain basic truths, such as the incorporeality of God. Thus, Maimonides (like Onkelos) held that the figurative interpretation of biblical anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms must be taught to all Jews regardless of intellectual sophistication or lack of it.
him and her onto the right path, consistent with such person's intellectual capacity. The elite, however, whose curiosity and intellectual ability raise them beyond the ordinary, are expected to strive for a far higher standard, much beyond the limits set by the Torah for the masses. Such a person must aspire to understand the most refined conceptions of the Deity and His attributes.22

Now, in the Book of Commandments, which—as its very name indicates-deals with an enumeration of the commandments, Maimonides is writing for ordinary Jews who wish to observe what is required of them and what is within their ability to understand. Hence, the very mitzvot which are such a person's principal connection to the service of God—the behavioral commandments plus the outline the Torah offers of the major concepts of the Deity—are the source of his or her Love of God. To the extent that such a person's ability permits, Nature and its reflection of the imponderable wisdom of the Creator are also available to him.23 But his primary source for religious inspiration is—the commandments and, of course, the Torah of which they form a part. Hence, the passages cited in this Maimonidean "popular" work.

However, the Mishneh Torah offers seeming resistance to our thesis. After all, this is his principal halakhic work, it is meant for all Jews equally, and hence here he ought to confine the source of Love to Torah and mitzvot and omit the contemplation of the cosmos and its consequent requirement of metaphysical speculation. But it so happens that the two passages in this work in which Maimonides does discuss Love and Fear are those in which the context calls for a standard different from the popular one. Thus, in the Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah his goal is to impart, in non-technical terms and in a manner accessible to the non-philosopher, the theological foundations of Judaism. However, even though the information is simplified for the masses, the subject matter remains intrinsically so difficult and so intellectually demanding that even in its pedagogically simplified form it constitutes a formidable intellectual challenge. Thus, Maimonides maintains that it is a key to understanding the divine governance of the universe,24 and that it forms the essential content of the ma'aseh merkavah—the exegesis of

Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot which the Sages declared an esoteric study,25 rather than halakhic discourse which is accessible to all, "young and old, men and women."26 Hence, it is to be expected that here Maimonides will point to the contemplation of Nature as the source of the intuition that leads to both Love and Fear. Moreover, since the context of these first chapters of the Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah concern matters scientific and metaphysical—such as matter and form, the essentials of Ptolemaic astronomy, spiritual beings, etc.—it stands to reason that the source assigned to Love and Fear will be Nature rather than the commandments and the Torah.27

The second such place is the passage in Hilkhot Teshuvah, the Laws of Repentance. The context here shows that Maimonides is using an alternative definition of Fear—the conventional one, that is—as opposed to his more sophisticated version as presented at the beginning of Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah. Chapter 10 of Hilkhot Teshuvah is devoted to the distinction between those who observe the laws for their own sake and those who do so for ulterior motives—such as the desire for reward or the fear of punishment. The latter—which includes "the ignorant, women, and children"—operate out of Fear which, of course, is a lower form of religious devotion; whereas the former do so out of Love.

What is the proper kind of love?—When one loves God with very powerful, great, and overflowing love, such that his soul is bound up in the love of God and he is constantly absorbed in it, as if he were love-sick and his mind is never free of that woman, being constantly absorbed in [that love] whether sitting or standing, whether eating or drinking.28 It is well known that the love of the Holy One does not become bound up with the heart of man until he thinks about it constantly and properly and abandons everything in the world except for it; as we were commanded, "with all thy heart and with all thy soul." One loves the Holy One only with the mind, thus knowing Him; for love is in accordance with knowledge: if little [knowledge] then little [love], if much [knowledge] then much [love]. Therefore must a person dedicate himself to understand and comprehend the [branches of] wisdom and learning which inform him about his Creator according to his capacity to understand and comprehend...29

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22. The elite, however, must continue to abide by the actional commandments along with the masses; their higher aspirations and deeper understanding are not a dispensation to do away with the obligations that devolve upon all other Jews. Everything in the life and writings of Maimonides rejects the notion, sometimes proposed, that the elite are beyond the law.

23. See above, n.13.

24. Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah, 2.2. end.

25. Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah, 4.10. And see above, n.13.


27. See the commentary to Maimonides' Sefer ha-Mitzvot by R. Hananiah b. Menachem, Kin'at Soferim (Livorno, 1740), Pos. Com. 3.

28. Hilkhot Teshuvah 10.3.

This form of Love is, then, that which goes beyond Fear as the latter was described in Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah; it is a higher level—and, hence, one that can come to a person who is prepared “to understand and comprehend the [branches] of wisdom and learning.” Maimonides’ term for both natural science and metaphysical thinking.

And, of course, in the Guide, his often esoteric philosophical magnum opus, we expect to find the higher standard of the elite predominate, as it most certainly does. Hence, Maimonides was consistent in his identification of Nature or Torah and mitzvot as the object of thought which leads to Love of God.

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Who were Maimonides’ Mutakallimûn? Some Remarks on Guide of the Perplexed
Part 1 Chapter 73

by

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(This is the second part of an article, the first part of which appeared in volume 2 (1991) of Maimonidean Studies)

The Seventh Premise

It consists in their belief that privations of habitus are things that exist in a body, being superadded to its substance, and are accordingly also existent accidents. (Guide 203)

This statement, which Maimonides further elaborates in Guide 3.10, is based on an opinion actually held by the Mutakallimûn as we shall see, but which is formulated by Maimonides in a way that they would never have been able to accept.

What most of them said is that the contraries or opposites of qualities are positive notions in the same manner as the original qualities. If a quality is subject to sense perception, its contrary is likewise subject to sense perception, says Ibn Matûya.287

These contraries are qualities as any other qualities, i.e., accidents created by God. Hence those thinkers who believed these contraries to be something positive could not call them “privations” or “absence” as Maimonides does. For “privation” is nonexistence, and nonexistence was not held to be a legitimate object of the divine power (or of human power either), as we have seen.288

287. Tadhkira 35.
288. See above, at nn. 208, 210 and 238.
The Mu'tazilite author of *Fi'l-Tawhid* insists that if a body is divided (IFTar), this occurs through the accident of division (IFTir), and he refutes at length the contention that the absence of composition suffices to cause the body to be divided.\(^{289}\)

In consequence they are always being created, and whenever one of them disappears, another is created. The explanation is as follows. *They do not hold that rest is the privation of motion, that death is the privation of life, and that blindness is the privation of sight; in fact they do not believe this with regard to any privations of habitus similar to those mentioned.* For according to them, the status of motion and rest is the same as that of heat and cold. (Guide 203).

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī writes:

Some of them considered cold to be the absence of heat. But this is a mistake. For we sense in what is cold a certain quality. The object of this sensation is not the absence of heat, for neither an absence nor a body can be sensed. Otherwise the sensation of the body when it is hot would be a sensation of cold.\(^{291}\)

**For just as heat and cold are accidents existing in the hot and cold substrata, motion is an accident created in the moving body, and rest an accident which God creates in the body that is at rest, which accident likewise does not last for two units of time, as has been set forth before in the preceding premise. According to them God has created a unit of rest in every particle of the body that is at rest, and as long as it is at rest, creates another unit of rest every time a unit of it becomes nonexistent.** The position is completely analogous, according to them, with regard to knowledge and ignorance. According to them, the latter exists and is an accident. In consequence, a unit of ignorance continually disappears and another is created as long as a particular ignorant individual continues to be ignorant in anything. The position is also completely analogous with regard to life and death. For both of these are, according to them, accidents, and they clearly assert that a unit of life disappears and another is created as long as a particular living being is alive. Then, when God wills its death, He creates in it the accident of death following upon the disappearance of the accident of life, which does not last two units of time. All this they assert clearly. Now according to this assumption, it clearly follows that

the accident of death, which God creates, likewise becomes nonexistent after a moment of time, so that God creates another unit of death. But for that, death would not last. However, as one unit of life is created after another, one unit of death is created after another, one unit of death is created after another. Would that I knew till when God creates the accident of death in a dead individual; does He do so as long as that individual's external form endures, or as long as one of that individual's atoms endures? For, according to what they wish, God creates the accident of death in every single atom of the individual in question. Now we find mortals of dead individuals that are thousands of years old. Accordingly this is a proof that God has not annihilated that substance. In consequence, He should be creating in it the accident of death all these thousand of years, creating a unit of death as soon as another unit of it disappears. This is the doctrine of the multitude of them. (Guide 203-04).

Abū Rashīd reports that Abū'1-Qāsim al-Kā'bī al-Balkhī of the Baghdad school held that death is a positive notion; it is the contrary of life. Abū Ḥāshim, his counterpart at the Bāṣra school, would prefer the idea that death is not a positive notion. Even if it were a positive notion, he said, it would not be the contrary of life. Abū Rashīd himself defined death as the absence of life, and not as a positive notion. If it were a positive notion, he added, it could inhere in a single atom.\(^{292}\)

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī writes:

...Some of them affirmed that death is an existing attribute, pleading from His words, "He created death and life."\(^{293}\) Others did not hold this opinion, but claimed that death is the absence of life in those (beings) which are likely to be alive. ...\(^{294}\)

The Mu'tazilite author of *Fi'l-Tawhid* writes:

We do not concede that death is the contrary of life. For we do not concede that death is a positive notion.\(^{295}\)

289. See above, n. 70.
290. *Fi'l-Tawhid* 8 ff.
295. *Fi'l-Tawhid* 124, line 8.
Whereas al-Juwaynī speaks of “general contraries such as death, sleep, inadvertence, swoon; these notions are contraries of knowledge and will.”

However one Muʿtazilite says that certain privations of habitus are not existent things. He does not, however, say this consistently with regard to every privation. Thus he does not say that darkness is the privation of light, that rest is the privation of motion. In fact he regards some of the privations as existent and some others as being merely a privation of habitus, just as it suits him with respect to his belief. They did a similar thing with regard to the continued existence of accidents. For according to them, some of the accidents last for some time, whereas others do not last for two units of time. (Guide 204)

The question of the continued existence of accidents has been discussed within the framework of the sixth premise.

For the purpose of all of them is to suppose an existent universe, the nature of which fits in with our opinion and teachings. (Guide 204)

The point which Maimonides makes here—namely that the Mutakallimūn adapted their picture of the physical world to their opinions, rather than shape their opinions in accordance with what they actually found in the world around them—will be discussed in the framework of the tenth premise.

In one of his articles297, H.A. Wolfson connects with the points made in this premise another question which as a matter of fact has nothing at all to do with it. It is well known that one of the moot questions, between the Muʿtazila of Baṣra on the one hand and their colleagues at Baghdād as well as the Ašʿāriyya on the other hand, was whether the non-existent is a “thing”—as the former claimed, or not, as the latter asserted.

Ibn Mattiyya claims that a nonexistting atom is still an atom, but not a “thing.” A color may be termed “color” even when it is non-existent, just as blackness may be termed “blackness” when it exists no more. 297 Abū Rashīd too states that an atom is an atom even when it does not exist. 298 Al-Juwaynī stated that that which does not exist is “mere negation.”

Now it has to be kept in mind that in all the statements Wolfson quotes on this problem,299 the question is raised whether the nonexistent is an object of knowledge. Indeed al-Bāqillānī at first states that the nonexistent is a possible object of knowledge, but emphatically denies that it is “a thing.” 300 In holding this position he appears to approximate that of al-Khayyāt, as described by al-Shahrastānī.301

This evidence seems to show that at least in the classical period of Kalām this was a problem of a conceptual, semantic and epistemological nature, but not an ontological question.

Even though at a later stage the philosopher Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī re-stated the question in terms of the Avicennian dichotomy of essence and existence302—there seem to be good reasons for agreeing with J. van Es303 that at least in the classical period the question referred to the relation between Divine knowledge and things which have not yet come into being.

Now if “al-Jubbāḥ” has condemned al-Khayyāt’s view on the ground that it leads to the belief in the eternity of bodies and (al-Baghdādī) himself condemns al-Jubbāḥ, also on the ground that this view leads to the eternity of substances and accidents”—as Wolfson300 quotes al-Baghdādī as saying—this is nothing but an ilūm. This is a method of discrediting the opponent by reducing his view ad absurdum, or, as in this case, “ad heresiam.”301 Indeed this does not prove at all that even some of the Mutakallimūn held “that the world was created out of an eternal antemundane matter” in the Platonic fashion as Wolfson would have it.300 Indeed there is no evidence whatsoever for such a view having been held by any of them. Moreover, such a view would not at all fit with their picture of the world.

Indeed all this does not appear to be relevant to Maimonides’ seventh

299. Tadhkira 293.
300. Mawālib (Tripoli) 37–47.
303. Tomāhā 6–7 §6, and 15–16 §25.
304. See Wolfson, Studies, 2: 341–42.
305. Arbaʾin 53–68.
308. cf. Ekwennaislehre 397.
premise. I should not have discussed it, had not Wolfson’s article made it necessary.

The Eighth Premise

It consists in their assertion that there there exists nothing except substances and accidents and that the natural forms are likewise accidents. The explanation of this premise is as follows. According to them, all bodies are composed of atoms resembling one another, as we have made clear when setting out the first of their premises. These atoms differ from one another only with regard to accidents and in nothing else. Thus according to them, animality, humanity, sensation and rationality are all accidents having the same status as whiteness, blackness, bitterness, and sweetness, so that the difference existing between an individual belonging to one species and an individual belonging to another is like the difference between individuals belonging to the same species. In consequence, the body of heaven, even the body of the angels, or even the body of [God’s] throne, as it is imagined in fantasy, and the body of any insect you like from among the insects of the earth or of any plant you like, are, according to them, of one substance, differing only with regard to accidents and in nothing else. And the substances of which the universe is composed are the atoms.

(Guide 205)

We have already seen how both al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī assert that the whole world is made up of nothing but atoms and accidents. It is true that I have not found such an explicit statement in the works of other Mutakallimūn. But from all the texts I have examined it becomes quite clear that this conception of the world was taken for granted by the vast majority, the exceptions being very few early thinkers such as Ibrāhīm al-Nāṣrānī.

Concerning Maimonides’ statement “and that the natural forms are likewise accidents”, it has to be pointed out that the Aristotelian concept “form” was not part of the conceptual equipment of the Mutakallimūn nor of their vocabulary. Had Maimonides wanted to be precise and fair to them, he would have said “They do not have the concept of “form”; what we, Aristotelians, call ‘form’ is for them just one of the accidents such as color or taste.” In a similar way we have seen that he was (arbitrarily?) imprecise when he formulated the seventh premise, saying that the Mutakallimūn consider the privations of qualities to be positive notions, while really those among them who considered the contraries of qualities to be positive notions, did not consider them to be privations.

Indeed “form” seems to appear in a Kalām text only when the views of the “philosophic,” i.e., Aristotelian opponents, are referred to.

Al-Juwaynī writes:

The philosophic infidels consider it possible for a substance (atom) to be without any accidents. In their terminology substance (atom) is called “matter” and the accidents are called “form”.311

The Ninth Premise

It consists in their assertion that accidents do not serve as a substratum for one another. According to them, it may not be said that one accident has as its substratum another, which latter has as its substratum a substance. In their opinion all accidents, in the first place and in the same way, have substance as a substratum. They avoid the opposing doctrine because it has as its necessary consequence that an ultimate accident may not subsist in a substance unless a primary accident precedes it in subsisting in it. They do not wish to admit this in the case of certain accidents, desiring to create the possibility that certain accidents may subsist in any substance that they may happen to encounter without any need for another accident previously providing the substance with a proprium. This is in accordance with their view that all accidents provide a proprium. Furthermore, from another angle it may be seen that the substratum to which an accident may attach itself has to be stable and has to endure for a certain time. However, as an accident, according to them, does not last for two units of time—I mean for two instants—how can it be possible according to this hypothesis that it should serve as a substratum for something other than itself?

(Guide 205)

Ibn Matuya holds that an accident does not inhere in another accident.312


312. Ibn Matūya, Tadhkira 137 and 274; and cf. Fī‘l-Tawḥīd, 188, lines 3–11.
Al-Juwaynī devotes more than five pages to proving this principle. But most other authors seem to take it for granted.

The Tenth Premise

It consists in the affirmation of admissibility that they mention. This is the main proposition of the science of Kalām. Listen to its meaning. They are of the opinion that everything that may be imagined is an admissible notion for the intellect. For instance, it is admissible from the point of view of intellect that it should come about that the sphere of the earth should turn into a heaven endowed with circular motion and that the heaven should turn into the sphere of the earth. Or to take another example, it is admissible that the sphere of fire should move toward the center of the earth and that the sphere of the earth should move toward the encompassing heaven. For as they say, according to intellectual admissibility, one place is not more appropriate for one particular body than another place. They also say with regard to all things that are existent and perceptible that supposing anything among them should be bigger than it is or smaller or different from what it is in shape or place—should a human individual, for instance, have the size of a big mountain having many summits overtopping the air, or should there exist an elephant having the size of a flea, or a flea having the size of an elephant—all such differences would be admissible from the point of view of the intellect. The whole world is involved in this method of admissibility as they practice it. For whatever thing of this kind they assume, they are able to say: it is admissible that it should be so, and it is possible that it should be otherwise; and it is not more appropriate that one particular thing should be so than that it should be otherwise. And they say this without paying attention to the correspondence or lack of correspondence of that which exists to their assumptions. For they say of the existent things—provided with known forms and determinate sizes and necessarily accompanying modes that are unchangeable and immutable—that their being as they are is merely in virtue of the continuance of a habit. In the same way it is the habit of a sultan not to pass through the market places of the city except on horseback, and he has never been seen doing it in a way other than this. However it is not held impossible by the intellect that he should walk on foot in the city; rather it is undoubtedly possible and it is admissible that this should occur. They say that the fact that earth moves toward the center

and fire upwards or the fact that fire burns and water cools is in a similar way due to the continuance of a habit. It is in consequence, not impossible from the point of view of the intellect that this habit should undergo a change so that fire should cool and move downwards, while still being fire, and so that similarly water should warm and move upwards, while still being water. The whole edifice is founded on this assumption. At the same time they are unanimous in holding that the coming-together of the contraries in the same substratum and at the same instant is impossible, cannot be true, and cannot be admitted by the intellect. They further assert that it is impossible and cannot be admitted by the intellect that a substance should exist without there being any accidents in it; or, as some of them say, it is also impossible and cannot be admitted by the intellect that an accident should exist without being in a substratum. Similarly they say that it cannot be true that a substance should be transformed into an accident or an accident into a substance or that a body should penetrate another body; they acknowledge that these are impossibilities from the point of view of the intellect. Now it is a true assertion that none of the things that they consider as impossible can be mentally represented to oneself in any way whatever, whereas the things they call possible can be. Yet the philosophers say that when you call a thing "impossible," it is because it cannot be imagined, and when you call a thing "possible," it is because it can be imagined. Thus what is possible according to you is possible only from the point of view of the imagination and not from that of the intellect. Accordingly in this premise you consider that which is necessary, admissible, or impossible, sometimes with the imagination and not with the intellect and sometimes with the first suggestion of common opinion—just as Abū Naṣr has noted when speaking of the notion to which the Mutakallimūn apply the term "intellect." Thus it has already been made clear that that which can be imagined is, according to them, something possible, whether something existent corresponds to it or not. On the other hand, everything that cannot be imagined is impossible, once this premise cannot be true except in virtue of the nine premises previously mentioned. Undoubtedly it was because of it that they had recourse to expounding these nine premises before it. The explanation of this is in accordance with what I shall set forth to you while I reveal to you the secrets of these matters in the form of a dispute taking place between a Mutakallim and a philosopher.

The Mutakallim said to the philosopher: Why is it that we find this body, which is iron, is endowed with extreme hardness and strength, while being black; whereas that other body, which is cream, is endowed with extreme softness and looseness, while being white?

The philosopher replied to him: Every body has two species of accidents:

313. Shāmīl (Alexandria) 197–203.
314. See Pines, Beiträge 23–24 with note 1 on page 24 and Fakhr al-Dīn, Muhasṣal 70, lines 5–12.
those that are attached to it in respect of its matter, such as those making man healthy and ill; and those that are attached to it in respect to its form, such as man's feeling of wonder and his laughing. Now the various kinds of matter found in bodies that are in the stage of ultimate composition differ greatly because of the forms, which particularize these various kinds of matter, so that the substance of iron becomes different from that of cream and so that each of these substances has attached to it the differing accidents that you see. Thus strength subsisting in the one substance and softness subsisting in the other are accidents that follow from the difference of their forms, and blackness and whiteness are accidents that follow from the difference of their ultimate matter.

Thereupon the Mutakallim controverted this entire reply by means of the premise of his doctrine as I shall set forth to you. In effect he said: There does not exist at all, contrary to what you think, any form constituting a substance so that a variety of substances is thereby brought about. On the contrary, everything that you consider as a form is an accident—as we have made clear from their assertion in the eighth premise. Then he said: There is no difference between the substance of iron and the substance of cream, the whole being composed of atoms similar to one another—as we have made clear from their opinions set forth in the first premise, from which, as we have explained, the second and the third follow necessarily. Similarly the twelfth premise is required for establishing the existence of atoms. Furthermore, it is not true, in the opinion of a Mutakallim, that there are certain accidents that particularize a substance so that because of them it is disposed and prepared to receive other secondary accidents. For in his opinion, one accident cannot serve as a substratum for another—as we have made clear in the sixth premise—and moreover, an accident has no continued existence—as we have made clear in the ninth premise. Then when, according to the Mutakallim, everything he wishes with regard to his premises is established as true, the resultant conclusion is that the substances of the iron and the cream are the same substance, substances similar to one another in every respect. Each of these substances has the same relation with any accident, one particular substance not being more appropriate for one particular accident than another. And just as one atom is not more fitted to move than to be at rest, so one particular atom is not more appropriate for the reception of the accident of life, the accident of the intellect, the accident of sense, than any other atom. The greater or smaller number of the atoms does not in this point constitute a significant addition to the final result, as an accident subsists in every atom—as we have made clear on the basis of their assertion in the fifth premise. Accordingly it follows necessarily from all these premises that man is not more fitted to cognize intellectually than a beetle. And thus the admittance of which [Mutakallimân]

speak in the present premise follows necessarily. In fact, it was with a view to this premise that the whole endeavor was made, because this premise is more firm than any other thing for establishing everything that there is a wish to establish, as shall be made clear.

A Call Upon The Reader’s Attention

Know, thou who studieth this Treatise: if you are of those who know the soul and its powers and have acquired true knowledge of everything as it really is, you already know that imagination exists in most living beings. As for the perfect animal, I mean the one endowed with a heart, the existence of imagination in it is clear. Accordingly, man is not distinguished by having imagination; and the act of imagination is not the act of the intellect but rather its contrary.

For the intellect divides the composite things and differentiates their parts and makes abstraction of them, represents them to itself in their true reality and with their causes, and apprehends from one thing very many notions, which differ from the intellect just as two human individuals differ in regard to their existence for the imagination.

It is by means of the intellect that the universal is differentiated from the individual, and no demonstration is true except by means of universals. It is also through the intellect that essential predicates are discerned from accidental ones. None of these acts belongs to the imagination. For the imagination apprehends only that which is individual and composite as a whole, as it is apprehended by the senses; or compounds things that in their existence are separate, combining one with another; the whole being a body or a force of the body.

Thus someone using his imagination imagines a human individual having a horse's head and wings and so on. This is what is called a thing invented and false, for nothing existent corresponds to it at all.

In its apprehension, imagination is in no way able to hold itself aloof from matter, even if it turns a form into the extreme of abstraction. For this reason there can be no critical examination in the imagination.

Hear what the mathematical sciences have taught us and how capital are the premises we have obtained from them. Know that there are things that a man, if he considers them with his imagination, is unable to represent to himself in any respect, but finds that it is as impossible to imagine them as it is impossible for two contraries to agree; and that afterwards the existence of the thing that is impossible to imagine is established by demonstration as true, and existence manifests it as real. Thus if you imagine a big sphere of any size you like, even if it be the size of the encompassing heaven; imagine further a diameter passing through the center of the sphere; and thereupon imagine the two human individuals standing upon the two extremities of the diameter so
that their feet are put in a single line with respect to the diameter so that their feet and the diameter form one and the same straight line — then one of two possibilities must be true: either the diameter is parallel to the horizon or it is not. Now if it parallel, both individuals should fall. If it is not parallel, one of them — namely the lower one — should fall, while the other is firmly placed. It is in that way that imagination would apprehend the matter. Now it has been demonstrated that in that earth is spherical in form and that portions of the inhabited part of it lie at both extremities of its diameter. Thus the head of every individual from among the inhabitants of the two extremities is near heaven while his feet are near the feet of another individual who is opposite him. It is thus impossible in every way that either of them would fall. This cannot even be represented to oneself: for one of them is not placed above and the other below, but each of them is both above and below in relation to the other. Similarly it has been made clear in the second book of the “Conic Sections” that two lines, between which there is a certain distance at the outset, may go forth in such a way that the farther they go, this distance diminishes and they come nearer to one another, but without it ever being possible for them to meet even if they are drawn forth to infinity and even though they come nearer to one another the farther they go. This cannot be imagined and can in no way enter within the net of the imagination. Of these two lines, one is straight and the other curved, as has been made clear there in the above-mentioned work.

Accordingly it has been demonstrated that something that the imagination cannot imagine or apprehend and that is impossible from its point of view, can exist. It has similarly been demonstrated that something the imagination considers as necessary is impossible — namely, that God, may He be exalted, should be a body or a force in a body. For according to the imagination, there are no exists except bodies or things in bodies.

Accordingly it is clear that there is something else by means of which that which is necessary, that which is admissible, and that which is impossible, can be discerned, something that is not the imagination. How excellent is this speculation and how great its utility for him who wishes to awaken from this dormancy, I mean the state of following the imagination: Do not think that the Mutakallimun are not aware of anything concerning this point. On the contrary, they are aware of it to a certain extent; they know it and call that which may be imagined while being at the same time impossible — as for instance God’s being a body — a fantasy and a vain imagining. And often do they clearly state that fantasies are false. For this reason they have recourse to the nine premises we have mentioned, so as to be able to establish with the help of the truth of

316. by Appollonius of Perga. The reference is to book 2, 13th theorem, referring to the hyperbola.

this tenth premise — which asserts the admissibility of those imaginings that they wanted to be declared admissible — in order to maintain the similarity of the atoms to one another and the quality of the accidents with respect to “accidental” as we have made clear.

Consider, thou who are engaged in speculation, and perceive that a method of profound speculation has arisen. For with regard to personal material representation, one individual claims that they are intellectual representations, whereas another affirms that they are imaginative representations. We wish consequently to find something that would enable us to distinguish the things cognized intellectually from those imagined. For if the philosopher says, as he does: That which exists is my witness and by means of it we discern the necessary, the possible, and the impossible; the adherent of the Law says to him: The dispute between us is with regard to this point. For we claim that that which exists was made in virtue of will and was not a necessary consequence. Now if it was made in this fashion, it is admissible that it should be made in a different way, unless intellectual representation decides, as you think it decides, that something different from what exists at present is not admissible. That is the chapter of admissibility. And about that I have something to say, which you will learn in various passages of this Treatise. It is not something one hastens to reject in its entirety with nonchalance.

(Guide 206–12)

The principle of “admissibility” (or “possibility”, tajwit) is here termed “the main proposition of Kalam”. Maimonides devotes it more attention than to the rest of the premises. Western scholars followed suit. The reason seems to be that this principle contradicts the Aristotelian concept of causality. But the impression one gets when one turns to the Kalam texts is, that this principle is not so very conspicuous. The principle which is connected with it, that of God’s custom (or “habit” in Pines’ translation here reproduced) gets a somewhat greater “coverage” in the texts.

These twin principles have been discussed by H.A. Wolfson and Harry Blumberg. Blumberg’s article is based almost entirely on Maimonides. Thus it is practically irrelevant to the purpose of the present paper, which is to examine the relation of the picture Maimonides draws to the texts themselves. Wolfson pays much more attention to the texts. Yet it appears there are still at least two questions which have not been sufficiently answered.

One being whether Maimonides’ description of the principle of admissibility (or possibility) as based on imagination—with the emphasis on the role of the imagination especially in the section called “A Call Upon the Reader’s Attention”—is a faithful description of this Qalâm principle. The second question is whether the principles of admissibility and of “God’s custom” were restricted to the Ash’arites, as it would appear from Wolfson’s description.

The Mu’tazilites Abu’l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf and Abū ‘Ali al-Jubbā’i are reported to have held that it is possible (“admissible”) for a heavy body to stay in the air for a prolonged period (literally: “many units of time”) “without descending being created”, i.e., without God making it fall down, but (instead) “rest being brought about.” They also considered it a possibility that fire and cotton wool be brought together without a conflagration being brought about, “but its contrary being brought about.”

I do not know what is meant by “the contrary of conflagration”, but here we have the “principle of admissibility” applied by two of the early Mu’tazilites.

The report goes on to say that Abu’l-Hudhayl went so far as to consider it possible for a dead being to see, for a blind being to perceive, for a mute person to speak, for a lame person to walk a little. But he considered it impossible for power or perception to go with death.

His contemporary, al-Iskāfī, agreed that it would be possible for wood and fire to be brought together “without God bringing about burning” and for a stone to be stable (in the open air) without God making it fall, but he denied that perception could be paired with blindness, speech with muteness, walking with lameness, knowledge and power with death. He considered life and power to be inseparable. On the other hand he held it possible for knowledge and perception to inhere in a person’s hand (sic!) while his colleagues deemed this to be impossible.

Al-Khayyāt and some other Baghdādī Mu’tazilī denied all these “possibilities.” But the principle of admissibility (or “possibility”) is not the only Mu’tazilīte principle which accounts for events and phenomena which we would call “unnatural”.

Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Asadābādī explains that after we till the soil and sow the seed it is God’s custom to make the seed grow and sprout. God lets events happen in a regular recurring sequence. This regular recurring sequence is termed “God’s custom.” The purpose is to accustom us, men, to that regular sequence. When God sends a prophet, he requires a sign to let people know that he speaks the truth when he claims to be a prophet sent by God. Such a sign proving the veracity of the prophet is a miracle. A miracle is a sequence of events contrary to the customary sequence, it is a breach of God’s custom. The only purpose of God’s custom is that He may breach His custom in order to proclaim to mankind the veracity of His true prophets.

A miracle must be known to us to have been brought about by God, and must be a breach of the customary order of events.

If the sun were to rise in the west, if a woman were to give birth a month after she dies, if a baby were born out of the wall of a building rather than the womb of its mother, these would be breaches of God’s custom, which could serve as miracles testifying to the veracity of a prophet.

A few years after ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Abu Rashīd reports that Abu’l-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī al-Balkhī, the Baghdādī Mu’tazilī, mentioned among the points on which he disagreed with his colleagues, that he held that the bodies which are in this world are composed of the four “natures,” although God has the power to bring them into being not out of these “natures.” Al-Ka‘bī said that bodies have “natures” by means of which it is feasible for us to act upon them. He said that in wheat there is a property (khāṣṣiya, special qualification), and it is not possible that barley should grow out of a seed of wheat, as long as the “nature” and the “property” are in it. It is impossible for God to create another animal from human semen.

It is interesting to note that the two thinkers whom we found to reject the

319. Maqālāt 312, lines 10–12.
320. Maqālāt 312, line 13–313, line 3.
322. Maqālāt 313, line 14–314, line 2.
principle of admissibility, al-Khayyāt\textsuperscript{331} and al-Ka'bi, were both members of the Baghdadī school of Mu'tazila.

Abū Rashīd, himself a Baṣrī Mu'tazilite, a pupil of 'Abd al-Jabbār would not agree to al-Ka'bi's position. He asserts that the belief in the "nature" of things is illogical. According to him it is in God's power to let barley grow from a seed of wheat. Likewise it is possible for Him to create from human semen whatever animal He wishes.\textsuperscript{332} He adds that is is only because God's custom is not to let stones sprout so that plants grow out of them, that such a phenomenon is unknown. It would be possible for God to do so as a miracle.\textsuperscript{333} Drinking wine does not generate drunkenness. It is only God's custom to create drunkenness after it.\textsuperscript{334} It is possible for God to let something heavy stay in the air without falling, says Abū Rashīd, noting that al-Ka'bi disagrees.\textsuperscript{335} Abū Rashīd also holds that it is only because of God's custom that animals require food. Again al-Ka'bi disagrees.\textsuperscript{336}

On the other hand, Abū Rashīd deems it impossible for God to make one and the same atom both white and black at one and the same time. He adds that saying this does not amount to attributing impotence to God. For it is impossible for something to co-exist with its contrary. And to describe anyone as having power over what is impossible is absurd.\textsuperscript{337}

Ibn Mattiyya reports that only masters of the Baṣrī school of Mu'tazila thought that it is only God's custom that fire is hot and that snow is cold. Ibn Mattiyya himself does not agree with this statement.\textsuperscript{338} It would have been possible for God, says Ibn Mattiyya, to make the heavens and the earth stand still.\textsuperscript{339} He also says that which is considered to be possible is to be judged in the same way as that which actually exists.\textsuperscript{340} This is already at variance with Maimonides's insistence that only what actually exists is to be considered possible.

To claim that our senses tell us that the heat of fire causes burning, and that too much drinking causes drunkenness is utter ignorance or folly, says the Ash'arite al-Bāqillānī. What we perceive is only the change in the body after drinking or after drawing near to fire. Our senses do not tell us what brought about this new condition. On this point various opinions exist.\textsuperscript{341} Sometimes people drink without getting drunk. Sometimes one drinks near to fire and does not get burnt. This shows that it is not the "nature" of wine which necessarily makes people drunk and nor the "nature" of fire that causes burning.\textsuperscript{342}

If the growth of a plant were the result of the "nature" of irrigation, manuring and exposing to the sun, a larger measure of irrigation, manuring and exposing to the sun would have made the plant grow beyond its "customary", i.e., normal, size, even out of season. But we know that overmuch irrigation, manuring and exposing to the sun destroy the plant just as overeating and too much drinking do not bring about satiety but harm and illness.\textsuperscript{343}

It appears that the Ash'arite al-Bāqillānī's conception of God's custom and of the miracles which prove the prophets' veracity\textsuperscript{344} does not differ from that of the Mu'tazilite 'Abd al-Jabbār.\textsuperscript{345}

One of the proofs of the existence of God which al-Bāqillānī cites, is based on the principle of possibility or admissibility: Anything in this world could possibly have been different from what it actually is. That which is square could possibly have been round. What is actually round could possibly have been quadrangular. Any animal could possibly have had any other shape than the one it actually has, and so on. Hence there must have been an agent who determined and chose the shape actually given to each thing from among all the possible shapes that could have been given to it.\textsuperscript{346} This is one variant of the proof from determination or particularization, based on the principle of

\textsuperscript{331} See above, at note 323.
\textsuperscript{332} Masa'il (Tripoli) 133, lines 14–16. Compare above, note 221.
\textsuperscript{333} Masa'il (Tripoli) 140, lines 21–23.
\textsuperscript{334} Masa'il (Tripoli) 147, lines 20–21.
\textsuperscript{335} Masa'il (Tripoli) 195, lines 6 ff.
\textsuperscript{336} Masa'il (Tripoli) 233 line 24–234, line 2.
\textsuperscript{337} Masa'il (Tripoli) 95, lines 8–10.
\textsuperscript{338} Tadhkira 304, lines 7–9, cf. Tadhkira, 286, lines 6–8.
\textsuperscript{339} Tadhkira 479, line 5, according to one of the mss. The other ms. reads "water" for "the heavens."
\textsuperscript{340} Tadhkira 288, line 4.
\textsuperscript{341} Tamhid § 77.
\textsuperscript{342} Tamhid 45, lines 6 ff.
\textsuperscript{343} Tamhid § 76.
\textsuperscript{345} See above, at notes 324–28.
\textsuperscript{346} Tamhid § 41.
admissibility. Al-Baqillani cites other variants of this proof as well and so does the Mu'tazilite Abu Rashid.

It is common knowledge that the Mutakallimun classified knowledge into a) "necessary" knowledge and b) "acquired", or "speculative", knowledge. "Necessary" knowledge comes to a person without his having done anything to obtain it, and he cannot help having it. "Acquired" or "speculative" knowledge comes about through an effort on the person's part, e.g., reasoning and establishing proofs. Now what is known "necessarily" was considered to be known to all sane mature persons and not subject to argument and disagreement, whereas people differ concerning the things which are known by speculation.

But, said al-Juwayni, it is only God's custom that logically there can be no disagreement about the things "necessarily" known. If God were to turn his custom upside down, it would be possible for people to disagree about what had been known necessarily and to agree about the things which previously had to be learned by speculation.

In another work by al-Juwayni, al-'Aqida al-Nizamiyya, there is a lengthy argument from the principle of admissibility. This passage appears to me worth closer scrutiny. Things in the world are either possible, or necessary, or impossible, says al-Juwayni. Things possible are known to be so either self-evidently or by speculation. An example for what is self-evidently possible is a building. For any person endowed with reason knows that it was possible for it to have been built and equally possible that it should not have been built. Furthermore, reason tells that every aspect and feature of this building, such as its height, its length, its width, could have been possibly different. The shape of each of its parts could have been different. So reason tells us. Furthermore, reason tells us that the building could have been built at another time than it has actually been built. Someone must have determined the special time for building it. This is clear according to reason.

While this was an example of what is self-evidently possible, there are things known by speculation to be possible. Thus a person endowed with reason knows that the rotation of the celestial spheres is possible. For if he contemplates the celestial bodies in a straightforward manner and speculates correctly he will find that the direction in which they move is—rationally speaking—as good as the opposite direction. Thus he will come to the rational conclusion that it is not impossible for those spheres, which actually rotate from East to West, to rotate from West to East. For there is no logical difference between the two directions. Their rotation would not be lower or higher if the direction were inverted.

Indeed, possibility known by speculation approaches self-evident possibility closely. The only difference between the case of the celestial spheres and that of a building is that while we are used to the spheres' moving always in one direction, we are accustomed to buildings having different shapes. On the other hand it is self-evidently impossible that two contraries meet, or that one and the same body move towards a place and at the same time rest in another place.

An example of what is known through speculation to be impossible is that a possible thing or event should come to be without something making it necessary (muqtadin). If something starts moving, while it could have remained at rest as before, it is clear upon a minimum of logical thinking that it is impossible and absurd that it should have started to move without either something necessitating its motion, or a cause causing it to move, or someone preferring it to move.

The world consists of all existents except God. It consists of bodies which are limited, having finite circumferences, and of accidents which subsist in

348. Tan hid § 40 and 49.
349. Mari'il (Tripoli) 80, 88-89.
352. See above, note 284.
353. 8 ff. This passage has been partly discussed by Wolfsen, Kalâm, 436-44. But is seems to me that he has ignored an important aspect of it, namely al-Juwayni's recurring reference to reason as the basis for the principle of admissibility.
354. This division seems to be roughly the same as the one set forth above at note 350.
355. al-'Aqida al-Nizamiyya 8, line 20 — 9, line 14.
356. al-'Aqida Nizamiyya 9, line 15-22.
357. al-'Aqida al-Nizamiyya 10, lines 1-5.
358. al-'Aqida al-Nizamiyya 10, lines 6-8.
359. al-'Aqida al-Nizamiyya 10, lines 1-14.
them, such as colors, shapes and other attributes. Both those of their qualities which we perceive by our senses and those concealed from us are possible. For reason tells us that each shape could possibly have been different from what it actually is. Anyone of the existing bodies could possibly have been shaped differently, have other colors, and so on. Reason does not consider it impossible that what rests should move, and that what moves should be at rest, that a lofty object, could possibly have been low. That which rotates in a circle could be assumed to do so far away from its present fixed course. It would have been possible for the stars which are arranged in their constellations to be disposed differently.

Thus it becomes clear by a minimum of speculation that all existents are possible. And since the world as a whole is thus possible it is wrong to say that it is necessary. But no well-guided intelligence could deem it possible that by mere chance something which is only possible should have existed since all eternity, without anything making its existence necessary. Thus it is established that the world has been requiring something which has been making it necessary for it to be as it is. For only what reason judges to be necessary in itself can do without something that makes it necessary. What has been proved to be merely possible, open to equal alternatives, cannot possibly exist by itself by chance.

The whole world is situated in a certain space. But for it to be situated in another empty space—to the right or to the left of its actual place—would have been equally possible. This is almost self-evident. Now locations and directions are "equal", i.e., on par with each other. No impersonal necessitating cause could have determined the world to be in one region as distinct from all other possible regions. For impersonal necessitating causes do not choose between equal alternatives. Therefore it is One Who chooses and prefers, Who by His will selects one alternative among equal alternatives. This proves that the world does not exist by virtue of an eternal necessitating cause but by virtue of One Who prefers and chooses.

The reason why I have discussed these passages in such detail is the recurring mention of reason in them. It is quite clear that here at least the basis for the argument from the principle of admissibility is reason and not imagination, as Maimonides claims so emphatically.

It is true that in the rest of the texts dealing with admissibility reason is not explicitly mentioned; but neither is imagination. This seems to justify one in doubting whether Maimonides' insistence that the principle of admissibility is based on imagination is a fair straight-forward description of this Kalām principle. This in spite of the fact that, as we have seen, Maimonides does speak of "intellectual admissibility" in the first part of the description of this premise. But obviously the word 'alq (intellect, reason) means one thing to the Mutaqallimun and another thing to Maimonides.

In connection with this subject, mention must also be made of the detailed refutation of causality by al-Ghazālī in his Tahāfuṭ al-Falāṣifah. Here the principles of admissibility and of God's custom play a role in a new method of argumentation. It is true that in the course of his discussion al-Ghazālī mentions the argument that the denial of causality and the belief in the direct intervention of God could lead one to assume cases like a book being turned into a young boy or into a horse, etc.; but he explains that God created in us the knowledge that things like these will not happen.

Elsewhere in the same work al-Ghazālī states that it would not have been impossible for the world to be larger or smaller than it is. Only simultaneously to affirm and negate one and the same thing is an impossibility.

To sum up, it appears that the principle of admissibility as well as the principle of God's custom have their roots among early Baṣrī Muʿtaẓilites, while leading figures among the Baghdādī Muʿtaẓilites seem to have rejected them. These principles play an important role in the thought of Kalām but apparently not as important as Maimonides would have it. There seems to be no indication that these principles are based on imagination.

361. Wolfsen, Kalām 442 (at note 35; cf. also 438 and 493) follows Averroes in understanding this to mean that the world is surrounded by empty space. I am not sure whether this is the correct way to understand what al-Juwaynī says. Wolfsen's source is Ibn Rushd, al-Kāshf 'an manṭūḥ al-adīlā (in Falasfūt. . . Ibn Rushd, second edition, Cairo, 1910) 43 lines 3-4.
362. al-'Aṣqāf al-Nizāniyya 11 lines 2-17. This and what follows has been summarized by H.A. Davidson, Proofs for Eternity 187-88. But Davidson skipped the— to my mind important—statement ruling out the possibility that mere chance led to the existence of the world.
363. Tahāfuṭ 64. lines 5-12, van den Bergh, Averroes' Incoherence, 1:52-53. It appears that van den Bergh is wrong in attributing to al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarītes the proposition "that nothing is possible but what exists" Averroes' Incoherence 2:30, n. 53; cf. Tahāfuṭ 70 lines 10 f; van den Bergh, Averroes' Incoherence, 1:60, lines 11 ff.
364. But see van Ess, Erkenntnislehre 184.
The Eleventh Premise

This is their saying that the existence of that which is infinite in any mode whatever is impossible. The explanation of this is as follows. The impossibility of the existence of an infinite magnitude has already been demonstrated, or the existence of magnitudes infinite in number — even if each of them is of finite magnitude — provided that those magnitudes infinite in number are supposed to coexist in time. Similarly the existence of an infinite number of causes is impossible — I mean to say that a thing should be the cause of something, that thing should be the cause of something, that this thing should have a cause in its turn, that that cause should again have a cause, and so forth to infinity, so that an infinite number of numerable things should exist in acta; and it is indifferent whether these be bodies or things separate from matter, provided only that some of them are the causes of others. It is this natural and essential orderly arrangement with regard to which it has been demonstrated that the infinite is impossible in it. But as for what is infinite in potency or accidently, the existence of such an infinite has, in some cases, been demonstrated: thus it has been demonstrated that the division of magnitudes to infinity is possible in potency, and likewise the division of time to infinity. Another case is an object of speculation: namely, the existence of what is infinite by way of succession. This is what is called the infinite by accident. And it consists in a thing coming to exist after the passing-away of another thing, the latter's coming to exist after the passing-away of a third thing, and so forth to infinity. About this there is an extremely profound speculation. Thus he who claims to have demonstrated the eternity of the world says that time is not finite, and nothing absurd follows necessarily for him therefrom. For as soon as a portion of time is actualized, another portion passes away. Similarly the succession of accidents, which attach themselves to matter, goes on, in his opinion, to infinity, without an absurdity necessarily following for him from this assertion. For the accidents do not all exist simultaneously, but in succession, and the impossibility of this has not been demonstrated. As for the Mutakallimūn, there is no difference, in their opinion, between saying that a certain infinite magnitude exists and saying that bodies and time are liable to be divided to infinity. There likewise is no difference, in their opinion, between asserting the simultaneous existence of things infinite in number, arranged, [at the same time] in orderly fashion — your saying this, for instance, as it were, about the human individuals existing at present — or your asserting that things infinite in number came into existence, but passed away one after the other. It is as if you said: Zayd is the son of Umar, Umar is the son of Khalid, Khalid is the son of Bakr, and so forth to infinity. This position is likewise absurd according to them, just as the first was. Thus these four divisions of the infinite are equivalent according to them. Some of them wish, in a way that I shall explain to you in the present Treatise, to establish the correctness of the latter of these divisions — I mean to say, they wish to make clear its impossibility. Others say that this impossibility is self-evident for the intellect through the spontaneous perception of the mind and that it does not require demonstration. Now if it is a clear absurdity that things infinite in number should exist successively, even though those of them that exist at present are finite in number, the eternity of the world can be considered through the spontaneous perception of the mind as absurd. And there is no need in any respect for any other premise. However, this is not the place for the investigation of this subject. (Guide 212–13)

The four kinds of infinity which Maimonides discusses in this passage are:

a) an infinite magnitude,

b) an infinite number of magnitudes, a series consisting of an infinite number of coexisting members, or an infinite causal chain,

c) an infinite division of a finite magnitude,

d) an infinite series whose members succeed each other and cease to exist so that the number of members actually existing at any given time is always finite. This is what he terms “infinite by accident”.

Maimonides states that the Mutakallimūn did not distinguish between these four kinds and rejected infinity of any kind. As we shall see, this can be verified from the sources. Maimonides himself agrees that infinity of kind (a) and (b) are impossible. He states that (c), the infinite division of a finite magnitude, is possible at least potentially. He does not express his opinion unequivocally on the fourth kind of infinity. This seems to be quite natural since this is clearly connected with the question whether the world has been created in time or exists since all eternity—a problem on which he studiously avoids expressing a decisive opinion in the Guide.

It appears to me that Maimonides omits to mention one kind of potential infinity, namely an infinite number of possibilities, this is the only kind of infinity I have found to have been acknowledged and affirmed at least by one of the Mutakallimūn. The Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabār states that at any point of time there is an infinity of things which are in God's power to accomplish.367

367. 'Abd al-Jabār, al-Muhkām Vol. 4, ed. Muhammad Mustafā Helmi and Abūl Wa'f al-Qanawī, al-Taḥfaṣāt (Cairo, 1965) 277. For an early discussion of this question see Al-Khayyāy, Kitāb al-Iṣār ed. Albert Nasri Nader (Beirut 1957) 4. See also al-Ghazāলī, Ḥujwel 33, lines 16f.
But all the other statements with regard to infinity that I have found seem to refer to outright rejection. The earliest denial of an infinite series, I have discovered, is quoted in the names of the early Mut'azilites al-Iṣkāfī (died 854) and Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām. The Ash'arite al-Bāqillānī (died 1013) tries to disprove the possibility of a series without a beginning by blurring the distinction between the beginning of an event and the beginning of a series of events. His also seems to be the earliest extant denial of an infinite causal chain.

A few years later the Mu'tazilite Ibn Mattīya produced the following elaboration of al-Bāqillānī's sophism. Since every created thing has a beginning, a series of such things must also have a beginning. This can be seen by analogy to the fact that since every Jew is an infidel, the community of all Jews is an infidel community. Then he goes on to agree that no infinity whatsoever can exist.

A lengthy refutation of what Maimonides calls "infinite by accident" ("(d)" in our division) appears in al-Juwaynī's 

All philosophical infidels (mulhīda), says al-Juwaynī, agree that the world was the same since all eternity. Suppose that before each rotation of the celestial sphere there was an earlier rotation. Suppose that there was no beginning to this. Suppose likewise the succession of events in this world of generation and corruption to have been without a beginning. Before every child there was a father, before every plant a seed, before every egg a hen. This principle, says al-Juwaynī, would lead to the conclusion that an infinite number of things came into existence successively. That this is false is one of the axioms of reason. For, according to their principle, before the present rotation began an endless number of rotations must have come to an end. But that which comes to an end is not endless.

Another argument from the rotation of the celestial spheres, but a much more sophisticated one than that by al-Juwaynī, is provided by al-Ghazālī in the Tahāfut al-Falāṣīf. The various spheres differ as to the velocity of their motion. Had the world existed since all eternity, the number of the rotations each sphere would have completed up to the present would be infinite. But the number of rotations one sphere had completed would be twice or three times as much as that of another sphere. This would lead to the absurd conclusion that one infinite number is the multiple of another infinite number. Elsewhere in the same work al-Ghazālī shows that the belief in an infinite causal chain is not tenable.

As against the argument that an eternal universe would involve only what Maimonides termed "infinity by accident" because the members of the infinite series of fathers and sons, for instance, would not all exist at one and the same time—al-Ghazālī claims that this would not be true of the immortal souls of which an infinite number would accumulate.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī provides, in his Kitāb al-ʿArbaʿīn, three arguments for the impossibility of an infinite causal chain. In two of them he uses Avicenna's concepts "possibly existent by itself" "necessarily existent," etc. The third is based on the impossibility of two unequal infinite magnitudes.

Indeed the impossibility of an infinite regress or "chain" (tasalsul) concatenation has become sufficient in order to disprove an opinion, by showing that this opinion would lead to an infinite regress. Thus the word tasalsul has become something of a magic tool in the disputation.

and what Maimonides calls an "accidental" one, he rejects both kinds; cf. also Irshād (Paris) 19, line 3.

375. Tahāfut 31–33; Averroes' Incoherence 8–9; Davidson, Proofs for Eternity 122 traces this proof as well back to John Philoponus, and mentions other authors who employed it. Cf. also Sambursky, "John Philoponus' refutation of the infinite", Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition, Essays presented . . . to R. Wasser, ed. S.M. Stern [and others] (Oxford, 1972) 351–53, see also Tahāfut 35, lines 8–12, and Iṣṭiṣād 33, lines 4–15.

376. Tahāfut 46–47; Averroes' Incoherence, 32–33, 2.26, note 33.1; cf. Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, 71 and note 156.

377. Tahāfut 136–137; Averroes' Incoherence, 161–62; Davidson, Proofs for Eternity 123 at notes 69–70.

378. ʿArbaʿīn 82–83; Davidson, Proofs for Eternity 357.

379. ʿArbaʿīn 83–84, 15; Davidson, Proofs for Eternity 120 and 122. Compare al-Ghazālī's argument above, at note 375.

380. See e.g., 'Abd al-Jabbar, Al-Majmuʿ fi'l-maḥbūb bi'l-takhrīf, ed. J.J. Houwen, vol. 1 (Beyrouth, 1966) 70, line 19 (the real author is Ibn Mattīya); Irshād (Paris) Arabic 12, line 17, French, 31; Arabic 13, line 8, French 32; Arabic 17, line 3, French 37, Arabic 79, line 16,
Among later authors who dealt with this question Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmīdī and al-Shahrastānī may be mentioned.

The Twelfthth Premise

This is their saying that the senses do not always procure certain knowledge. For the Mutaqallimūn have been suspicious with regard to the apprehension of the senses on two counts. One of them arises from the fact that, as they say, the senses miss many of the objects of their sensation either because of the subtlety of the body of the object of apprehension— as they mention with regard to the atoms and what pertains to them, as we have made clear — or because of the distance of the objects of apprehension from the apprehending subject. Thus a man does not see, hear, and smell at a distance extending to several parasangs, and it is impossible to apprehend the motion of the heaven. The second count arises from their saying that the senses can be mistaken with regard to the object of their apprehension. Thus a man, when he is far off, sees a big thing as small; a small thing as big, if it is in water; and a crooked thing as straight, if part of it is in water and part of it outside. Similarly someone suffering from jaundice sees things as yellow, and one whose tongue is steeped with yellow bile tastes sweet things as bitter. They enumerate many things of that kind. They say: for this reason the senses should not be trusted to the extent of adopting them as the principles of demonstration. Do not think that agreement of the Mutaqallimūn in affiiming this premise is gratuitous. That would be similar to the belief of the majority of the later Mutaqallimūn that the wish of their predecessors to establish the existence of the indivisible particle did not correspond to a need. In fact, all their assertions that we have set forth in the foregoing passages are necessary, and if one premise were to be destroyed, the whole purpose would be destroyed. Indeed this last of the premises is most necessary. For whenever we apprehend with our senses things contoversing their assumptions they are able to say: no attention should be paid to the senses as the matter— which, as they think, has been proven by the testimony of the intellect—is demonstrated. This is the case with regard to their claim that continuous motion is interrupted by units of rest, with regard to their other claim that the millstone undergoes a division when revolving, and with regard to still another claim of theirs that the whiteness of this garment has become nonexistent at this instant and that this whiteness is another whiteness. These are assertions that run counter to what can be seen. There are furthermore many things necessarily following from the existence of vacuum, all of which are contradicted by the senses. Consequently the answer to all this is, when this answer is possible, that the particular thing one is concerned with has been missed by the senses. In other cases, the answer is given that it is one of the errors of the senses. You already know that all these are ancient opinions, which had been held by the Sophists. About the latter, Galen, in his book "On the Natural Faculties," states that they taxed the senses with lying and relates everything that you already know.

(Guide 213–14)

In clear contradistinction to the previous proposition, the denial of infinity, for which I have found ample confirmation in the texts, I can hardly make a similar claim for the present premise. It is true, as we have seen above, that they held that the motion of a body is made up of an invisible alternation of motion and rest, that a millstone, inivisibly breaks up into its particles while in motion, that the color of a garment is created by God at every instant imperceptibly. But the reason given why our senses do not perceive these things was that things are imperceptible in themselves, not that our senses are to blame. Indeed I have not found any explicit statement whatsoever affirming that our senses deceive us.

Al-Bāqillānī, for instance, writes that the knowledge which results from perception by any of our five senses is necessary knowledge which the soul cannot but have and which leaves no room for any doubt.

It sometimes happens, says Ibn Mattūya, that he who perceives fails to distinguish between different tastes. But this is not a sign that he does not perceive. Thus one who suffers from jaundice feels bitterness when he eats honey, because a certain bitterness cleaves to him and causes the taste to change.

Ibn Mattūya reports that his masters disagreed as to whether a single atom in isolation is visible or not. Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī taught that if light were to

French 132; al-Ghazzālī, al-Iqṭāsād fī 'l-Fiqḥād 23, line 13; al-Rūzī, Mahāsās al-43 line 18, 44, line 4, and 105, line 10. For the idea without the term, see Iqṭāsād, 143, line 3 and 144, lines 9–10. See also Abū Rashīd, Manāẓīr 77, line 24.


382. Towbīd 9, lines 8–14, for the concept of "necessary knowledge" see above at note 350 and the references provided in that note.

become stronger than it is, the isolated atom would be seen just as people on their death-bed see the angels. Abü `Abdallāh, on the other hand held that it is impossible to see an isolated atom. From what follows in the text it appears that Abū Hāshim, al-Jubbātī's son, anticipated Abū `Abdallāh in this. Ibn Mattīya argued that the states of being (akwān) are imperceptible. The proof of this is that often a passenger in a ship is not aware that the ship moves.

Similarly Abū Rashīd reports that while Abū'l-Qāsim al-Kā'bi al-Balkhī held that the senses do perceive the states of being, he himself does not hold this view. The senses do not perceive motion or rest. Thus a passenger in a ship is not aware whether it moves or not. Nevertheless Abū Rashīd does not claim that this is a failure of the senses. It is the states of being that are by their very nature imperceptible.

Ibn Mattīya holds that both the atom and its color are visible. Sometimes it happens, he says, that one sees a body and does not see what its color is, "because confusion (al-lubs) becomes an obstacle preventing him who perceives from knowing what he perceives." Abū Rashīd's argument is similar. What a person perceives is necessarily perceived and known, i.e., the person cannot help perceiving and knowing it, if there is no confusion (lubs).

The argument in Fi'al-Tawḥīd is clearly based on the assumption, taken for granted, that perception teaches us about existence as it is. Whatever exists says al-Juwaynī could possibly be seen. Both Ashʿarites and Muʿtazzīlites agree that if in fact people do not perceive all perceptible object this is because of certain obstacles. But they differ concerning the nature of these obstacles. The Muʿtazila speak of obstacles such as excessive closeness, excessive remoteness, wrong direction of the ray of sight so that it does not meet the object, thick non-transparent partitions or blindness owing to disintegration of the eye. The Ashʿarites, on the other hand, allowed only for those obstacles which are contraries of the perception and inheres as accidents in the potential perceiver, e.g., blindness as contrary of sight.

Al-Juwaynī writes:

It would have been possible that fresh blood flow in the rivers and the mountains turn into pure gold. Nevertheless whoever holds this to be possible in his period and lifetime—is crazy and obsessed with delusion. In the same manner one has to affirm decisively that there is nothing in our presence that we do not see.

He also states that some of the ancient masters denied that speculations is a trustworthy source of knowledge. Only sense-perception and reliable reports lead to knowledge.

It is said that the sun is some one hundred and seventy times larger than the earth. If a piece as big as several mountains were detracted from it, this would escape our senses, says al-Ghazālī.

I can hardly say that the evidence of the passages here collected—which are all the references to this question I have found—suffice to confirm that Maimonides imputes to the Kalam in this section. Therefore I tend to agree with J. van Ess that "up to this day we have barely met thoughts like these in their original context in the Kalām." Van Ess in his discussion of the subject cites mainly examples from Greek antiquity and only few from Kalām. The only large list of delusions of the senses he quotes is taken from the work of al-Ījī, who flourished a whole century after Maimonides. And al-Ījī explicitly refers to the Greeks for the notion that the senses delude. Elsewhere J. van Ess showed convincingly that a sort of skepticism did

elishabenabuyah and muslim heretics in maimonides' writings

by sarah stroumsa

shlomo pines prefaced his english translation of the guide of the perplexed with an introductory monograph, "the philosophical sources of the guide of the perplexed." despite the fact that he hid behind the modest title, "translator's introduction," this is not an introduction of the type intended as preparation for the study of the guide. it is a difficult work, dense and full, to which one needs to return again and again each time one studies anew the guide of the perplexed.

in seeking maimonides' philosophical sources for the guide, pines relied first and foremost upon explicit statements by maimonides, whether those made in the guide itself or those in his letter to its translator, samuel ibn tibbon. but the philosophers and other thinkers mentioned by name in the guide are not numerous. even the list found in the letter to ibn tibbon does not necessarily exhaust those philosophers to the discussion of whose thought maimonides attached importance and whom he therefore chose to quote. it is more likely that ibn tibbon, in a letter which is no longer extant, inquired concerning certain authors whose books were in his library, and that maimonides responded in his letter to this inquiry.

* the following article is based primarily upon a lecture given at a memorial evening for prof. shlomo pines on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death, sponsored by the department of jewish thought at the hebrew university of jerusalem.

1. s. pines, "translator's introduction: the philosophical sources of the guide of the perplexed," in moses maimonides, the guide of the perplexed, tr. s. pines (chicago, 1965) xxvi-xxxiv.

In any event, Pines thought that Maimonides' philosophical erudition was far broader than would seem to be the case only on the basis of these explicit references. It is therefore incumbent upon us, when we set out to study the Guide, to be alert to the possibility that Maimonides' words reflect, whether by way of acceptance or by way of reaction and criticism, his knowledge of the works of various thinkers whose names are not explicitly mentioned. An example of this is Judah Halevi; although his name is not mentioned by Maimonides, Pines assumes that Maimonides' remarks, in several places in the Guide, reflect acquaintance with the Kuzari, either by way of influence or criticism. Another example is the Muslim theologian al-Ghazali (d. 1111), whose name is also not mentioned by Maimonides. Pines sees Maimonides' acquaintance with the writings of al-Ghazali as a likely possibility because, according to Pines: "No philosopher who wishes to keep abreast of the intellectual debate of this period could have afforded not to have done so; and such a lacuna in Maimonides' knowledge of Arabic theological literature would have been most uncharacteristic." Pines saw the identification of sources and the analysis of the way in which they are used as an important tool for understanding the thought of any philosopher, including Maimonides.

In what follows, I shall attempt to point out several instances in which the assumption that Maimonides knew Muslim theological literature can assist us to understand or to explain curious or vague statements in his words, to which, to the best of my knowledge, attention has hitherto not been paid. As a point of departure we shall consider the figure of Elisha ben Abuyah as it appears in several places in Maimonides' writings. I shall attempt to demonstrate that Maimonides' presentation of the figure of Elisha is not based upon the Jewish sources, and that certain features in the personality of the Maimonidean Elisha, which have thus far been unexplained, can be understood on the basis of the assumption that Maimonides was familiar with Muslim theological literature.

4. "The Philosophic Sources" cxxvii.

In Guide 1.32, Maimonides explicitly mentions Elisha and his sin. He states:

For if you stay your progress because of a dubious point; if you do not deceive yourself into believing that there is a demonstration with regard to matters that have not been demonstrated; if you do not hasten to reject and categorically to pronounce false any assertions whose contradictionary have not been demonstrated; if, finally, you do not aspire to apprehend that which you are unable to apprehend—you will have achieved human perfection and attained the rank of Rabbi Aqiba, peace be on him, who entered in peace and went out in peace [BT, Hagigah 14b] when engaged in the theoretical study of these metaphysical matters. If, on the other hand, you aspire to apprehend things that are beyond your apprehension; or if you hasten to pronounce false, assertions the contradictionary of which have not been demonstrated or that are possible, though very remotely so—you will have joined Elisha Aher. That is, you will not only not be perfect, but will be the most deficient among the deficient... In this regard it is said: "Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith and vomit it" [Prov. 25:16]. In a similar way, the Sages, may their memory be blessed, used this verse as a parable that they applied to Elisha Aher.5

Several striking features of Elisha's personality emerge in this passage: he attempted to reach beyond his powers of apprehension; he deluded himself into thinking that there is a proof for that which in fact cannot be proven; and he pronounced false certain matters "the contradictionary of which have not been demonstrated." Shortly after his remarks concerning Elisha, Maimonides, in the same chapter, returns to the same subject. He states:

This is what the Sages intended to signify by their dictum, whoever considers four things, and so on. [BT Hagigah 13b], completing the dictum by saying, he who does not have regard for the honor of his creator; whereby they indicated what we have already made clear: namely, that man should not press forward to engage in speculative study of corrupt imaginings. When points appearing as dubious occur to him or the thing he seeks does not seem to him to be demonstrated, he should not deny and reject it, hastening to pronounce it false, but rather should persevere and thereby have regard for the honor of his Creator. He should refrain and hold back.6

Maimonides repeats here what he already stated several lines earlier concerning the need to refrain from reaching conclusive decisions about matters for which there is no demonstrated proof. This time, however, he mentions a further characteristic of those who act in that manner which was described as being the behavior of Elisha—that is, who hastened to deny those things the contradictories of which have not been proven: namely, that such a man does not have regard for the honor of his Creator.

Maimonides clearly alludes here to what is stated in the Mishnah:

One does not expound upon matters of illicit sexual relations before three, nor upon the Account of the Creation before two, nor upon the Account of the Chariot to a single person, unless he is wise and understands matters by himself. Whoever contemplates four things, it is a pity that he was ever born: What is above, what is below, what is before, and what is after. And whoever does not have regard for the honor of his Creator—it is a pity that he was ever born.7

In his Commentary on the Mishnah, Hagigah 2 (Pereq Ein Dorshin), Maimonides explains this entire mishnah as one unit: he first explains the significance of the limitation on the study of the Account of the Creation and of the Account of the Divine Chariot, against which the mishnah warns that one ought not to involve oneself without suitable preparation. He connects this with the condemnation of one who involves himself with the question of “what is before and what is after”—that is, of a person who attempts to know

“what there was before the heavens were created, and what will be after they are destroyed.” All these things—the rash involvement with the Account of the Chariot and the Account of Creation, and the condemnation of one who investigates what is before and what is after—are connected by Maimonides in his Commentary on the Mishnah to “Whoever does not have regard for the honor of His Creator.” He states:

And he states, regarding the restraint of a person who imposes his intelligence also on the contemplation of metaphysics by way of the imagination alone, without graduated study of the sciences, “Whoever has no regard for the honor of his Creator.”8

As we have seen, in Guide 1.32 Maimonides also mentions the contemplation of these four matters and the unwillingness to take heed of the honor due to one’s Creator as two matters which are interrelated:

This is what the Sages intended to signify by their dictum, Whoever considers four things, and so on. [BT Hagigah 11b], completing the dictum by saying, He who does not have regard for the honor of his Creator...

The person who insists upon reflecting upon the acts of Creation, upon what is before and what is after, is the same one who has no regard for the honor of his Creator, and is also the one who is too hasty in rejecting those matters the contradictories of which have not been demonstrated—like Elisha-Aher.

As might be anticipated, over against Elisha Maimonides poses R. Akiva, who “entered in peace and went out in peace.” In this same context, Maimonides also defines the realm of speculation within which R. Akiva succeeded and Elisha failed as “the divine matters.” As is known, the divine matters are first of all metaphysics or “the Account of the Chariot” (Ma‘aseh Merkavah). But Maimonides also thought regarding the science of physics or “the Account of the Creation” (Ma‘aseh Bereshit) that “there is a close connection between these matters and the divine science, and they too are secrets of that divine science.”

7. Mishnah, Hagigah 2.1
Indeed, in his interpretation of the chapter concerning the four who “entered Pardes” (i.e., engaged in esoteric speculation), Maimonides would seem to have accentuated the tendency to see involvement in physics as a part of the Divine “sciences.” In *Guide* 2.30, he distinguishes between the terms “first” (al-‘awwal) and beginning (mabda’); in that same chapter, in his interpretation of the terms “water” and “firmament” in the Account of the Creation, Maimonides chooses to cite the warning of R. Akiva:

> With regard to the fact that that which is above the firmament is called water in name only and that it is not the specific water known to us, a statement setting forth has also been made by the Sages, may their memory be blessed. They made it in the following passage: *Four entered the Paradise, and so on.* [BT Hagigah 14b] Rabbi Akiba said to them: When you come to the stones of pure marble, do not say, Water, Water, for it is written: He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before nine eyes [Ps. 101:7].

Chapter 30 of Book II belongs, as is well-known, to the complex of chapters dealing with the question of the eternity or creation of the world. The meaning of the statement of R. Akiva in this connection has already been widely discussed. For our present purposes, this is important as it clearly follows from it that Maimonides associates the path of the four who entered into Pardes, and hence the path of Elisha, not only with the question of Creation in a general way, but specifically with that of the eternity of the world.

This understanding enables us to once again examine the figure of Elisha. Let us return to Maimonides’ remarks in *Guide* 1.32, and to the stumbling blocks which may cause a person to resemble Elisha. As we have seen, this danger confronts one who “aspires to apprehend things that are beyond his apprehension” or “hastens to pronounce false, assertions the contradictions of which have not been demonstrated.” The specific question concerning which Maimonides takes trouble to argue that there is not, and cannot be, a proof, is indeed that of the eternity of the universe. In *Guide* 2.15, he states:

> As for me, I have no doubt that the opinions mentioned by Aristotle with regard to these subjects—I mean such opinions as that concerning the eternity of the world... are none of them provided with a demonstration. And Aristotle never at any time had the fantasy that what he said in this connection constituted a demonstration. On the contrary, he thought, as he says, that the gates of the ways to inferential reasoning on these matters are closed before us and that we have at our disposition no principle pertaining to them from which to start to draw inferences.

In a more explicit and specific way, the danger that one may come to resemble Elisha awaits him who “hastens to pronounce false, assertions the contradictions of which have not been demonstrated or that are possible, though very remotely so.” Here, too, the specific issue that Maimonides tries to keep within the realm of the possible, and to argue that no proof has been brought disproving it, is the belief in the creation of the world in time. Thus, he says in *Guide* 2.23:

> I have drawn your attention to this in order that you should not be deceived. For someone may some day lead you into vain imaginings through setting forth a doubt concerning the creation of the world in time, and you may be very quick to let yourself be deceived. For in this opinion is contained the destruction of the foundation of the Law and a presumptuous assertion with regard to the deity.

10. Maimonides, *Guide* 2.30 (Arabic: 247–248; English: 353): אַם-אָנָּה אָאֵ בָּרָא-מְלַה בָּרִי לַעָלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה הָּלָה HAGIGAH 2.1 (Arabic-Hebrew: Mo'ed 377): “By the name ‘The Account of the Beginning’ they designate physics and the preoccupation with the origins of Being. By ‘The Account of the Chariot’ they intend metaphysics, which is the discussion of the entirety of Being, the existence of the Creator, His knowledge and His attributes, the necessitating of existing things from Him, the Angels, the soul, the intellect which is conjoined with the human being, and the destiny after death.”


Elsewhere, in Chapter 29 of Book II, he again explains that:

Aristotle, on the other hand, thinks that just as the world is eternal a parte post and will not pass away, it is also eternal a parte ante and has not been produced. Now we have already said and explained that this doctrine can be arranged in a coherent way only through recourse to the law of necessity and that necessity contains a presumptuous assertion with regard to the deity, as we have explained.  

And shortly thereafter:

Not everything mentioned in the Torah concerning the Account of the Beginning is to be taken in its external sense as the vulgar imagine ... And they say explicitly: As from the beginning of the book up to here, the honor of God requires to conceal the thing. [Gen. R. 9:1, ref. to Prov. 25:2]  

In these last passages, an additional element appears in Maimonides' remarks. We initially saw his logical and methodological claim that there is no proof and cannot be any proof regarding the question of the creation of the world. But he then adds a claim that might be described as an ethical one: casting doubts upon the doctrine of the Creation of the world in time is “a presumptuous assertion with regard to the deity.” Contemplation of the Account of the Creation and its hidden aspects constitute “the honor of God;” this is the meaning of the command, “to have regard for the honor of his Creator.” It is in this light that we ought to reexamine what we saw above, in Guide 1.32:

This is what the Sages intended to signify by their dictum, Whoever considers four things, and so on. [BT Hagiga 11b], completing the dictum by saying, He who does not have regard for the honor of his Creator, whereby they indicated what we have already made clear: namely, that man should not press forward to engage in speculative study of corrupt imaginings. When points appearing as dubious occur to him or the thing he seeks does not seem to him to be demonstrated, he should not deny and reject it, hastening to pronounce it false, but rather should persevere and thereby have regard for the honor of his Creator. He should refrain and hold back.

Let us summarize the argument to this point by stating that the central elements comprising the image of the sin of Elisha in the Guide are: excessive effort to attain that which is above human comprehension, involvement with what is before and what is after, the denial of things which have not been logically disproven, and the decision which does not have regard for the honor of the Creator of man. The very same elements are involved in the question of the eternity of the world. Maimonides nowhere explicitly says that Elisha sinned in denying the creation of the world in time. But the use of the same key expressions in both cases is striking, and it seems to me that we would not be far wrong if we say that Elisha ben Abuyah is portrayed by Maimonides in the Guide as a man who stumbled into the pitfall of the Aristotelian philosophers (to be distinguished from Aristotle himself), and who interpreted the Account of the Creation in the direction of belief in the eternity of the universe.

It seems to me that there is no need to discuss at length the originality of this interpretation of the figure of Elisha and his sin. While there were earlier attempts to connect the question of the eternity of the world with the story of the “four who entered Paradise,” they all related to the statement of Ben-Zoma and the warning of Rabbi Akiva. It is self-evident that one cannot find the roots of the Aristotelian philosopher Elisha ben Abuyah in the Talmudic descriptions. Fundamental elements in the image of Elisha in the Talmud—such as his confrontation with Metatron and the matter of “two powers in heaven,” or the concern with theodicy (“Is this Torah and is this its reward?”), are completely absent in the image of the Maimonidean Elisha. But what most stands out in Maimonides’ interpretation is primarily the absence of the Talmudic formulation of the nature of Elisha’s sin: “Aber uprooted the plants (qitzei ba-ne’elot)” I. In its place, stress is placed by Maimonides upon the Mishnah which discusses those concerning whom it is said that “it is a pity that they ever came into the world”; i.e., those who contemplate that


16. However, Maimonides also applies this expression to the discussion of the divine attributes in Guide 1.59 (see Arabic: 97; English: 142).
which was before, and those who do not have regard for the honor of their Creator.

Moreover, the emphasis upon the excessive effort to attain that of which it is impossible to achieve comprehension causes Maimonides to apply to Elisha the verse, “Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee,” which in the Talmudic source is applied by the Sages to Ben Zoma, rather than the verse in Ecclesiastes 5:5, which the Sages apply to Elisha (“Do not cause your mouth to cause thy flesh to sin”). One may of course simply assume that Maimonides committed an error, and confused the Talmudic text concerning Elisha ben Abuyah with that concerning Ben Zoma. But such an error is not at all characteristic of Maimonides, and seems particularly unlikely in light of the numerous times that Maimonides alludes to the second chapter of Hagigah in the Guide. This is without doubt a chapter which Maimonides studied a great deal and knew well.

The possibility of an ordinary error is weakened further, in my opinion, in light of the fact that this is not his only “slip of the pen” concerning this matter, but part of a systematic commentary, in which Maimonides frees the images of the “four who entered Pardes” from the bonds of the Talmudic text, using them as he wishes. We would have thought that, of the four, the figure to whom it would be most appropriate to attribute involvement with the eternity of the world would be Ben Zoma, who “gazed and was harmed,” and whose reflection upon what was between the upper waters and the lower waters led Rabbi Joshua to remark that, “Ben Zoma is presently outside.” We might have thought that Maimonides, loyal to the above-mentioned approach (Guide 2.30), would be happy with this version, and state that Ben Zoma dealt with the Account of the Creation. Instead, Maimonides completely ignores the Talmudic context. The saying of Rabbi Joshua, “Ben Zoma is presently outside,” is taken by him to indicate that Ben Zoma only engaged in the preliminary disciplines of mathematics and logic, and did not at all engage in natural science. He prefers to attribute involvement in physics as “a presumptuous assertion with regard to the deity” to the great rebel,

Elisha-Aher. We thus find here a clear departure from the Talmudic images of Elisha and Ben Zoma; however, it seems extremely doubtful to me that this departure occurred without deliberate thought. Neither can the source of Maimonides’ interpretation of Elisha be found in the writings of Jewish philosophers who preceded him. None of the peculiarities of Maimonides’ Elisha can be found in Judah Halevi’s treatment of this figure (Kuzari 1.65).

Analysis of the passages pertaining to Elisha, of course, has bearing upon the famous and perplexing question as to what Maimonides really thought about the issue of the creation or eternity of the world. The formulations used by Maimonides in order to describe the sin of Elisha in the Guide emphasize the theological-educational aspect (as opposed to the philosophical-scientific aspect) of the demand to preserve the doctrine of the Creation as a possibility, “even if very remotely so.” This demand follows from the need to “have regard for the honor of his Creator,” and not from considerations of scientific rigor. In addition, the blatant “error” of attributing an inappropriate verse to Elisha is intended, in my opinion, to serve as a “pointer,” arousing the attention of the reader to the fact that Maimonides’ remarks here are not intended to be understood literally. It may well be that they are correct only on one level, and that one needs to investigate the possibility of their being understood on another level. But it is not with this matter that I wish to deal here, but with the uniqueness of the Maimonidean Elisha.

The original interpretation of the mishnah offered by Maimonides is not an unusual phenomenon in the Guide. If only this one interpretation were long as you are engaged in studying the mathematical sciences and the art of logic, you are one of those who walk around the house searching for its gate, as [the Sages], may their memory be blessed, have said resorting to a parable: ‘Ben Zoma is still outside.’ If, however, you have understood the natural things, you have entered the habitation and are walking in the antechambers . . .”

available to us, we could point toward Elisha as just one more example of the fact that Maimonides translates the words of the Rabbis in a manner suitable to the problems with which he is dealing, but we would not have much success in identifying the source of his inspiration for this interpretation. This is made possible by examination of another passage in which Maimonides mentions Elisha ben Abuyah, in an entirely different context and with a different, but no less original, interpretation. I refer to his remarks in the Sırāj—i.e., his Commentary on the Mishnah, Hullin 1.2—where he deals with the question of who is to be considered an apostate Jew (Yisra’el meshummad), who may validly perform ritual slaughter, and who is considered a heretic (min), and may not validly slaughter animals. He states in this connection:

“And he may not be a heretic.” In the language of the Sages, minin are the heretics among Israel (zanādīq Yisra’el). And these are the people whose foolishness dulls their intellects, and whose lusts have darkened their souls; therefore they cast aspersions upon the Torah and the prophets, of blessed memory, and give the lie to (or. deny) the prophets concerning matters about which they have no knowledge (yukadhdhiḥanā al-anbiyyā’ bīnā tā ‘ilmā lahun bihi), and they abandon the commandments in contempt. They are of the congregation of Jesus the Nazarene, Doeg, Ahiophel, Gehazi, and Elisha-Ahēr, and those who follow in their ways—may the name of the wicked rot. It is possible to know that a person belongs to this congregation when one sees that he shakes off any one of the commandments contemptuously, without deriving any benefit from this act.25

The people included here as heretics are those whom one might expect to see in such a list: Jesus and Elisha, along with three Biblical figures whom the mishnah (Sanhedrin 11.2) enumerates as “laymen” (i.e., not kings) who have no portion in the World to Come: namely, Doeg, Ahiophel, and Gehazi. These figures are mentioned in the Talmudic discussion in Hagigah (in connection with Elisha’s involvement with Greek song and heretical books), as having been remarkably learned.26 In his Commentary on the Mishnah in Sanhedrin, Maimonides likewise stresses the fact that these same three laymen were renowned for their great erudion (ʾɪm dārajaḥātīm fī l-ʾilm).27

Spiteful contempt for the commandments—contempt which, according to this passage, characterizes a “heretic”—fits the Elisha of the Talmud. One may also note a certain connection between the image of Elisha here and that in the Guide: the contempt towards the commandments and the prophets exhibited by heretics such as Elisha is consistent with the portrait of Elisha as one who does not have regard for the honor of his Creator.

But the description of Elisha as one of those who “give the lie to the prophets concerning matters about which they have no knowledge” (a description formulated, incidentally, in Koranic language28 includes a certain feature which we have not encountered in the Guide—one which, as far as I know, has no basis in the description of Elisha in the Jewish tradition. The fact that, in the Commentary on the Mishnah, Maimonides does not concern himself with questions of physics and the creation is not surprising. This was not a proper subject for the audience intended in this book. However, his interpretation of the figure of Elisha remains as original as his interpretation in the Guide.

If we combine the description given in the Guide of the Perplexed with that in the Commentary on the Mishnah, we are confronted with the image of a heretic, the paradigmatic Jewish zindīq, of whom Elisha is the archetype. He is a person of great erudition and learning, with a great desire to know that which is beyond what it is possible to know. This combination of desire and learning causes him to speak with “presumptuous assertion with regard to the Deity,” not to have regard for His honor, to declare the falsity of that which has not been proven false, and to decide in favor of the belief in the eternity of the world. Such a person contemptuously and openly denigrates the commandments, without any motivation of personal benefit. He does not believe in the prophets, and in declaring this reveals the limits of his own knowledge. As I have already mentioned, several of the primary features of this image have no source in the Jewish literature concerning Elisha-Ahēr; however, they all appear in the figure of the Muslim archetype of the zindīq, Ibn al-Rawandi.

Abū al-Husain Ahmad b. Ishaq al-Rawandi lived in Iraq during the ninth century.29 (The Muslim sources, and in their wake modern scholarship,

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28. See, for example, Koran: 22. 71; 24. 15; 40. 42.
not only against them. He rapidly became known as the archetype of the heretic in Islam, despite the fact that there is no agreement (either in the Muslim sources or, in their wake, in the modern studies) concerning the exact nature of his heresy. He evidently had certain connections with Shi'ite Islam, at least at the beginning of his path, and also connections with crypto-Manichean circles. Some emphasize the philosophical aspect of his heresy, while others claim that he converted to Judaism; there are those who claim that he underwent a death-bed repentance, and others who assert that he died a heretic. But notwithstanding the haziness of his historical image and of the true nature of his heresy, one can reconstruct a rather clear, consistent picture of what one might call "the polemic image of Ibn al-Rawandi"—that is, the image he assumes in the polemical literature. He is designated as a zindiq, even by those who do not specifically intend to accuse him of Manicheanism. He is connected to the Dahirya—that is, those who assert the eternity of the world—and it is related that one of his books, Kitāb al-Tāj, was devoted to a presentation of the proofs for the eternity of the universe.30 He is described as an educated man, whose erudition led him astray, causing him to evaluate incorrectly the limitations of his own wisdom (in this connection, there is applied to him the same cliché used by orthodox intellectuals to discount heretical intellectuals: that his erudition outstripped his intelligence (kāna 'ilmuhu akhtar min 'aqlihi)).31

But Ibn al-Rawandi is primarily known for two other characteristics: one concerning his character, the other concerning his ideas. In terms of


31. For example, he is described in this fashion by the poet Abū 'l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (who was himself not free of accusations of heresy). See Risālat al-Ghifrān (Beirut, 1980) 232. On the expression in general, see F. Rosenthal, Ahmād ibn at-Tāyīb al-Saḥaf (New Haven, 1943) 33.

character, he is described as a haughty individual who, with a sharp tongue and arrogance, enjoyed satirizing and mocking his rivals and all that was holy to them. In terms of the contents of his words, Ibn al-Rawandi became a byword for one who denied prophecy. In a number of places, there is quoted in his name the argument attributed to the Barāhima, according to which the idea that God will send prophets is opposed to common sense. As God has given human beings intellect, there are only two possibilities: if the words of the prophets correspond to common sense, they are unnecessary; if they are opposed to the command of the intellect, one ought not to heed them. Ibn al-Rawandi's Kitāb al-Zamurrud is devoted to proving the falsehood of prophecy generally, but he went even further and directed this argument explicitly against Islam: in Kitāb al-Firūd he disproves the prophecy of Muḥammad. In another book, the Kitāb al-Dāmīgh, he pointed out, in impudent language, the contradictions contained within the Koran and the laughable and absurd arguments found therein. In yet another, less well-known book, he made a similar criticism of the Bible. None of these books has been preserved, and they are only known to us from quotations by his opponents.32

Thus, the features which mark Ibn al-Rawandi as a zindiq—i.e., denial of the prophets and attachment to the Dahirya, who believe in the eternity of the world—are the same ones which we find emphasized in the Maimonidean Elisha, and which are not expressed anywhere in the Jewish tradition. Hence, we may legitimately ask the question whether Maimonides' portrayal of Elisha ben Abuyah may not have been influenced by the figure of Ibn al-Rawandi.

This question may be divided into two parts: 1) One first needs to ask whether Maimonides may have read the numerous writings of al-Rawandi. While such a possibility may not be ruled out entirely, it seems to me rather unlikely. The Muslims mercilessly persecuted Ibn al-Rawandi while he was alive, and did not give him rest even after his death; his books were in effect

Maimonides is very free in adapting Ibn al-Rawandi to his own purposes. He “breaks down” the image into its components, drawing from it those elements which comprise the stereotype of the zindiq, the Dahrite or the “denier of prophecy.” But Maimonides does not see any need to relate to Ibn al-Rawandi himself or to mention him anywhere by name. All of the elements characteristic of Ibn al-Rawandi enter in Maimonides under the name of Elisha-Aher.

III

Indeed, Maimonides uses the very same method with regard to the image of another Muslim heretic, whom he specifically attacks by name. At this point, we must leave Elisha ben Abuyah and turn to another matter, which one might designate by the title, “the physicians’ trial.”

In his introduction to Pereq Heleq, Maimonides enumerates three classes of people in relation to the interpretation of the aggadic words of the Sages: 1) those who understand them literally, and accept them, and these are numerous; 2) those who read them literally and reject them, and these are also a large group; 3) the small number of people who understand the words of the Sages to contain hidden wisdom, concealed within riddles and parables. The second group, those who understand the words of the Sages in a literal manner, and who therefore reject them, is marked by contempt and scorn for the words of the Rabbis rooted in excessive arrogance. Maimonides says of this group:

They repeatedly mock the sayings of the Sages; they claim to be more intelligent and brighter than the Sages, and that the Sages, peace upon them, were simpletons who suffered from inferior understanding, that they were ignorant of the entirety of Being, and understood nothing whatever. Most of those who have stumbled into this error are those who claim [to know] medicine and those who rave about the decrees of the stars. They claim to be cultivated men, physicians and philosophers. How remote they are from true humanity in the eyes of real philosophers.36


34. It is possible to give a technical-stylistic answer to the question why Ibn al-Rawandi is not mentioned in those extant writings of the philosophers: the philosophers did not indulge in theological polemics bearing a personal character, nor in heresiography. But see L. Miller, “Al-Fârâbî’s Dispute about the Adab al-Jadhî,” Acts of the International symposium of Ibn Turk, Khwârezmî, fârâbî, . . . (Ankara, 1990): 185–188. It seems to me, however, that the influence of Ibn al-Rawandi upon the development of philosophy has not yet been fully investigated, and I hope to discuss this point elsewhere.


One might ask: who are these people, who claim to be physicians, who deal with astrological delusions and claim to engage in philosophy, and who hold to scorn the words of the Sages and the Talmudic midrashim? Offhand, one would seek here Jewish doctors, and more than one, as Maimonides speaks here of a group that "are also numerous."

In his letter to Ibn Tibbon, Maimonides refers critically to Isaac Israeli, who is "only a physician" (and not a philosopher). But Isaac Israeli is far from meeting the specifications given here by Maimonides, and it is generally difficult to know where Maimonides would find a group of Jewish physicians to fit this description.

On the other hand, another individual, mentioned in that same letter to Ibn Tibbon as "a physician alone," is very suitable to this description. He is Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (10th cent.), who was indeed renowned as a physician, but was also a philosopher. Like Ibn al-Rawandi, al-Rāzī was noted for his claim that prophecy is opposed to Divine wisdom, and for the contemptuous remarks he made against the prophets. Like Ibn al-Rawandi, al-Rāzī became an archetype of the heretic, but his reputation was more widespread in philosophic circles. Al-Rāzī of course did not write—and could not have written—against the exegeses of the Talmudic sages, but we do know of contemptuous remarks which he directed against religious sages in general, whom he calls "the bearded goats."

I would like to raise the possibility that, in his portrayal of those who hold the words of the Sages in contempt while understanding them literally, Maimonides incorporated the image of al-Rāzī, as a stereotype of one who mocks the tradition with the arrogance of the man of science and philosopher. It is not that Maimonides had any reason to think that al-Rāzī's words or his approach had any hold among the community of physicians of the Jewish people; rather, as Maimonides was engaging in typologies, and attempted to portray clear-cut types in relation to their understanding of the words of the Sages, he tried to build the image of one who has contempt for the words of the Sages in the sharpest and most extreme way possible. The image of the physician-heretic al-Rāzī serves him as a model for this purpose.

In Book II of the Guide, Maimonides attacks at length the "ravings" (hadhāyādāt) of al-Rāzī. In chapter 12 of this book, he quotes the remarks of al-Rāzī in his book al-Ilāhiyāt. According to Maimonides, al-Rāzī argues there that "there is more evil than good in what exists." Maimonides goes on from there to discuss the words of the Aristotelian philosophers who, noting the injustice in the division of good and evil in the world, challenge the notion of Divine Providence (3.16). Then, in ch. 19, while still within the broad context of the question of providence and God's knowledge of individuals, Maimonides cites the verse from Psalm 94, "Consider, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will you understand? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" (v. 8-9).

He then goes on to say:

I shall now explain to you the meaning of this argument after I have mentioned to you the way in which those who assault the prophets' discourse misunderstand this discourse. Several years ago some distinguished individuals of our religious community, who were physicians, told me that they wondered at this dictum of David. They said: According to his way of reasoning, it would follow necessarily that the Creator of the mouth eats and the Creator of the lung shouts and the same would hold for all the other members. 40

The question cited here by Maimonides challenges the logic of this verse, on the assumption that the argument made in the verse is that whoever makes any sort of vessel, himself acts in accordance with the qualities of that vessel. Maimonides replies by explaining that the logic of the verse is in fact different: one who makes any vessel must certainly understand its way of

37. The Spanish Muslim theologian Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) mentions two Jewish physicians who uphold the "Equivalence of Proofs" (cf. K. al-Fishāl Il-Imāl wa 'l-Ibnal, V, 119), but no contempt towards the Sages is discernible in their words. As suggested by J. van Ess ("Disputationpraxis in der Islamischen Theologie," Revue des Études Islamiques 44 [1976]: 47), the Jewish interlocutors of Ibn Hazm probably reverted to this argument as a convenient defense in an uneasy polemical situation. They thus cannot be taken to be authentic representatives of a sceptical trend within Spanish Judaism, as suggested by M. Fierro, "Ibn Hazm et le Zindiq jami," Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée 63-64 (1992): 81-99.


39. Maimonides, Guide 3.12 (Arabic: 318; English: 441). One should note that these unambiguous remarks of Maimonides against al-Rāzī, who is explicitly cited, are not without difficulty. There are passages that have been preserved from a book of al-Rāzī with a similar name (Kitāb 'l-ilmu'l-dīn), and from other works of al-Rāzī: the statement attributed to him by Maimonides does not appear there in this precise form. See Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Rūṣūl Falsafiyah, ed. P. Kraus (Cairo, 1939) 165-190; M. Mohaghegh, Filsuf-i Rayy (Tehran, 1974) 273-276.

functioning. At first glance, this passage does not present any difficulty: the question as such is a plausible exegetical one. Maimonides' answer to the question, intended to show the providence and wisdom inherent in Creation, is related to the subject of the chapter: since the issue at hand is the wisdom revealed in the creation of the organs of the human body, one can understand why physicians would specifically be interested in this.

Nevertheless, the reader is left with a certain feeling of unease: the question itself is a logical one, which has nothing to do with medicine. One can understand why the one answering it might be a physician, who constantly encounters the complexity of the human body; but his interlocutor could be any person. One cannot understand Maimonides' emphasis on the fact that those referred to are "some distinguished individuals of our religious community, who were physicians," in the plural, as if this were a typical question of physicians. Even less clear is why Maimonides formulates this exegetical question in the words: "I have mentioned to you the way in which those who assault the prophets' discourse, misunderstand this discourse." It follows from this that those selfsame "distinguished individuals of our religious community, who were physicians," who ask a question stemming from their misunderstanding of the verse in Psalms, are defined as those who "assault the prophets' discourse"—doubtlessly a severe accusation.41

When the accusation placed in the mouth of the physicians is not specifically a medical one, and its wording has a provocative ring, of pointing out the absurd and ridiculous in the verse42—we have reason to suspect that here, too, Maimonides has mixed into the framework of the discussion elements which do not properly pertain to it in the historical sense. Because of the proximity of this discussion to that concerning the philosopher who "assault the prophets' discourse," Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, it seems to me possible that these elements were borrowed from the Muslim struggle against this philosopher.

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41. Pines' translation (478), "Those who are overhasty in their interpretation of the prophet's discourse," evidently comes from the assumption that he indeed speaks of "distinguished individuals of our religious community," and moderates the translation accordingly. But the word "overhastly" does not seem to me to properly reflect the belligerence of the expression natahabīfīn.

42. Compare the manner in which Maimonides presents a question which is not provocative, but legitimate, in, Guide 3.32 (Arabic: 385, lines 13-15; English: 526-527).
MAIMONIDES ON THE END OF THE WORLD

by

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Maimonides repeatedly insists, contra Aristotle, that the world was created and does not exist eternally a parte ante. He makes clear that the very legitimacy of the Torah rests upon the answer to the eternity question: in a world eternal a parte ante there can be no miracles, and if there can be no miracles there can be no revelation. Despite


Maimonides' insistence, however, that the world was created, the debate among scholars with respect to whether Maimonides is to be taken is that when he denies the world's eternity a parte ante continues unabated. In this paper I do not focus on the world's beginning but on its end. In treating the question of whether the world will end as separate from the question of whether it began I am following Maimonides' course, for he devotes several chapters (Guide 2.27-29) to extracting from Scripture and from rabbinic texts the view that the world is eternal a parte post. Since one would expect Maimonides to regard eternity a parte post as linked necessarily with eternity a parte ante (as Aristotle clearly does), it is interesting and surely significant that he does not. And since Maimonides informs us that only the latter, i.e. eternity a parte ante, and not the former, i.e. eternity a parte post, poses a threat to the validity of the Law, it is important to understand why he labors to reveal the hidden universal (or nearly universal) biblical and rabbinic support for the world's eternity a parte post. Whereas I do not wish to claim that one can fully understand the Maimonidean view of the end of the world without coming to terms with his view on its beginning, I do maintain that Maimonides has a philosophical investment in establishing the unendingness of the world that is independent of any investment he might have in establishing either its creation or its eternity a parte ante. It is my purpose to bring to light the nature of this investment.

In Section II shall consider a most valuable recent article by Seymour Feldman, "The End of the Universe in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in which one of the views surveyed on the end or destructibility of the world is, of course, the Maimonidean view. In this section of the paper I offer and defend an interpretation of Maimonides' view that differs considerably from Feldman's.

In Section II I discuss Feldman's characterization of Maimonides' treatment of the question of the end of the world as "unfortunately brief and primarily exegetical—rather than philosophical." I emphasize the philosophical import of Maimonidean exegesis, whose purpose consistently is, I believe, to disclose the philosophically sound truths obscured by prophetic and rabbinic recourse to the "language of the sons of man."

Finally, in Section III, I set forth the reasons for what I take to be Maimonides' absolute commitment to the indestructibility of the universe. Maimonides, I argue, seeks to preserve the rationality of the universe and its accessibility to science by insisting on the permanence of the world-order once established.

I. Review and Critique of Feldman's Interpretation of Guide 2.27-29.

According to Feldman, Maimonides' view is as follows:

(1) The doctrine of the world's indestructibility, unlike the doctrine of the world's creation, is not a dogma, not a foundation of the Torah, and, therefore, one should not be surprised to find a lack of unanimity on this issue.

(2) Aristotle's principle that whatever is generated is subject to corruption need not apply to the world as a whole because it applies only to natural phenomena within the world.

(3) The world is inherently destructible but is rendered indestructible by God's will. The world resembles in this respect the souls of the righteous that likewise are generated but are caused by God to survive the body's decay. Biblical passages that seem to indicate the end of the world are to be reinterpreted so that they are understood to assert the indestructibility of the universe "as a fact dependent upon God's will."

(4) There is within Maimonides' primarily exegetical discussion "a suggestion of a philosophical argument" at the end of Guide 2.28, where Maimonides attributes to Solomon the view, with which Maimonides presumably agrees, that a perfect creator makes a perfect product and a perfect product has no nags (hazron), no inherent cause of decay or corruption. Thus, the world is not inherently corruptible, and, once created, will continue to exist without interruption or major change.

7. Feldman notes Maimonides' agreement with Plato in this regard (59).
11. Feldman notes (60) that Maimonides elsewhere criticizes the sage who declares that God created and destroyed several worlds before creating the present one which pleased him (see Guide 2.30 commenting on Gen. Rabbah 3). Note, however, that Maimonides criticizes

5. Feldman 58.
God can, of course, destroy the universe, as He created it, *ad libitum*, but such destruction would, like creation, constitute a miracle: creation and annihilation are uniquely divine acts that freely bring about or do away with “a total system.”

(5) Although the world will continue to exist without major change, miracles are possible since miracles are for Maimonides only temporary changes in nature.

On each of these points my interpretation of Maimonides’ approach differs from Feldman’s:

(1) Maimonides indeed does say, as Feldman says he does, that the doctrine of the world’s indestructibility is not a foundation of the Torah in the way that creation is. But Feldman is incorrect in his assertion that Maimonides acknowledges a lack of unanimity on this issue. On the contrary, Maimonides goes to great lengths to align all Scriptural and rabbinic dicta on the side of the everlastingness view. He seeks to establish that on the question of whether the world will continue as it is without change and without end, prophets, kings, and sages are in complete accord: all believe in the permanence of the world-order. Only the vulgar, the externalists/literalists (*al-zahariyyah; ha-nimshakhim ‘ahar peshueti ha-devartin*), i.e. those who mistakenly take literally what is properly to be taken figuratively, affirm the end of the world. Although Maimonides takes note of one rabbinic view that may indeed be intended to retain its literal sense according to which the world will end, even with regard to this case he offers a possible alternate reading and then points out that the view represents merely the saying of an individual. For this reason Maimonides can say:

this sage not for implying that the worlds preceding this one were imperfect and less pleasing to God than this one, but rather for implying that time existed before its creation with this world. Indeed there is the citation from Gen. Rabbah no mention of the imperfections of earlier worlds or of the greater appeal to God of the present one.

12. Feldman 60.

13. Guide 2.27:333. Maimonides clearly dissociates himself from such externalists—indeed, it is not unreasonable to say that the *Guide* is an attack on externalist readings of the Torah and rabbinic texts.

14. Guide 2.29:244. The rabbinic view in question is: “The world lasts six thousand years and one thousand years it is a waste” (TB Rosh Hashanah 31a; TB Sanhedrin 97a). The alternate reading interprets this dictum to imply that time remains following the one thousand years in which the world is a waste. Saadya, who is not mentioned by Maimonides in this connection, held the opinion that the world will end. One can only assume that Maimonides would therefore

\[\ldots\] the passing-away of this world, a change of the state in which it is, or a thing’s changing its nature and with that the permanence of this change, are not affirmed in any prophetic text or in any statement of the Sages. (*Guide* 2.29:344)

(2) Feldman interprets Maimonides as taking exception to the Aristotelian principle according to which whatever is generated must come to an end, doing so on the grounds that the principle does not extend to the world as a whole but only to the natural phenomena within it. I wish to suggest that in fact the *Guide* does not contrast the inapplicability of the principle to the whole with its applicability to the parts, but rather contrasts the principle’s inapplicability to what is generated miraculously ex nihilo with its applicability to what is generated naturally from already existent matter:

For we do not assert that it [i.e. the world] has been generated according to the rule applying to the generation of the natural things that follow a natural order. For what is generated in accordance with the course of nature must of necessity pass away in accordance with the course of nature. 

For Aristotle, change is matter’s motion from potentiality to actuality, or from one form to another. The principle concerning the convertibility of the qualities of generability and corruptibility applies to such change. When God brings into being from nothing something that has not previously existed in any form, the principle loses its validity. Had the universe as a whole been created from something, it too would be susceptible to corruption despite its being the “whole”—indeed it would end necessarily. Nor is it unlikely that Maimonides would argue that a Platonic world, generated (albeit by God) from matter, would (without the miraculous intervention of God) degenerate


16. Although at *Guide* 2.17:296 the Aristotelian principle is contrasted with the Maimonidean one with regard to the world as a whole, the basis for the contrast is not that the world is a whole as opposed to a part. Rather, the Aristotelian principle fails to apply because the nature of the world after creation in no way resembles its nature while in the state of being generated.
into that matter. As Feldman points out, for Plato, the incorruptibility of the heavenly bodies is “a divine gift.”

Being the whole, then, is not in itself sufficient for indestructibility; indeed, being the whole is not even necessary for indestructibility. Within the very chapters we are discussing, Maimonides specifies several things (besides the “whole,” i.e. the world as a totality) which he contends are created but unending: the throne of glory, the souls of the virtuous (Guide 2.27:333),19 earth, the heavens, their statutes, and all that is in them (Guide 2.28:335), the faith in God and the joy in that faith, the seed and name of Israel, and the Law (Guide 2.29:342). Of these, some are clearly nonmaterial and incorporeal, and their everlastingness is no doubt attributable to these characteristics. Only things composite, i.e. containing matter as well as form, are subject to corruption.

The clearest instances of nonmaterial non-wholes created but unending are the statutes of the heavens and the souls of the virtuous.19 The statutes of heaven (and earth) constitute the untransgressable, immutable, created but unending law laid down by God to govern the universe; they are not bodies. The souls of the virtuous, as both the Mishneh Torah and the Guide make clear, refer to the acquired intellect (as it is described in Guide 1.7:193). In Mishneh Torah, Teshuvah 8.2, Maimonides, in commenting on the Talmudic passage (TB Berakhot 17a) which depicts the righteous in the hereafter seated on their thrones with crowns upon their heads, interprets “crown” as a metaphor for the knowledge the righteous acquired during their lifetime and by virtue of which they obtained immortality.20 Similarly, when it is said that the righteous enjoy the splendor of the shekhnah, Maimonides understands by this that the righteous can now comprehend of the true nature of God what they could not grasp completely during their lowly bodily existence. Maimonides continues:

The soul (nafesh) referred to in this connection is not the soul (neshamah) that requires the body but the form of the soul (gurat ha-nafesh) which is the intellect which comprehends the Creator according to its ability and which comprehends the incorporeal intelligences and the rest of God’s works. (Mishneh Torah, Teshuvah, 8:3)

Maimonides now refers the reader to his discussion of the soul in Mishneh Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah 4.9, where this soul, i.e. the soul of the righteous, is said to survive because it is not composed of the simple elements and is not in need of the body. It

knows and comprehends the immaterial intelligences and knows the Creator of the universe. Thus it continues to exist forever and ever.21

This intellectualized understanding of the way in which immortality is achieved by man is found as well in Maimonides’ discussion at the end of the Guide. At Guide 3.54:635 Maimonides describes the “fourth species” of human perfection, which alone constitutes the “true human perfection” through which “man is man.” This perfection consists of the acquisition of the rational virtues, i.e. of the conception of intelligibles. It is this perfection,

18. Along with the throne of glory and the souls of the virtuous, Maimonides mentions also the bodies of the virtuous. He attributes to those who interpret Midrash literally the idea that the bodies of the virtuous will be in a state of perpetual felicity. It is clear that Maimonides does not himself subscribe to this view, and that by attributing it to literalists he intends to distance himself from it.
19. In Guide 1.74 Maimonides discusses the Kalam argument for the creation of the world in time which is based upon the impossibility of the simultaneous existence of an infinite number of souls; this, it is claimed, would be the consequence of an eternal universe. Maimonides considers the continued existence of souls and the form in which they last and what sort of thing souls are matters “even more hidden” (Guide 1.74:221) than the question of creation in time. Maimonides counters the Kalam argument with an argument of “some of the later philosophers” who, though not disputing the continued existence of souls, dispute their multiplicity (since they are separate from matter: they are, like intellects, neither bodies nor forces in bodies). Although Maimonides does not explicitly endorse this view, it would complement nicely his view here, for Maimonides could then be understood to be saying that the souls of the righteous, being nonmaterial and incorporeal, exist forever though, when detached from bodies, they cease to be numerous and become one.

20. Cf. Maimonides’ Commentary on the Mishnah, Peraq Heleq, where Maimonides quotes this Talmudic passage and says: “The intent of their saying, ‘Their crowns upon their heads’, is the immortality of the soul through the existence of the intelligible in it, that is, [the intelligible is] the Creator, blessed be He; and it, I mean to say the intelligible and it [the soul] are one thing; ‘enjoying the radiance of the shekhnah’ means that those souls attain joy from what they comprehend and know of the true nature of the Creator, blessed be He, just as do the Havyot ha-Qodesh (kinds of angels) and the other orders of angels from what they comprehend and know of His existence.”
“a perfection belonging to him [i.e. man] alone,” that gives a human being everlasting life. The Guide confirms the identification of this intellectual perfection with righteousness in several ways. At Guide 1.34:76 Solomon is quoted as contrasting the slothful man who refuses to work and is driven by greedy desire with the righteous man who “giveth and spareth not” (Prov. 21:25-26). Maimonides notes that unless one understands righteousness in an intellectualized sense, according to which it involves the intensive labor of seeking knowledge—with no time to spare for other things—the contrast between it and sloth is meaningless. At Guide 3.18:475, in interpreting the verse 1 Sam. 2:9, Maimonides identifies excellent men, over whom providence does watch, with the holy, and contrasts these with the ignorant, identified with the wicked, over whom providence does not watch. If the wicked are the ignorant, then the holy, i.e., the righteous, the opposite of the wicked, are the wise, those whose intellects are perfected. And, of course, for Maimonides, providence is “consequent upon the intellect.” At Guide 3.22:489–90, the good inclination, that which makes one virtuous, “is only found in man when his intellect is perfected.” In describing (at Guide 3.51:628) the strengthening of the intellectual apprehension of even the lesser prophets upon the separation of their souls from their bodies, Maimonides cites the following biblical verse: “And thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be at thy rear” (Isa. 58:8). For Maimonides righteousness is the intellectual apprehension of the released soul, a perfected intellect that brings God near. Perhaps the point is clearest when Maimonides writes:

Man’s ultimate perfection is to become rational in act, to have intellect in actu. . . ultimate perfection is not of actions or moral qualities, and consists only of opinions toward which speculation has led and that investigation has rendered compulsory. . . But once the first perfection [i.e. the political] has been achieved it is possible to achieve the ultimate, which is undoubtedly more noble and is the only cause of permanent preservation. (Guide 3.27:51)

Let us now consider faith and the joy in it. These, I would claim, like the statutes of the heavens and like the souls of the righteous, must be noncorporeal: insofar as they are viewed as permanent, they cannot be

22. The fact that the other virtues, even those of the third species, are dependent upon others for their realization, precludes their being the virtues leading to immortality, which is itself surely the soul’s intellectual dwelling with God—not a social or political association.

emotions for emotions are tied to the perishing body; they must be instead matters of intellect. They are “states that cannot cease or ever be altered in all those who have attained them,” i.e. they are the permanent condition of intellects that have been actualized with the correct apprehension of the divinity. The Law as well, I would argue, may be understood not as a corporeal entity but as a set of physical and metaphysical truths and timeless prescriptions for living. The Law, in other words, need not be thought of as a material book but as that book’s nonmaterial content.

But what can be said of the progeny and name of Israel? Here, too, I would contend that Maimonides does not intend by “Israel” something corporeal, a particular people bearing that name. Maimonides, let us note, juxtaposes the permanence of the progeny and name of Israel and the eternity of the Law “because of which we have a special name,” on the one hand, to the permanence of faith in God and the joy in such faith for all those intellects who have attained them, on the other. This juxtaposition suggests that the adherents of the Law, the members of the congregation Israel, are to be identified with those intellects who rejoice in having achieved a true understanding of the divine. “Israel,” in this broader sense, then may be said to denote the community to which all intellects that have achieved correct knowledge of God belong.23

Earth and the heavens, however, unlike the other created but everlasting things—the statutes of the heavens, the souls of the virtuous, faith in God, the Law, and Israel—are material, and one would therefore expect that they would be corruptible.24 Yet their eternity a parte post is supported by what Maimonides regards as the strongest Scriptural evidence, i.e. the use of the expression le-’olam va’ed, “for ever and ever,” as opposed to simply le-’olam, “forever,” with regard to their everlastingness.25

Let us note in this connection an important phrase present in what Maimonides says with regard to the heavens but absent in the case of the earth. Of the earth it is simply stated that it is eternal a parte post; with regard

23. Maimonides’ sense of “Israel” is perhaps analogous to Augustine’s notion of the Heavenly City, a noncorporeal body composed of those who, regardless of their earthly affiliation, are true members of the Church.

24. There is never any doubt about the material nature of the heavens. Indeed even the arguments for creation offered in Guide 2.19 assume that the heavens are material. As we shall see, however, the matter of the heavens and that of the earth differ qualitatively from one another.

to the heavens, however, both they themselves and “all that is in them” are said to be eternal a parte post. We can explain the eternal endurance of the earth as a whole, as well as that of the heavens as a whole, on analogy with that of the world as a whole as discussed in Guide 2.27: just as the world as a whole is said to come into being ex nihilo by the miraculous exercise of the divine will and to be eternal a parte post for that reason, so we may assume now of the earth as a whole and of the heavens as a whole that they too have come into being ex nihilo by the miraculous exercise of the divine will and are eternal a parte post for that reason. 24 Yet the everlastingness of particular bodies within the heavens—and not simply of the heavens as a whole—poses a new problem, for it is far less plausible to say of the composite bodies within the heavens that they were created ex nihilo. Nevertheless, Maimonides does affirm the incorruptibility of the contents of the heavens at Guide 2.28:335. Indeed at Guide 2.17:297, where Maimonides had already maintained the eternity a parte post of the heavens, he does not contrast the heavens that are generated but do not pass away with the bodies they, i.e. the heavens, contain. On the contrary, he contrasts the heavens with earthly bodies—the horse and palm tree—which both come to be and pass away. We shall return shortly to the eternity a parte post of the heavenly bodies.

Not yet considered at all thus far is the status of the throne of glory: is it material or nonmaterial? Indeed, what is the throne of glory? It is Scripture that declares that the throne will last forever; the Sages assert its having been created. 25 The multiple senses of “throne of glory” make it difficult to secure Maimonides’ precise intent here. According to Guide 1.9:34–35, something is called “throne” in order to indicate the grandeur of God who manifests Himself in and upon it; hence the Sanctuary is called a throne as are the heavens: 26 those who have knowledge of and reflect upon the heavens infer from them the greatness of Him who caused them to exist and to move. The other denotation of “throne” is the divine attribute itself of greatness and sublimity.

The Scriptural verse cited by Maimonides in support of the eternity a parte post of the throne is Lam. 5:19: “Thou, O Lord, sittest for all eternity, Thy throne is from generation to generation.” It is cited not in Guide 2.27 but in Guide 2.26, the chapter in which Maimonides discusses the “strange” statement of R. Eliezer, with regard to the generation of heaven and earth from, respectively, the light of His garment and the snow under the throne of glory. Yet this very verse is cited in Guide 1.9:35 to establish the sense of throne according to which it is inseparable from God, i.e. it is His sublimity and greatness “that do not constitute a thing existing outside His essence.” The throne understood thus as a divine attribute inseparable from the divine essence surely is eternal not only a parte post but a parte antec as well.

Hence, in Guide 2.27 where the throne of glory is presented as a created, nonperishing thing, it is not possible that it has the sense of divine attribute. It is also not likely that it refers to the Sanctuary. Most probably then the throne of glory here refers to the heavens. This sense of “throne” fits nicely both with the statement of R. Eliezer in the preceding chapter (Guide 2.26), and with Oneglos’ interpretation of the biblical verse, “And there was under his feet, as it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone” (Ex. 24:10), which, though first discussed in Guide 1.28:60, is revived in Guide 2.26 because Maimonides regards it as expressing the same point as R. Eliezer’s statement. Oneglos, taking the “his” of “his feet” to refer to the throne, reads the verse Ex. 24:10 as follows: “And there was under its (i.e. the throne’s) feet, as it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone,” R. Eliezer, as Maimonides understands him, makes the claim that terrestrial matter “derive[s] from the snow under the throne of glory.” 27 According to Maimonides, the “whiteness” of Oneglos’ verse, like R. Eliezer’s snow, refers to the “inferior first matter,” and the fact that for both R. Eliezer and Oneglos this earthly matter is situated below the throne makes natural the conclusion that the throne denotes the heavens. The identification of the throne with the heavens is further confirmed by a

26. Maimonides contrasts the generation of terrestrial matter with that of particular terrestrial bodies in this way at Guide 2.17:297: “For we do not maintain that the first matter is generated as man is generated from the seed or that it passes away as man passes away into the dust. But we maintain that God has brought it into existence from nothing…”

27. At Guide 2.26:331 Maimonides remarks on the strange manner in which the sages express the notion that the throne is created: “For they say that it was created before the creation of the world” (Gen. Rabbah 1; TB Pesahim 54a; TB Nedarim 39b). In Guide 2.27, however, he makes no mention of this strangeness. The reason for this difference might be that the sense of “throne” shifts from that of divine attribute in Guide 2.26 to that of the heavens in Guide 2.27.

It is noteworthy that Maimonides neglects to mention the six other entities that the sages name along with the throne of glory as having been created before the world was created: the Torah, Gehinom, the Garden of Eden, the Temple, repentance, and the name of the Messiah. It is likely that Maimonides mentions only the throne of glory here because it is only the throne whose everlastingness has biblical support.

28. “Thus saith the Lord: The heaven is My throne…” (Isa. 66:1).

29. Guide 2.26:331. Maimonides quotes Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer 3, where R. Eliezer says that the earth was created “from the snow under the throne of glory.”
passage at Guide 1.28:61, where Maimonides speaks of first matter which, he says, is "under the heaven that is called the throne." Moreover, when discussing the verb yeshivah (Guide 1.12:37–38), Maimonides explains that it denotes the stable, changeless, and permanent, and maintains further that in several passages "this term is used with reference to heaven, as the latter is changeless and without diversity." Given the obvious connection between God’s "sitting" and His seat or throne, the identification of the throne with the unchangeable heavens becomes still more convincing.

If this interpretation of the throne of glory as the heavens is correct, then by asserting the eternity of the throne Maimonides reasserts the eternity of the heavens a parte post. By identifying the heavens with the throne of glory, however, Maimonides is able to reemphasize a point that is apparently of great importance to him, i.e. that the matter of the heavens is not like the matter of the sublunar world—it is far superior to it, 30 a discovery that Maimonides credits R. Eliezer with having made.31 We may surmise that the superiority of heavenly matter is such that not only it itself but also those heavenly bodies composed of it endure forever. That not only heavenly matter but the heavens and the heavenly bodies they contain endure forever may be implied by a statement of R. Eliezer’s quoted by Maimonides in Guide 2.26:331: "The creation of everything that is in the heavens derives from the heavens, and the creation of everything that is in the earth derives from the earth." 32 As Maimonides interprets this statement, it means that "the matter of everything that is on earth . . . of everything that is beneath the sphere of the moon, is one common matter, and . . . the matter of all the heavens and of what is in them is another matter and not the same as the one just mentioned" (Guide 2.26:322). Thus, the superiority of the heavenly matter affects the heavens and its contents. In Guide 2.17:297, the nature of the heavens—something constituted from heavenly matter—is distinguished from the nature of the horse and the palm tree—two things constituted from earthly matter. Although both the heavens, on the one hand, and the horse and palm tree, on the other, are composites, only the latter, i.e. the horse and palm tree, contain contraries. Indeed, at Guide 2.14:286, where Maimonides sets forth the Aristotelian proofs for eternity, he asserts, in Aristotle’s name, that the cause of the passing-away in everything that passes away is their containing contraries. 33

32. Gen. Rabbah 10; TB Yoma 54b.
33. The matter of the heavens as a whole contains no contraries for circular motion has earthly bodies, since they derive from inferior terrestrial matter, perish; the heavens (and their contents), by contrast, since they derive from superior heavenly matter, endure forever.

The Guide recognizes other nonperishing things as well, some of which may be identical to things already mentioned. Ruah, for example, defined as "the thing that remains of man after his death and does not undergo passing-away" (Guide 1.40:90), clearly refers to the intellect, as does nefesh, defined as "the thing that remains of man after death" (Guide 1.41:91). In light of our earlier discussion of the souls of the virtuous, we might conclude that only actualized intellects survive death. Indeed Maimonides makes clear that "the souls that remain after death are not the soul that comes into being in man at the time he is generated" (Guide 1.70:173). At the time of generation the soul is "a faculty consisting in preparedness (isti’dad, hakhtlahah)" as opposed to a "thing that has become actual" (Guide 1.70:174); only the latter survives death. Furthermore, the angels, who are not bodily but are intellects separate from matter, are also, according to the Guide (1.49:108), created by God but everlasting. In addition, all the specific forms, and hence the species, are "perpetual and permanent" (Guide 3.8:430).

We see then that there are many things—both wholes and nonwholes, both material things and nonmaterial—that are eternal only a parte post. The wholes, i.e. the world and heaven and earth, are created miraculously ex nihilo by the will of the Creator and are thus outside the reach of the Aristotelian principle according to which what is generated is necessarily destroyed and what is eternal a parte post is necessarily eternal a parte ante. The cause of the eternity a parte post of nonmaterial things is their lack of compositeness. For the material heavenly bodies, it is the absence of contraries in them that is responsible for their incorruptibility.

(3) Maimonides, on my interpretation, does not make the claim Feldman imputes to him, i.e. that the world, though inherently destructible, is rendered indestructible by God’s will simpliceri. What he does state is that (a) God has no contrary; there are contraries only in rectilinear motion (Guide 2.14:286). Maimonides apparently has no quarrel with the Aristotelian notion that the cause of the passing-away in everything that passes away is their containing contraries; it is only the next step in Aristotle’s argument with which Maimonides takes issue, i.e. the assertion that what is not subject to passing away is likewise not subject to generation.

34. See also Guide 2.2:252-53 and 2.6:265.
the power to destroy the world if He so wills, and (b) God’s will is subject to His wisdom. Let us examine each of these claims in turn:

With regard to (a) let us note that Maimonides, as we have seen above, believes that the world as a whole, and several other things as well, once created remain to eternity. What he regards as miraculous in each case is not the thing’s eternity a parte post but its having been created. In fact once they are in existence these created things assume their natural state as “eternal” things. Thus Maimonides says with respect to first matter that

> God has brought it into existence from nothing and...after being brought into existence it was as it is now—I mean...it is not subject to generation as are the things generated from it, nor to passing-away as are the things that pass away into it...(Guide 2.17:297)

Similarly with regard to the circular motion of spherical bodies Maimonides says:

> For after the spherical body endowed with motion has been brought into being, one cannot conceive that its matter should have a beginning. (Guide 2.17:297)

What Maimonides finds inconceivable here is clearly not the endlessness of the motion but rather its having had a beginning. Maimonides holds that things have a nature, and that it is by virtue of this nature that they either endure forever or perish: it is the nature of first matter and circular motion to be eternal; it is the nature of things composed of terrestrial matter to end. Indeed, Maimonides’ repeated complaint against the Mutakallimûn with regard to their proofs for God’s existence is that they maintain that “nothing has a nature in any respect” (Guide 1.71:182), that they do “not leave being with any permanent nature” (Guide 1.75:226), and that they abolish “the nature of being” (Guide 1.76:230). Unlike the Mutakallimûn, Maimonides believes that God “has made the natural things pursue their course” (Guide 2.48:410), i.e. that even if God has created them, natural things do have a course. “We believe,” he says, “the what exists is eternal a parte post and will last forever with that nature which He, may He be exalted, has willed” (Guide 2.29:346). (It is for this reason that miracles—discussed below—are difficult to accommodate within the Maimonidean view.) Thus it is clear that what Maimonides regards as requiring a miracle on God’s part is not the preservation to eternity of those things that are eternal a parte post but rather their destruction. Speaking of first matter at Guide 2.17:297, Maimonides says: “And its Creator may, if He wishes to do so, render it entirely and absolutely nonexistent,” and speaking more generally of the eternity a parte post of what exists, Maimonides assures his readers that “He, may He be exalted, has the power to change the whole of it, or to annihilate it, or to annihilate any nature in it that He wills” (Guide 2.29:346). Maimonides does not assure his reader that God has the power to prevent what exists from changing or to preserve its permanent existence for he believes that things persist in their nature as does the whole unless there is divine intervention. Although Maimonides says at Guide 2.27:332–33 that God’s will can cause the thing to pass away or to last, and that it is “possible that He should cause it to last for ever and ever,” this is only said in order to rebut the Aristotelian who claims that if something is brought into existence it must necessarily be caused to pass away. Once Maimonides has made the case that passing-away is not the necessary complement to coming-to-be, it is the destruction of what is eternal a parte post rather than its preservation that would require a show of God’s power.35

It would seem then that Maimonides rejects the Platonic God that Feldman attributes to him, a God who in His goodness preserves an inherently corruptible world (see Timaeus 41a–b). For Maimonides the world, once created, is inherently an eternal world. Indeed, whether it be the world as a whole, nonmaterial things such as separate intellects, perfected souls, true beliefs, forms and species, or the material but noncontrary heavenly bodies, it is the nature of these created things to endure forever.

Furthermore, the parallel that Maimonides draws between the world and the souls of the righteous as both being generated by God but not destructible serves to show not, as Feldman would have it, that the universe is inherently destructible but kept in existence by God’s will, but rather that the universe is, like the souls of the righteous, inherently indestructible. Whereas Feldman states that God “cause[s] the generated souls of the righteous to survive their...” (Leo Strauss, “How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed,” in Maimonides, Guide, trans. Pines liv). Since what Maimonides would say is that it is according to nature that what has come into being by generation from matter will perish, it does not follow that for him what is naturally “eternal” but brought into being ex nihilo will, in the absence of a miracle, perish. On the contrary, it would take a miracle to destroy those naturally eternal things once they exist.

35. Here I disagree with Strauss who says: “It is according to nature that what has come into being will perish; but according to the Law both Israel and the souls of the virtuous have come into being and will not perish; hence their eternity a parte post is a miracle...” (Leo Strauss, “How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed,” in Maimonides, Guide, trans. Pines liv). Since what Maimonides would say is that it is according to nature that what has come into being by generation from matter will perish, it does not follow that for him what is naturally “eternal” but brought into being ex nihilo will, in the absence of a miracle, perish. On the contrary, it would take a miracle to destroy those naturally eternal things once they exist.
bodies’ decay,” the text in fact simply says that “they are created, but will never become nonexistent” (Guide 2.27:333).

Nor does Maimonides require, as Feldman implies that he does, that Biblical passages be reinterpreted so that the indestructibility of the universe be viewed as dependent upon God’s will. Maimonides requires only that these passages be interpreted as affirming the indestructibility of the universe. In fact after presenting in Guide 2.28 his interpretation of the words of David and Solomon, Maimonides states:

Accordingly they [i.e. the works of the deity] are of necessity permanently established as they are, for there is no possibility of something calling for a change in them. (Guide 2.28:335)

The expression “of necessity” surely precludes sheer dependence upon God’s will.

With regard to (b), i.e. the Maimonidean claim that the divine will is subject to divine wisdom, let us note but a few of the many passages in which this claim is made. At Guide 2.27:332–33 Maimonides says:

Rather does the matter [i.e. of whether God will cause an existent that is not eternal a parte ante to pass away] inevitably depend on His will: if He wills, He causes the thing to pass away; and if He wills, He causes it to last; or, it depends on what is required by His wisdom.

At Guide 2.28:336 he says:

37. I take the “or” here to signify that both disjuncts represent formulations acceptable to Maimonides—not because will and wisdom have the same sense, but because in God they merge to the point of identity (see below, n.38). “Or” is used similarly at Guide 3.13:456, where Maimonides, in concluding a chapter in which only volition is stressed, says: “[...] which depends on the divine will—if you prefer you can also say: on the divine wisdom,” and at Guide 2.25:329: “If this were said, the answer to all these question would be that it would be said: He wanted it this way; or His wisdom required it this way.” Cf. Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, trans. Samuel Ibn Tibbon, ed. Yehuda ibn Shmuel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1981) 2.27:53 [Hebrew], who deletes the conjunction altogether, and Maimonides, Le guide des égarés, trans. C. Munk, vol. 2 (Paris: G. - F. Masionneau & Larose, 1970) 2.27:204 [French], who renders it “ou bien,” “or else.” Munk notes (204, n.5) that the conjunction does appear in the original edition of Ibn Tibbon’s translation, even if not in later editions of it.

Similarly all that is being accomplished... is absolute justice and follows from the requirement of wisdom.

At Guide 2.29:346 we find:

... He, may He be exalted, has the power to change the whole of it, or to annihilate it, or to annihilate any nature in it that He wills. However, that which exists has had a beginning, and at first nothing at all existed except God. His wisdom required that He should bring creation into existence at the time when He did do it, and that what He has brought into existence should not be annihilated... 

Indeed, in many passages in the Guide—both preceding and following the chapters we are considering—Maimonides links God’s will to wisdom, removing thereby any hint of whim or caprice that one might think attends the notion of divine will. Yet Maimonides rejects what he regards as an inescapable implication of the Aristotelian view that the world is eternal a parte ante, i.e. that God’s will is replaced by necessity. It would seem then that whereas Maimonides allows God’s will to be guided—even bound—by His wisdom, leaving no doubt that “the universe is consequent upon His perpetual and immutable wisdom” (Guide 2.18:301), he does not allow God’s will to be completely displaced by necessity.41
(4) In expounding the so-called "philosophical argument" "suggested" by Maimonides at the end of Guide 2.28, Feldman at last attributes to him the view that the world is inherently everlasting and that its destruction—not its preservation—would be miraculous. As the perfect product of a perfect creator, says Feldman, the world has no inherent cause of decay or corruption: "in and of itself the universe has no deficiency (naqs, besron) that would naturally lead to its ultimate demise." In interpreting Maimonides now in this way, Feldman reverses his earlier interpretation: whereas earlier it was God's will that was said to preserve an inherently destructible world from extinction, it is now God's will that is said to be capable, if it so desires, of miraculously destroying an inherently perfect and therefore naturally incorruptible universe. On the interpretation I have offered no such reversal takes place: according to it Maimonides throughout consistently affirms the natural eternity a parte post of the universe.

(5) Feldman mentions miracles only in passing, in a footnote. When he attributes to Maimonides the view that the world, once created, will "continue to exist without interruption or major change," he explains that he inserts the word "major" in order "to allow for miracles, which are, for Maimonides, only temporary changes in nature." I believe that the mention necessity, on the other, is perilously fine. Moreover, the distinction verges on extinction when Maimonides links divine wisdom and will to God's essence: "For, in our opinion, volition too is consequent upon wisdom; all these being one and the same thing—I mean His essence and His wisdom—for we do not believe in attributes" (Guide 2.18:301; see also, e.g., 1.46:102; 1.69:170, 3.13:452). It is perhaps this link that provides the strongest support to those who maintain that Maimonides secretly believed in the eternity of the world a parte ante as well as a parte post. I do not wish to give too much weight to Maimonides' distinction between divine will and necessity. At this time I should like to say only that for Maimonides necessity does not supplant will; it may well be, however, that he regards necessity and will as fully compatible with each other. See, for example, how Maimonides recasts the view of Aristotle, the champion of necessity, so that necessity does not exclude divine volition but only precludes the possibility that it is subject to change: "He [Aristotle] asserts...that in his opinion it would be an impossibility that will should change in God or a new volition arise in Him; and [he asserts] that all that exists has been brought into existence, in the state in which it is present, by God through His volition..." (Guide 2.13:284). Perhaps Maimonides rejects necessity only when it is understood to exclude volition but not when it is understood to be compatible with it.

42. Feldman 60.
43. Feldman 59.
44. Feldman 59, n. 11.

by Maimonides of miracles twice within the space of the few pages concerned with the everlastingness of the universe, and indeed the fact that he discusses miracles at some length in Guide 2.29, signifies that their inclusion here requires serious attention.

The first mention of miracles comes at the end of Guide 2.28. Having said that God's creations are perfect, containing neither excess nor deficiency and consequently of necessity being permanently established as they are, Maimonides states:

He [i.e. Solomon] has also, as it were, stated an end for what has come to exist or given an excuse for what changes, saying in the final part of the verse: "And God hath so made it, that they should fear before Him" (Eccles. 3:14)—he refers to the production in time of miracles.

Solomon, let us note, feels obliged to "give an excuse" for changes in the nature of things, that is, for miracles: he explains that they were produced in order to instil the fear of God in human beings.

In Guide 2.29, Maimonides returns to the question of miracles. He contrasts miracles, which represent transitory change, with the destruction of the universe, which represents permanent change. Maimonides approves of the view of the sages Rabbah and Midrash Qohelet where the sages claim that miracles do not signal the intrusion of something new into nature but rather constitute the unfolding of the natures of things as ordained at the time these natures were created. Through this stipulation, says Maimonides, the sages avoid having to admit "that a nature may change...or that another volition may supervene after that nature has been established in a definite way." It seems clear that Maimonides believes that reason can more easily accommodate the notion of transitory change inscribed into the natures of things at creation than it can the notion of permanent change so inscribed. Indeed, transitory change apparently poses less of a threat to the presumed unalterable will of God than does permanent change. It furthermore seems clear that Maimonides wishes his readers to appreciate the significance of the difference between permanent and transitory change. I shall argue in Section III that in this difference lies the key to Maimonides' philosophical investment in maintaining the eternity of the world a parte post.

II. Maimonidean Exegesis

Feldman characterizes Maimonides' treatment of the question of the destructibility of the world as "primarily exegetical—rather than philosophical," and as containing merely "a suggestion of a philosophical argument" at the end of Guide 2.28. If Feldman's intent in this characterization is simply to underscore the extent to which Maimonides appeals to traditional sources as opposed to offering purely philosophical arguments for his view, then one cannot disagree with him. If, however, Feldman intends to minimize the philosophical import or seriousness of Maimonides' treatment of this question then his statement must be challenged.

Let us note first that even the so-called "suggestion of a philosophical argument" to which Feldman refers is presented by Maimonides not as an independent philosophical argument but rather as biblical exegesis. Maimonides says:

On the other hand, Solomon himself has likewise stated that these works of the deity—I mean the world and what is in it—even though they are made, are permanently established according to their nature for ever. For he says: That whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it (Eccles. 3:14). Thus he imparts in this verse the information that the world is a work of the deity and that it is eternal a part post. He also states the cause of its being eternal a part post; namely, in his words: nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it. For this is the cause of its being for ever. (Guide 2.28:335)

We see here that Maimonides founds on a biblical text the "philosophical" argument that a perfect deity makes only perfect products and that where there is neither excess nor deficiency there is no possibility of change. He does not present this argument as his own, though it clearly is meant to be seen as an argument that he supports. In this case he offers no figurative or esoteric interpretation of the text, probably because it requires none: it supports his philosophical position as is.

Maimonides' approach to the other biblical and rabbinic passages that he assembles in Guide 2.27-29 is to interpret them—if need be figuratively—so that they too accord with his philosophical view on the end of the world. Extensive exegesis is necessary precisely because a critical philosophical issue is at stake, the truth of which might be threatened by an incorrect reading of the passages in question. It might even be maintained that the extent of

the exegetical emphasis in Maimonides' discussion of the possibility of the extinction of the world attests to just how critical this question is to him. Furthermore, the question is critical to him only for philosophical reasons—as he clearly states, the Law is not in any way threatened by the end of the universe.47

What does it mean to say that the Guide is exegetical or largely so? Does this mean that it is meant primarily to be a commentary on the Torah and on rabbinic literature? Maimonides, of course, in the first sentence of the Introduction to Part I of the Guide, asserts that "the first purpose of this Treatise is to explain the meanings of certain terms occurring in books of prophecy" (Guide 1. Intro.:5).48 Yet he also says (Guide 2.29:346): "For the first purpose of this Treatise is to explain what can be explained of the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot," and similarly (Guide 3. Intro.:415): "...the chief aim of this Treatise is to explain what can be explained of the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot..." One has little choice but to see the exegetical aim merging with the aim of explaining the Accounts of the Beginning and the Chariot: the purpose of exegesis is to reveal philosophical truths—physical and metaphysical—concealed by biblical language.49 Indeed the Introduction to Part I ends by promising the reader that exegesis is "a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked" (Guide 1. Intro.:20).

Exegesis then is clearly the means to a further end. This end, as Strauss understands it, is to show that "the teaching of these philosophic disciplines [physics and metaphysics], which is presupposed, is identical with the secret teaching of the Bible."50 Indeed, I would add, it is because Maimonides has mastered the teaching of the philosophic disciplines of physics and metaphysics that he believes he is able to interpret correctly the biblical and rabbinic texts

47. See Guide 2.27:332 and 333.
49. This general purpose of exegesis, i.e. to reveal philosophical truth, encompasses as well, I think, the more specific purpose of interpreting correctly the Bible’s anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms for describing God. For when one interprets these terms correctly, i.e. when one penetrates their surface meaning to get to their true meaning, one reveals philosophical truth about the deity.
he confronts. He does not and cannot follow these texts where they lead on their own; on their own they lead, after all, to the anthropomorphization of God and to other philosophically unacceptable results. On the contrary, he leads, equipped with his knowledge of physics and metaphysics, and the texts follow. Unless one knows how to lead because one has already mastered "the sciences of the philosophers" (Guide 1. Intro.:5), one cannot hope to succeed in the study of the true science of the Law.

Because Maimonides agrees with Aristotle on the eternity of the world a parte post, he has no reason to marshall "philosophical" arguments of the kind that Feldman has in mind. Where he differs with Aristotle, as on the question of eternity a parte ante, he does argue "philosophically," as he does as well against the Aristotelian principle that what comes to be must perish.

III. The Philosophical Import of Eternity a Parte Post

Since in affirming the eternity a parte post of a variety of created things Maimonides defies an Aristotelian principle (if only as it applies to things created miraculously ex nihilo), and since he devotes considerable effort to getting all traditional sources to converge in support of eternity a parte post despite his belief that the legitimacy of the Torah does not depend on the world's having no end, there must be some other truth of very great importance that Maimonides is determined to protect. I believe, furthermore, that he provides a quite effective clue to the identity of that truth by focusing, in the chapters dealing with eternity a parte post, on the subject of miracles.

Miracles, as we have seen, represent for Maimonides transitory changes in nature, and, although he allows these, he precludes the possibility of permanent change. Maimonides does give the impression, however, that his preference would be to exclude all change, but that he is constrained to admit the transitory sort for the sake of preserving miracles.24 He speaks approvingly, as we have seen, of those Rabbis who treat even miracles as pre-planned, for pre-planned miracles may be somewhat less threatening than newly willed miracles are to the unchangingness of the natures of things as these are established by their creator at creation.25

Despite the admitted difficulty involved in the concession that a nature may change, Maimonides clearly appreciates the cost of a world with no miracles. A world with no miracles seems to imply a world eternal a parte ante. A world eternal a parte ante is a world in which God is subject to necessity and is not a free agent acting voluntarily. A world eternal a parte ante is a world without revelation. And although Maimonides says that if Aristotle had succeeded in demonstrating eternity a parte ante the Torah could be reinterpreted accordingly, he indicates immediately that it would in fact be impossible to do so, since eternity a parte ante invalidates the very Torah one would reinterpet:

On the other hand, the belief in eternity the way Aristotle sees it—that is, the belief according to which the world exists in virtue of necessity, that no nature changes at all, and that the customary course of events cannot be modified with regard to anything—destroys the Law in its principle. (Guide 2.25:328)

In other words, if the world is eternal a parte ante there can be no valid Torah to reinterprete. Divine providence too would be sacrificed. Indeed Maimonides lists a host of questions that can be addressed only on the assumption that there is a God with volition who created the world.26

The greatest miracle of all, however, is creation itself. Interestingly, this miracle is also the least offensive. For unlike other miracles that change the nature of things if only temporarily, creation establishes that very nature. It is the nature of things as established at creation that Maimonides wishes to protect. Miracles subsequent to creation disrupt this nature, but not irrevocably. The world's destruction, however, represents so complete and irreparable a rupture in the nature of things that Maimonides is compelled to reject it. For Maimonides, a permanent change in the nature of things or the termination of that nature threatens the very rationality of the universe: only a perpetually ongoing, never-changing universe can be a rational one.

The preservation of a rational world, one which is the object of science and intellect, one with regard to which demonstration is possible, is critical enough heavens and a new earth" (Gen. Rabbah 1), according to which even these have always subsisted: "For it is possible that he means that the nature that will necessitate in time the states of existence that have been promised, is created since the six days of the Beginning. And this is true" (Guide 2.29:345).

24. Guide 2.29:345 Maimonides says: "I have said that a thing does not change its nature in such a way that the change is permanent merely in order to be cautious with regard to the miracles.

25. Cf. Maimonides' discussion (Guide 2.29:344–45) of the rabbinic understanding of "new

to Maimonides that he is willing to challenge an Aristotelian principle for its sake. If the price of eternity a parte ante is too high for an adherent of Torah, the price of the world's termination is too high for one who respects science and reason. In effect, Maimonides challenges an Aristotelian principle for the sake of preserving an Aristotelian universe.

The world of Feldman's Maimonides is a Platonic one. God is a free agent exercising His will and benevolently preserving the world and human souls to eternity. By contrast the interpretation offered in this paper preserves for Maimonides a world as Aristotelian as possible given its creation. It is a world in which the deity exercises will—but will bound by wisdom. It is a world in which natures do not change, and if they do, they change very briefly. It is a world where what is nonmaterial—souls, forms, species—lasts forever, where the heavens, the laws that govern them, and their circular motion are unending. It is a world that satisfies Aristotelian criteria for demonstrability and definition.  

Miracles, then, provide the key to understanding this passage. By contrasting these impermanent forms of change with the permanent change represented by the destruction of the world, Maimonides sets limits to what divine wisdom will permit God to do: at most it will permit Him to interrupt temporarily the course of nature; it will not, however, permit Him to alter this course or to end it. Of course, if even temporary interruptions were incompatible with God's wisdom, all miracles—including the most critically important miracle of all, i.e. revelation—would be impossible. But without an indestructible and fundamentally unalterable natural course for miracles to disrupt, miracles would constitute the rule rather than cause it occasionally to be suspended. A universe in which the miraculous is the norm is surely a universe irrational and unintelligible: rationality requires stability and permanence. For Maimonides, as for Aristotle, there is no science of the perishable.

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54. See Aristotle, Metaphysics 7.15.1039b20–1040a4. In this passage Aristotle claims that substances—in the sense of forms alone rather than of forms combined with matter—qualify as objects of definition and demonstration, whereas composite substances do not. Definition and demonstration are not possible with regard to the latter, i.e. to sensible particulars, because the nature of their matter is such that it admits of being and not being, thereby rendering them destructible. Although for Aristotle these perishing things are also of necessity generated things—indeed they perish because they are generated—it is nevertheless the fact of their passing out of existence that precludes scientific knowledge of them.

Shem Tob Ibn Falqaerah as Interpreter of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed:

OUTLINES OF HIS THOUGHT

by

Yair Schifman

Shem Tob Ibn Falqaerah (ca. 1225-ca. 1295) completed his Moreh ha-Moreh, a commentary on selected chapters of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed, in 1280. But Falqaerah's work is a commentary of a special kind. Instead of presenting his own continuous interpretive comments, Falqaerah largely cites relevant passages from Greek, Hellenistic, and Muslim philosophers and commentators, and from Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Abraham Ibn Ezra. The passages cited are Falqaerah's own Hebrew translations from Arabic sources. In an appendix, he presents a critical evaluation of Samuel ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of the Arabic original of Maimonides' Guide. Yet in spite of his method of citing passages from other authors, a careful reading of the commentary reveals that Falqaerah is a critical thinker who does not hesitate to disagree with those he cites, accepting only those opinions which he considers philosophically sound. This essay is devoted to three topics in Falqaerah's thought: Creation of the World, Conjunction with the Agent Intellect, and the Supra-lunar World.

Maimonides wrote his Guide for someone who was a faithful adherent of the Jewish religion, who had studied philosophy, but could not reconcile the two; Falqaerah wrote his Moreh ha-Moreh for someone who had strayed from the right path (namreh; ki pihu mariti). Maimonides, writing in Arabic, wrote for an intellectual elite; Falqaerah, writing in Hebrew, wrote for a wider audience, though one that possessed philosophic sophistication. Maimonides wrote not only on philosophic topics, but on biblical and rabbinic topics as well; Falqaerah dealt only with philosophic topics. Moreh ha-Moreh is, then, a philosophic commentary on selected philosophic chapters of the Guide. While Falqaerah does not state explicitly that he wrote an esoteric work, it
becomes clear that he holds esoteric opinions. Similarly, he undertakes to discover Maimonides' esoteric opinions in the Guide.

Turning to the Creation of the World, Falqerah reviews the three opinions presented by Maimonides in Guide 2:13. But already in his account of the first opinion, that of those who adhere to the Law of Moses, he hints (by making a slight linguistic change) that a theory other than Creation of the World in time is compatible with the Mosaic Law. This esoteric interpretation is provided by the second opinion discussed by Maimonides, that of Plato. According to Plato, God created the world out of an eternal matter, but this creation did not take place in time. Hence, Plato is a proponent of eternal creation—a causal theory describing how the creator continuously imposes forms on an eternal matter. While this theory shows some affinity with the Aristotelian view that the world is eternal, Falqerah distances himself from Aristotle in affirming (with Plato) that there is a creator. Falqerah hints, additionally, that the Platonic view is also Maimonides' esoteric opinion.

Maimonides has little to say about the conjunction of the human intellect with the Agent Intellect in this life, but, as Falqerah interprets, he denied the possibility of such a conjunction. By contrast, Ibn Bajjah affirms the possibility of such a conjunction at least for those who have attained happiness (alsu'ud'ah; ha-maslikhim). Maimonides maintains that an intellectual emanation (shefa' sikhi) proceeding from God is available at all times, but the acquisition of knowledge is the result of human effort; Ibn Bajjah affirms that God participates directly in the process of acquiring knowledge. For Ibn Bajjah the religious commandments have no role in the acquisition of knowledge; for Maimonides they have an instrumental role. In his description of conjunction Falqerah inclines toward Ibn Bajjah's opinion. Falqerah further holds that conjunction with the Agent Intellect confers the power to miraculously change the natural order. Distinguishing between the philosopher and the prophet, Falqerah maintains that the former acquires knowledge discursively, while the latter acquires it intuitively and with divine help. While Falqerah grants that conjunction is possible for individual non-Jews, as a continuing phenomenon it exists only within the Jewish community.

Discussing the supra-lunar world, Falqerah criticizes Maimonides for accepting the Kalāmīc principle of "particularization" (tajwīl). Maimonides' acceptance of this principle is manifest in his opinion that while the sub-lunar world functions according to orderly laws, the supra-lunar world does not. The supra-lunar disorder becomes apparent from the lack of order in the arrangement of the planets and from the lack of order in their velocities. This disorder, Maimonides holds, is an indication that creation took place through the will of the creator and that the world does not exist by necessity. Averroes, by contrast, affirms that there is order in the supra-lunar, no less than in the sub-lunar world. Falqerah follows Averroes in affirming the order of the supra-lunar world.

Maimonides follows Ibn Sinā in affirming that God, the necessarily existent, differs from the mover of the outermost sphere. Hence, God is the first cause not the prime mover. Averroes, by contrast, maintains that God is identical with the mover of the outermost sphere. On this issue Falqerah follows Maimonides.

The discrepancy between Aristotle's celestial physics and Ptolemy's mathematical celestial mechanics was one of the vexing problems of medieval astronomy. According to Aristotle the celestial bodies move with uniform circular motion around a common center, the earth; according to Ptolemy the planets (including the sun and the moon) move on eccentric circles and epicycles. Averroes tried to resolve the difficulty by distinguishing between the motion of the celestial spheres and that of the planets: the spheres move with uniform circular motion around the earth as center, while the planets have their own independent motions. This is analogous to the motion of a human being, the motion of whose limbs are independent of the motion of the body. In a variation of Averroes' opinion Falqerah holds that the principle of uniform circular motion applies only to the outermost sphere, not to the other spheres.

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כפרשים מורח נבוכדנצר לחרותם

קוה לחתוות

יואל שיפמן

הספר "המרית המprix"; פרוש ישו המ振り מפרשים מפורשים לפורים, זה
והזו אוח מצייניות האוצרות והבשא מתפוך לשון פליקריה. 2: הפרוזט של המחבר עץ בוזק
בנשлепו בותא בשונה באבד מתפוך "לנפרים". 3: שנות 5040 בברית
ה sharedPreferences הקטנה לשנת 1280, בשעה שဉו לפצי מחל.

הספר זה-component ספורט הווה בנטה לקהל של מושג זה. והפרוש על פליקריה
בנורתי נבוכדנצר, 4: הפרוש בלשון אתורי ממצה שבשל פליקריה. הפרוש זה ווה
iative מובאות פליקריה בו, הפוסטים חותם לאופיואיטופוס, המשך פליסטים
הלאנוגים חמתו הקטנים לעכלᴊונד ארידיסיא, עזר וopathic המחשה המוסלמית

1. התוכן "המרית המprix" הוזה לארת פסח אוח מתלול עניי מוהרי לייב ב"משה ייסוליבס בפר_BOTH".
בכש 1837: הכפר אולדו פוריסיס פומפינו פליקריה במעת שלחן יחידה. הניב והמנחת
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של פליקריה. הפרוש בלשון אתורי ממצה שבשל פליקריה. הפרוש זה והباء
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המקסומי בפליוסטר המשحوا כרבודים בשתי חותמות מחוזות האוגנוגרשות בפליוסטר
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הנמצאות בפרשים המש_HAVE כרבודים בשתי חותמות מחוזות האוגנוגרשות בפליוסטר

2. על שרומת צירוניות המליאה של פליקריה, מיו מעדינה היברה, ראה: R. Jospe, "Torah and
Sophia: The Life and Thought of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera", (Cincinnati, 1988) 31–33


4. יוחנן בר יהודה: שמעון, עמק 1 ר"פ

5. ברכות מגה הרמב"ם, מכון מבוקד. ראה:...

6. פרץ מורה נבוכדנצר, אפרים פליקריה, ו

7.".
The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed
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"Or was Writing a Form of Prayer?" ""The Life ofȥ the Talmud"" (Art of Writing, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952).

Dr. Strauss, "The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed", Persecution and the

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סקירת הספרים של ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

א. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ב. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ג. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ד. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ה. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ו. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ז. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ח. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ט. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

יו. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

ט. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.

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יו. קרונאוס, ויקי, חוברת, A. Kahn, "History of Jewish Literature Vol. 2" (New York, 1933) 209, n. 3.
Avicenna’s "De Anima," ed. F. Rahman (London, 1959) 219. The work is based on Aristotle’s "De Anima," but whereas Aristotle viewed the soul as a vital force, Avicenna proposed a more mechanical explanation. He believed that the soul was a set of physiological processes that could be understood through the study of anatomy and physiology.

Avicenna’s approach was influenced by the Aristotelian tradition, as well as by the Islamic philosophical and medical traditions. He was particularly interested in the relationship between the soul and the body, and he sought to explain how the soul could control the body through the nervous system.

Avicenna’s work had a significant influence on later Islamic philosophy and medicine, and it was translated into Arabic and Latin and had a lasting impact on European medical thought.

Avicenna’s "De Anima" was a major work in the history of medicine and philosophy, and it remains an important text for students of the humanities and the sciences.

Avicenna’s "De Anima" is a seminal work that has had a profound impact on the development of medicine and philosophy. It is a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the subject, and it remains a classic work in the history of science.

Avicenna’s "De Anima" is a testament to the power of human thought and the importance of understanding the natural world. It is a work that continues to inspire and challenge readers today.


This is a historical research paper discussing Maimonides' cosmogony and prophethy puzzle. The paper is written in Hebrew. The author, Dr. Yair Shemesh, examines Maimonides' views on cosmogony and prophethy and how they contribute to understanding Jewish philosophy. The paper is a comprehensive analysis of Maimonides' thoughts on the creation of the world and the role of the prophet in Jewish tradition.
ב. בלטש השדרות היא פבילה.

ב. מסתבר לנו זאת.

א. יערץ המים על הטרבונים הוא עונש.

ב. כולנו יודעים על כך והם מ ноч על ברך אחר.

ג. הפרק הראשון של הרומן משקף על דייר רבדו,跡ית מימים

ד. נוכחו של פנקם של הטרבונים משקף על המים הנפגעים.

ה. המילים של הפנקם של הטרבונים משקף על המים הנפגעים.

ו. המקווה של חיות מים בטרבונים משקף על המים הנפגעים.

ע. הלבוש של חיות מים בטרבונים משקף על המים הנפגעים.

ב: "סלוקים מקומית על הרובס כמוהם ברגים, וב". "ממעתי לול ד"א ו". "רובס". כ. "רובס". בת"מ. כ. "רובס".


איור שפם

על כל כך נשמנו עלי במעוף,
ואנחנו ליוו בתענית הגמישת האור.

זעמו את השמשがあった אז, או או או או או או או.

נפלו את הזרע המפריד לשחקל פקוק, ג'ינו.
נפלו בברך את אחד והשני, והשני לחם.

הם נפלו בברך והואם את מקוה הקארבה אפשרית.

ככל זהaryawan בחול תבלול, בחול תבלול, בחול תבלול.
"אני לא יכולowitz

ביום ה'ジェיבי

16

Jubilee Volume (Jerusalem, 1965) 66–68.

18 poj 168, "Ancestral Home", 168 poems.

A. Altmann "Ibn Bajra on Man's Ultimate Felicity", H. A. Wolfson 168 poems.

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לא ניתן לקרוא את התוכן המוצג בתמונה.