Philosophy and the Jewish Tradition

Lectures and Essays by Aryeh Leo Motzkin

STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE

Edited by Yehuda Halper

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For Daphne and Sharon

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PREFACE

by
Eva Brann

I met Aryeh Motzkin only twice in the flesh, both times in Jerusalem. And both were memorable occasions. Our acquaintance in America developed through phone calls. His academic life here was shadowy to me, and I had no interest in pursuing some circulating tales. Thus I knew him independently of any institutional affiliation, and I became fond of him quite aside from his scholarly accomplishments. I was drawn in most of all by his quick responsiveness in conversation, his human openness, and—how could I resist—his warm appreciation of my books.

In fact it turned out that he'd gotten in touch with me because he had conceived the notion of placing a copy of each of these books in every library of higher education in Israel. Although I regard it as the luck of my life that I landed in America, I *can* imagine myself as an Israeli, especially since I have dozens of cousins of all degrees there. Therefore I was honored and pleased by his undertaking—although it soon appeared that I was to fund it. So for a while I would get monthly calls from my college's bookstore manager. "Dr. Motzkin phoned," he would say, and I would say, "How much?" Nonetheless I was grateful.

Our first face-to-face meeting was, I believe, in the nineties, at his remarkable apartment at 34 Kaf-tet Benovember. We had only snippets of philosophical conversation, since I had two of my cousins along. But his home was a revelation: a large living room crammed with books and around it a gallery, similarly stuffed, and in the back room, too, journals, monographs, papers over everything. He found his way around this welter, for he had read it all. His learning was immense, and it was levigated by his love for music and poetry.

Bold as he was in his entrepreneurial mode, he was modestly reticent about his scholarship, at least with me. If he feared falling short, he needn't have worried. His learning exceeded mine by a factor of ten at least.

He had gone through the trouble of procuring a sticky Teutonic confection, a *Sachertorte*, which he thought, rightly, would appeal to

my German-Jewish taste. It was a very hot Jerusalemite day, but I was touched by the attentiveness of it.

Aryeh had put much effort into arranging a second face-to-face meeting. He got me invited to lecture at the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The exciting two days began with the hairy experience of driving up and down and to and fro in Jerusalem with Aryeh at the wheel. It ended with a seminar attended by students and teachers from the philosophy department of the Hebrew University, which made Aryeh glow with pride. What added to his exhilaration was a fact unknown to him when he initiated the invitation: that the great scholar in whose honor this lecture had been established, Shlomo Pines, had in fact been a pal of mine forty years ago in Princeton—we used to go on the town together with a third companion, Ernst Manasse, a Plato scholar.

When we bid each other goodbye at the after-seminar lunch, Aryeh had tears in his eyes. Was it a presentiment? A few days later he was dead. When I wrote to his daughter, I expressed, along with condolences, a small fear that I might have been a contributing cause, because he had been so excited over the occasion; she replied very graciously and relieved my worry. Later on Aryeh's grandson, Daniel Badgio, who is a student at my college, told me that when his grandfather died an open copy of one of my books was found beside him. I was much moved.

When, in conclusion, I ask myself what aspect of Aryeh seemed most admirable, it is, indeed, this: his intensely human responsiveness. He was what in Jewish-American is called a *mensch*—one with a huge appetite for learning.

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INTRODUCTION

by
Yehuda Halper

A. *The Intellectual Development of Aryeh Leo Motzkin*

Aryeh Leo Motzkin was born in Jerusalem in 1934 and died in Jerusalem in 2006. Though he spent most of his life outside of Jerusalem, it is as a Jerusalemite that he should be remembered. His vast erudition, cultural involvement, and singular personality made him most at home in a city where, in the words of Saul Bellow, "German Jews…often rest in a *Kultur* paradise, reading Homer and Plato and Goethe, and listening to Mozart."[1] At the time of his death Motzkin not only owned around 15,000 books but appeared to have read and become well versed in most of them. There was scarcely a topic in the humanities, including music and poetry, to which Professor Motzkin could not contribute expert knowledge. Professor Motzkin read and spoke at least eleven languages fluently, with moderate reading ability in at least four more. In addition to giving free translations of Greek, Latin, German, French and Arabic texts in his classes, Professor Motzkin was also a regular contributor of translated poetry, which preserved the original meter, from a variety of languages to Israel's leading newspaper, *Ha'aretz*. Perhaps, though, the most Jerusalemite aspect of Professor Motzkin was his lifelong dedication to understanding and elucidating the problems posed by the conflicts and interrelations of faith and reason, of religion and philosophy.

Evidence of Motzkin's interest in these problems can be found in his earliest class and paper notes saved from his undergraduate days at the University of Chicago, where his studies were strongly influenced by Leo Strauss. While at Chicago, Motzkin also took classes in Arabic and Near Eastern Studies with Benno Landsberger and Gustave E. von Grunebaum. Following his undergraduate studies, Motzkin continued on at the University of Chicago where he studied Maimonides under

[1] Saul Bellow, *To Jerusalem and Back: a Personal Account* (New York: Avon Books, 1976), p. 40.

Strauss's guidance, first in the Committee on the History of Culture and later in the Committee on Social Thought. Later, Motzkin had a falling out with Strauss that led him to complete his Ph. D. with Shelomo Dov Goitein at the University of Pennsylvania. Professor Motzkin spoke only very highly of Leo Strauss, never to my knowledge mentioning their falling out. Thus it is hard to ascertain what led to their dispute. Rumors speak of a fundamental disagreement between the two regarding the question of whether or not religion is a fundamental characteristic of human beings. Motzkin reportedly argued for the necessity of religion to humanity, while Strauss reportedly thought that humankind could exist, perhaps even thrive without religion.

The move from Chicago to Pennsylvania was more than just a personality conflict. Motzkin's academic work changed from a study of the interaction of religion and philosophy to a historical study of Egyptian Jewish society in the thirteenth century. Though many letters by and to Maimonides were preserved in the Cairo Geniza, Motzkin's work on the Geniza papers dealt with mundane aspects of daily life. Both his doctoral dissertation and his first academic publications are mainly character portraits of doctors, judges, women, etc. as they emerge from letters preserved in the Geniza. Motzkin's dissertation also included some significant grammatical observations on the language of the Geniza documents and in 1970 he wrote an article on grammatical features of Judeo-Arabic.

Though the articles he produced at this time of his life were interesting historical portraits and useful grammatical tools, these works did not arouse in Motzkin the same kind of excitement that Leo Strauss' political and theological questions did. Indeed, while throughout his whole life Motzkin saved all records of his correspondence with Strauss and all notes he had taken from Strauss' lectures and sayings, including various tidbits written on napkins, I could not find any notes or sayings of Goitein's among Motzkin's vast collection of papers. Nor did Motzkin keep any drafts of his earlier work or photocopies of the manuscripts he relied on for his early articles. In contrast, one finds numerous copies and drafts of notes and articles concerning philosophical and religious matters from only a couple of years after he abandoned all interest in the further production of socio-historical character sketches.

Whether this foray into social history was for perceived benefit on the academic job market or due to an attempt to change paths after his fallout with Leo Strauss cannot be ascertained with certainty. Yet Motzkin's ability to move from the study of theology and political philosophy to social history and back again attests to his ability to

work in and understand vastly different fields of humanist thought. Nevertheless, during his career as a lecturer at Haifa University from 1966 through 1974, Motzkin returned to teaching and studying philosophical topics with an emphasis on the views of Leo Strauss and his students. In 1972, he published the last of his Geniza based articles—this time an article on women's letters in the Geniza—and turned to translating Al-Farabi's, "A Remark about the Way to Happiness" from Arabic to Hebrew and English.[2] The entries he wrote at this time for the then fledgling *Encyclopedia Hebraica* reflect his joint scholarly interests in both philosophical and orientalist topics. These entries include, "The Philosophical Sources of Maimonides," "Neoplatonism," "Numenius," "Simplicius" and "Speusippus" on the one hand, but "Thoeodor Nöldeke" and "Snouck Hurgronje" on the other.

Motzkin's stay at Haifa University was not to be permanent. Probably on account of his political advocacy for improving the conditions of junior lecturers, Motzkin was unable to receive tenure at Haifa University. In 1975, he moved to Boston, Massachusetts, perhaps attracted by the intellectual life of the city. For the next seven years, Aryeh Motzkin was unable to receive a regular academic appointment. Yet this does not appear to have slowed down the pace of his academic publications. In fact the opposite was the case. Between 1976 and 1981, Motzkin published six full-length, academic articles in English, four of which he also published in different academic journals in Hebrew, and three academic book reviews. In comparison, during his Haifa period, he published only six full-length, academic articles, all of which are elaborations of chapters of his doctoral dissertation, and one book review. From 1982 on, he published only four full-length academic articles, an English translation of an article by Shlomo Pines, and a single book review.

Thus, the years 1976 through 1981, during which Motzkin held no full-time academic appointment, turned out to be the most fruitful, in terms of the number of publications, of his entire life. The articles he wrote during this period bore more than just numerical fruit; they also reflected Professor Motzkin's full engagement with philosophical and religious questions from the perspective of a philosopher, and with the background of a specialist in the study of Near Eastern languages and civilizations.

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[2] The Hebrew translation was published in *Iyyun* 23 (1974): 113–135.

That he published most when he had the fewest academic obligations is a testament to the seriousness with which Professor Motzkin engaged both teaching and writing. Both his lectures and his written works reflected the serious consideration Motzkin dedicated to each word along with his sense of the beauty of well-constructed arguments. An attentive reader of Motzkin's post-1976 work will find not a single word out of place, nor a single haphazard argument.

The care which Motzkin dedicated to writing his articles continued to be evident in the small number of writings published after he had attained full-time teaching positions in Boston. Indeed, the careful thought and consideration Professor Motzkin dedicated to his writings accounts for their rather small number. While teaching in the Department of Theology at Boston College from 1981 to 1986, Motzkin published only one academic article, one academic translation, and one academic book review. Afterwards, while in the Department of Philosophy at Boston University from 1987 until his retirement in 1996, Professor Motzkin published only three academic articles. After 1990 and until his death in 2006, Professor Motzkin published no academic articles, but dedicated himself to teaching.

Of Professor Motzkin's seventeen full-length academic articles, only ten were dedicated to philosophical and religious questions. Nevertheless, the care given to these articles was such that the reader can learn more from each than from entire books on the same topic. When taken together, these articles represent a tremendous, though laconic, achievement, which should benefit those philosophically minded people who did not have the good fortune of being able to attend Professor Motzkin's classes.

Teaching and publishing academic articles are not, of course, the only standards of academic productivity and it is important to mention also the public, academic lectures Professor Motzkin gave. In addition to the lectures reproduced in this volume, he gave or prepared others with such titles as "What is Philosophy?", "Plato and Aristotle on the Vocation of the Philosopher", "Nature as it Is, the City as it Should Be", "Nietzsche's Critique of 'Platonism'", and "Plato's Answer to Nietzsche: On the Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry." Professor Motzkin collected and edited all of his extant lectures, arranging for them to be neatly organized in binders, presumably because he intended to publish them as articles. According to his good friend, Zeev Gries, Motzkin was waiting to publish these lectures until he could give what

he considered to be adequate footnoting. In the absence of Professor Motzkin's own footnotes in most of the lectures included in this volume, I have added my own footnotes, tracing what I believe to have been the sources Professor Motzkin's claims.

Not all of Professor Motzkin's achievements were academic. In addition to a number of politically oriented articles written in various prominent newspapers all over the world, he gave various lectures on popular themes from essays on the importance of Jerusalem to Woody Allen (*e.g.*, "Memory: Family, Love, Death: On a Film by Woody Allen"). He lectured in religious settings (*e.g.*, "From Korah to Ruth" given in a synagogue) and wrote numerous articles documenting the history of his prominent family. During the early 90s he was also Senior Counselor to the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Lojze Peterle.

I have already mentioned the poetry he translated, mostly during his retirement, which included the works of such poets as Auden, Eliot, Goethe, Lermontov, Pope, Pushkin, Rossetti, Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Yeats. The translations—mostly into Hebrew, though he also translated others from Hebrew to English—preserved the meter and the cadence of the original poems. One of Professor Motzkin's favorite poetic activities was to recite a poem in meter in its original language and then recite his own, meticulous and metered translation to the same tempo of the original. The night before he died, Professor Motzkin entertained my wife and me with such recitations of Goethe and Pushkin.

B. *Jewish and Philosophical Works of Aryeh Leo Motzkin*

Aryeh Leo Motzkin did not see a Jewish Philosophy that was distinct from Greek Philosophy, Modern Philosophy, or any other form of Philosophy; rather he saw a single Philosophy that manifested itself in different traditional contexts. This philosophy was discovered by Plato and Aristotle and, as a way of life, was encountered by many in various traditions. In Motzkin's view, studying these kinds of encounters is important for determining how to encounter philosophy in our own time and in our own cultural context. By comparing the ways in which thinkers of different cultures became philosophers two things become apparent: what is the same about philosophy in each culture, and what is different about each culture. This study, which examines the Jewish

encounter with philosophy from Judah Halevi (d. 1141) to our own time, presents these two aspects of the encounter between culture and philosophy under the rubric of a single, changing culture.

Though Jewish culture, law, and society were in a state of nearly constant change over the course of the almost one thousand years covered in this volume, Motzkin assumes that philosophy did not change. The encounter between philosophy and culture did, of course, change as culture changed and the details of that encounter are different for each thinker discussed in the book.

Beyond the individual differences in how various Jewish thinkers encountered philosophy, the history of philosophy among Jews can be broken up into two periods: ancient and modern. Characteristic of the ancient Jewish philosophers is their adaptation of the philosophy discovered by Plato and Aristotle to the context of traditional, medieval Jewish life. Following modernity, the meaning of important concepts such as "nature," "philosophy," "metaphysics," "ethics" and "politics" changed fundamentally. Though these changes pervaded all modern scientific thought, modern thinkers could encounter an original philosophy grounded in Platonic and Aristotelian writings through reading ancient texts. For Jewish thinkers, this encounter occurred through reading the medieval philosophical texts, particularly the work of Maimonides.

In accordance with Motzkin's understanding of these two important periods in Jewish thought, this book has been divided into two parts. Part I deals with Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy as it was understood by medieval Jewish thinkers and Part II deals with how modern thinkers, beginning with Spinoza, read and understood those medieval Jewish thinkers.

In the first chapter in Part I, "Plato and Aristotle on the Vocation of the Philosopher," Motzkin examines how Plato and Aristotle viewed the philosophical life and what they saw as the goals of philosophical inquiry. In the central section of the chapter, Motzkin turns to Al-Farabi's understanding of Plato and Aristotle as a key to understanding what is meant by the theoretical life. It must be understood that medieval Jewish thinkers did not merely sit down and read Plato and Aristotle; medieval Jewish thinkers encountered Plato and Aristotle through the works of Arabic speaking Muslims, such as Al-Farabi and Averroes. Al-Farabi in particular was responsible, in Motzkin's view, for providing the basis on which the philosophical way of life could rest in medieval, traditional, monotheistic society—a basis that was adapted to suit medieval Judaism.

Yet it is not clear that philosophy as discovered by the Greeks could be made to fit medieval Judaism. Indeed there is reason to think such a task was actually impossible from the outset. In the second article of the work, "Halevi's Kuzari as a Platonic Dialogue," Motzkin suggests that Judah Halevi felt such a "Jewish Philosophy" to be deeply problematic. Like Plato in his dialogues, Judah Halevi does not speak in his own voice in the *Kuzari*. Motzkin suggests that Ḥalevi is not represented by any of the characters in the dialogue, but that through the dialogue form Halevi brings out the problematic character of the encounter between the philosopher and the Jewish *Ḥaver*.

In the third article, "Maimonides and the Imagination", Motzkin explores Maimonides' attack on the Muslim theological dialecticians known as the *Mutakallimūn*. Maimonides objects to the *Mutakallimūn*, and by extension to any of his co-religionists who might follow the *Mutakallimūn*, on the grounds that they do not distinguish between intellect and imagination. The imagination, according to Maimonides, is, following Aristotle, inferior to the intellect. Thus prophecy, which is based on the imaginative faculty, must be understood as inferior to philosophy, which is based on the intellect.

Contrary to Maimonides' view that religion and philosophy can be joined through philosophical interpretation of religious texts is Averroes' view that religion and philosophy must be kept apart. In "Elia del Medigo, Averroes and Averroism", Motzkin discusses Elia del Medigo's application of this Averroist principle to Jewish thought through his work *Behinat Hadat* (*The Crucible of Religion*).[3] Motzkin argues that neither Averroes nor Elia del Medigo were proponents of a "double truth" theory. But both thinkers believed in a kind of disjunction between philosophy and religion. Both "philosophical" religion and "religious" philosophy can be harmful to the community.

Continuing this theme in his article, "Paduan Averroism Reconsidered," Motzkin argues that Elia del Medigo and other Averroists, following certain arguments of Plato and Aristotle, believed in the importance of the distinction between the philosophers and the many. The Averroists directed their writings toward the philosophers, rather than the people. In Motzkin's view, this method of argument was an important predecessor to modern philosophy.

[3] Motzkin prepared a critical edition of this Hebrew work, though it was never published.

Returning to the question of philosophy's encounter with Jewish tradition, Motzkin's lecture, "Philosophy and Mysticism" explores philosophy's distinction from Jewish mysticism, which was influential on many aspects of mainstream medieval and modern Judaism. Despite recent criticism of the distinction between Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, Motzkin argues that the distinction should be upheld. Philosophy, as understood through the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, is antithetical to any form of mysticism.

In the articles that make up the second part of the book, Motzkin examines how Jewish thinkers after the advent of modernity looked upon the philosophy of the Medieval Jewish thinkers. In Motzkin's view, modernity changed the way people conceived of religion and its interaction with philosophy. By examining how modern thinkers read medieval thinkers and by comparing how modern and medieval thinkers viewed specific issues, such as good and evil, he believed we can characterize the importance of that change. In comparing Ancients, Medievals, and Moderns, Motzkin followed Strauss in asking about the relationship between politics and philosophy, but his preference for philosophy over politics shows him to be far from a standard "Straussian."

In the first article of this section and the seventh article of the volume, "Maimonides and Spinoza on Good and Evil," Motzkin elaborates the modern reading of medieval texts by discussing the differences between Spinoza and Maimonides. In Maimonides' view, the moral virtues, which are outside of the domain of intellectual apprehension and pure knowledge, are subordinate to the intellectual virtues and designed to promote them. For Spinoza, good and evil are framed in terms of useful and not useful. Philosophy-science is still valuable, but because it is useful for conquering nature.

In the following chapter, "A Note on Natural Right, Nature and Reason in Spinoza," Motzkin outlines the modernism of Spinoza's thought and Spinoza's departure from ancient philosophical views. Spinoza breaks with ancient and medieval philosophy by insisting on the disjunction of reason and nature. The ancient and medieval quest to understand the ideal state in accordance with nature is replaced in Spinoza's thought by the quest to conquer nature and build a state based on human reason.

Spinoza cannot, however, be considered to conform to mainstream Jewish traditional thought. Thus Motzkin details the difference between him and a more traditional thinker, Samuel David Luzzatto, in "Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion." Luzzatto's opposition

to Spinoza is, according to Motzkin, the opposition of the theologian to the philosopher. Luzzatto criticizes Spinoza for regarding as important the preservation of the body and seeking profit. Additionally, Luzzatto considers Spinoza anerotic and antireligious. Yet Luzzatto observes that political philosophy and metaphysics are intertwined.

In the tenth essay, "On the Interpretation of Maimonides: the Cases of Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am," Motzkin discusses how both Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am read and interpreted Maimonides. Both Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am read Maimonides without influence from 19th century scholarly literature. Thus both thinkers were able to understand how Maimonides separated dogmatic theology from natural philosophy. Yet neither thinker was properly able to understand Maimonides on account of the interest of each in his own thought.

Turning to more contemporary readings of ancient philosophy, Motzkin's "Harry A. Wolfson as Interpreter of Medieval Thought" criticizes the work of one of the best known scholars of Jewish, medieval philosophic thought. Wolfson, in Motzkin's view, did not properly distinguish between philosophy and theology, and was thus unable to read an unchanging philosophy and philosophical way of life in medieval philosophical texts. For this reason, Motzkin contends, Wolfson only rarely, in his voluminous work, quotes Plato, whose works are not doctrinaire but focus on the philosophical way of life.

In the final essay in the volume, "On the Limitations of Human Knowledge," Motzkin turns his criticism to another prominent scholar of medieval Jewish philosophic thought, his personal friend, Shlomo Pines. In an article with the same title as this essay,[4] Shlomo Pines argued that according to Maimonides the philosopher could not properly understand physics and metaphysics, but could understand the human sciences of ethics and politics. Thus, according to Pines' interpretation, ethics and politics are the proper objects of study for the philosopher, not metaphysics and physics. Motzkin argues against Pines, stating that in fact ethics and politics are subordinate to the properly philosophical studies of physics and metaphysics. This sharp critique of one of Shlomo Pines' most important statements about

[4] In *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), vol. i, pp. 82–109.

Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* demonstrates Motzkin's significant difference from traditional Straussians.

Though not originally written for a single volume, the articles contained in this book can and ought to be read together because they are focused on a single theme: the encounter between the Jewish tradition and philosophy as discovered by Plato and Aristotle. While the articles do not discuss every important thinker in this encounter, a careful reader of Motzkin's work can get a good sense of the history of that encounter, through both the medieval and modern periods.

A theme that runs throughout the book is the importance of Averroes and Averroism. In the entire book, there is only one chapter that does not mention Averroes or Averroism (Chapter 9). The focus of two of the chapters on the Jewish Averroist, Elia del Medigo, a thinker who is relatively neglected in the field of Jewish studies, further emphasizes the prominence Motzkin placed on Averroism. Averroism, in Motzkin's view, was perhaps the most important precursor to the modern view of the role of the philosopher in society. Loosely put, Motzkin considers ancient philosophers, particularly Plato and Al-Farabi, to assign to the philosopher a guiding role in forming society in such a way as to reflect philosophical truth and virtue. The modern thinkers, of whom Spinoza is the most prominent example in Motzkin's works, are considered to utilize knowledge attained by philosophy—or as the moderns call it, "science"—to further the will of the populace. Averroism, in Motzkin's view, stood in between these two views in so far as it called on the philosopher to remove himself and philosophy from the masses and to refrain, by and large, from attempts to guide society in accordance with philosophical truths.

A reader looking for a complete account of modern Jewish philosophical thinkers will note the absence of such prominent thinkers as Moses Mendelssohn, Franz Rosenzweig, Hermann Cohen, and Emmanuel Levinas. The reason for Motzkin's lack of interest in these thinkers is probably his unstated view that these men were not interested in the continuation of ancient philosophy, but rather in the promotion of a new, modern philosophy that could be synthesized with an interpreted version of the Jewish tradition. While Motzkin did not himself ever, to my knowledge, give a reasoned explanation for his neglect of these thinkers, I got the sense from him that these thinkers did not encounter *philosophy* as Plato, Aristotle, Maimonides, Averroes, etc., encountered it. Their philosophy, or philosophies, were not part

of the *philosophia perennis* that Motzkin saw in the works of the philosophical thinkers discussed in this volume.

It is possible that Motzkin saw these modern philosophers as being too influenced by the development of modern science, which Motzkin condemns as "monistic, materialistic, mechanistic and antitheological."[5] Insofar as modern science relies on empirical data and experience to form its conclusions, it is entirely different from what Motzkin sees as philosophy, which strives for purely intellectual knowledge. The reliance on empiricism and experience by modern science, and in its wake by modern philosophical thought as well, is a reliance on the faculty of the soul that interprets empirical data and experiences, namely what Aristotle calls the "imagination." While philosophy proper, as discovered by Plato and Aristotle, concerns the faculty of intellect, the dependence of modern science and scientific methods on the Aristotelian notion of "imagination" places them in an entirely different category of thought—a category that shares its place with mysticism, exemplified in the Jewish tradition by the Kabbalah, insofar as it too interprets experience and empirical data.

Motzkin's denigration of modern science and much of modern thought to the rank of imagination emphasizes that the problem that Motzkin was interested in was the difficulty inherent in the encounter between the *philosophia perennis* as discovered by Plato and Aristotle, which relies on unchanging intellect, and the changing history of religious Judaism, discovered, as it were, through empirical, *i.e.*, imaginative, methods.

[5] See Chapter 6: Philosophy and Mysticism, p. 74.

PART I

PLATONIC AND ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTORY POEM: SOLOMON IBN GABIROL, "A REPLY OF HIS TO ONE WHO INQUIRED OF HIM ABOUT THE ESSENCE OF BEING"

Translated by Aryeh Leo Motzkin

[A Reply of His to One Who Inquired of Him
about the Essence of Being]

I've loved you as a man who loves his sole one,
With all his heart and his soul too and his vim.
And took great joy about your heart which did seek
To see the secret act of God who bore him.
Now this idea's very deep and remote,
And who can know and understand its bedrock;
Yet I'll relate to you a thing which I heard,
And you reflect well on its secret that's locked.
The wise had said the secret of the being of All
Is for All's sake for whom all is in His hand,
And He aspires to make it Be like that Be
Just like a lover whose desire's for his friend.
Perhaps that is what prophets did allude to
When they said He had made it for His name's sake;
I've given you reply, and now it's you
Who'll go find proof in order that it will stand.

ולה ג'ואב למן סאלה ען מאהיה' אלכון [ולו תשובה למי ששאלו על מהותה של ההויה]

– – ◡ / – – – ◡ / – – – ◡ // – – ◡ / – – – ◡ / – – – ◡

אֲהַבְתִּיךְ כְּאַהֲבַת אִישׁ יְחִידוֹ / בְּכָל-לִבּוֹ וְנַפְשׁוֹ עִם-מְאֹדוֹ
וְשַׁשְׂתִּי עַל-לְבָבְךָ אֲשֶׁר תָּר / לְהָבִין סוֹד פְּעֻלַּת צוּר יְלָדוֹ
וְהַדָּבָר מְאֹד עָמֹק וְרָחֹק / וּמִי-יֵדַע וּמִי-יָבִין יְסוֹדוֹ
אֲבָל אַגִּיד לְךָ דָּבָר שְׁמַעְתִּיו / וְעָלֶיךָ לְהִתְבּוֹנֵן בְּסוֹדוֹ
חֲכָמִים אָמְרוּ כִּי-סוֹד הֱיוֹת כֹּל / לְמַעַן כֹּל אֲשֶׁר הַכֹּל בְּיָדוֹ
וְהוּא נִכְסַף לְשׁוֹמוֹ יֵשׁ כְּמוֹ-יֵשׁ / כְּמוֹ חֹשֵׁק אֲשֶׁר נִכְסַף לְדוֹדוֹ
וְאוּלַי זֶה יְדַמּוּ הַנְּבִיאִים / בְּאָמְרָם כִּי בְרָאוֹ עַל-כְּבוֹדוֹ
הֱשִׁיבֹתִי לְךָ דָּבָר וְאַתָּה / קְנֵה מוֹפֵת לְמַעַן הַעֲמִידוֹ.

CHAPTER ONE

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE ON THE VOCATION OF THE PHILOSOPHER

Lecture

I

The enterprise called philosophy appears first in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. It is in the Platonic dialogues and in the treatises or lectures of Aristotle that Philosophy is for the first time discussed extensively, put forth as the highest and most proper or most worthy human endeavor, and defended against its multitudinous adversaries.

Certainly there were philosophers before Plato, but their writings were either non-existent, or have survived only in fragmentary fashion. We learn about them for the most part from what we would call today secondary sources. To what extent Plato and Aristotle are reliable in their reports of their predecessors will forever remain a moot question, notwithstanding the voluminous scholarship which attempts to answer just this question. But there is no gainsaying that not only do all major philosophic problems make their appearance in the writings of the two major Greek philosophers, there is hardly a problem which interests them more and which is always present in their minds—sometimes in the back of their minds—than the question of philosophy itself, and of the vocation of the philosopher.

My intention is to discuss the two-fold meaning of the term vocation: vocation as occupation or activity, and vocation as calling or duty. Or if you will, the philosopher's duty to himself and the philosopher's duty to others.

We all know that philosophy is a problematic term, and we have just been reminded that "vocation" is also an equivocal term. So, of course, are "Plato" and "Aristotle." We are in possession of many writings of dubious origin, quite likely lecture notes, which form the extant Aristotelian corpus. We are all aware of the extreme difficulties attendant upon an attempt to recover Plato's teaching or teachings which are presented in the form of dialogues. Plato's obscurity is immediately apparent. I think we should beware of the error

often made in believing Aristotle any less obscure: Aristotle is not as systematic a philosopher as the scholastics would have us believe. These remarks are made in order to remind ourselves that we cannot simply cite "Plato" or "Aristotle" on any given problem but must examine with infinite care *all* their explicit writings on any given topic; and on a subject both as exalted and as all-pervading as the one before us, our task is even more forbidding: we must, as it were, examine the Platonic and Aristotelian writings in their entirety.

What *is* the primary occupation or *activity* of the philosopher? A contemporary philosopher—this was perhaps the most "propitious" statement he ever made—called it "an irrational passion for dispassionate rationality."[1] Neither Plato nor Aristotle would take exception to these words. Philosophy is not in itself a *logos*, a speech about a specific facet of the cosmos or of man. It is the passion for logos *as such—the* thirst for knowledge, *the* lust for learning. It is in fact the love for wisdom, which is, according to Aristotle, the knowledge about the primary things. This passion, this love, is the principle of the philosopher's movement or activity. It is, both according to Plato and according to Aristotle, the one activity which is excluded from their general recommendation to temperance (Greek: σωφροσύνη) in the words of the former and the *mean*, the golden mean, in the words of the latter. It is indeed irrational, a manic activity, a mania. Of course to say an *irrational passion* is to be redundant. There is no intersection of passion and reason. Is there a rational passion, or in other words does the *ratio*, the logos, admit of passivity? Is not the *ratio* the one active principle according to both Plato and Aristotle? And so "dispassionate rationality" is apparently a repetitious phrase as well. All rationality is *dis*passionate, one might say, by definition. The philosopher's activity is indeed a movement: it starts with passion and ends with ratio. It is the attempt to move from the realm of the passions, of becoming, to the realm of the intellect, to the realm of being. The philosopher shares the *desire* for being with every other of the *beings*, mineral, vegetable or animal. Every being, as Avicenna asserts in his *Risāla fi'l 'Ishq*, his *Treatise on Love*, is innately and continuously moving toward its specific perfection,[2] which Aristotle

[1] [This quote is widely attributed to the economist John Maurice Clark. Clark was referring to economics, not philosophy.—ed.]

[2] [See Avicenna, *Treatise on Love*, Section I. English translation by E. Fackenheim in *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (1945): 212–4.—ed.]

called the love of matter for form, or in other words, the love of becoming for being.[3]

The specific love of the philosopher is simply the specific love or desire for the perfection of man. To both Plato and Aristotle, philosopher and man are synonymous, for when they say "man" they usually mean the highest or best man. It is clear to them *what* the definition of man is, and it is from the definition that we learn of man's vocation.

The definition, we have learned, consists of the genus plus the specific differences, and the specific difference of man is his *logos*, his *ratio*. The perfection of man lies in continuous perfection of his logos.[4] *That* man who truly deserves to be called *man*, namely the philosopher, will be constantly seeking to arrive at his specific state of being, he will forever attempt to arrive at what Al-Farabi calls his specific happiness: the life of reason.

And so we can see that "irrational passion for dispassionate rationality" means (is reducible to) "passion for rationality," or "irration for the dispassionate" which are interchangeable and which are synonymous with the more familiar phrase "love of wisdom." It is of course the circular and thus perfect definition of Philosophy.

In his last conversation (the same one in which he mentions his dream about "cultivating and making music"),[5] Plato's Socrates says that the "true votary of philosophy, who to be sure is always misunderstood by other men, is always pursuing death and dying." His interlocutor, Simmias, *laughs* and says that indeed "the people at home *have found them out* to truly deserve the death they seek."[6] The people of Athens, as we know, shared this view of Simmias' fellow Thebans and followed it through; this opinion, which was shared by most Athenians, indeed is the cause of the conversation which we witness. Be that as it may, Plato's Socrates *also* shares this view, although he takes exception to the words "they have found them out."[7] The reason for this reservation of Socrates is made clear: the Thebans, as well as the Athenians, and perhaps, the many of any city, have no notion of either the *nature* of *that death* which the true philosopher deserves, nor *how* he deserves or desires death.

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[3] [Cf. Chapter 7, n. 57—ed.]
[4] [See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 7.—ed.]
[5] [See Plato, *Phaedo* 60e.—ed.]
[6] [*Ibid.* 64a–b.—ed.]
[7] [*Ibid.* 64b–c.—ed.]

In the discussion which follows Socrates explains that the philosopher's *end*, which all his *activity* is directed toward, is the cultivation of his soul. By cultivation of the soul, or if you will by the cultivation and making of music of the highest sort, the philosopher means the actual acquirement of knowledge, an inquiry which only the soul, or a part of the soul, conducts. The *body* and the satisfaction of its needs, which consist in the escape from pain and the pursuit of pleasures, is only a hindrance in the release from ignorance and the pursuit of knowledge which is philosophy. That real liberation of man, philosophy, is contingent upon a prerequisite liberation from the body. Death is a homonymous term. *That* death which is the object of the philosopher is the liberation from bodily want or desire.

The world of becoming is the nemesis of the world of being. Since the philosopher's activity consists in the search for the world of being he must desire with equal *passion* to be removed from the world of becoming. That self-annihilation which the philosopher desires is the annihilation of the *individual* within him and the joining of that within him which can partake of the eternal, with, in Shakespeare's words, "the be-all or the end-all."[8]

In both Plato and Aristotle the object of the philosopher is the attainment of happiness. What is this positive demonic state, this εὐδαιμονία? *Eudaimonia* consists in the attainment of the best life, and the best life for man, which is the same as the life of the best man, or philosopher, is to live one's life in accordance with the dictates of the natural order of things, to organize one's soul to be in harmony with the order of the whole, of the *cosmos*.[9] Which *kósmos*? Not the living visible cosmos, the κόσμος αἰσθητός, the perceivable (perceptible) universe, but rather in harmony with the κόσμος νοητός, the intelligible universe. That is of course true of Plato. We know both from the *Republic* (508c, 507b) as well as from the *Phaedrus* (247 c–e) that the εἴδη, the ideas have a *place* of their own, namely the κόσμος νοητός. It is in the contemplation of the *eternal* ideas that the best life consists. But this is true of Aristotle as well. The God of Aristotle, as we learn from the *De Caelo* (I 279 a–b) is outside the cosmos and the philosopher, being that man in whom the divine has, as it were, the upper hand,

[8] [*Macbeth*, Act I, scene vii.—ed.]
[9] See Plato, *Republic* 353b–354a; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 1097a–b.

lives his life primarily in contemplation of the highest being, which is not of the visible universe.

Indeed the distinction between the visible and the intelligible, or if you will between the mutable and the eternal is crucial for the understanding of the vocation of the true man, sc. the philosopher. Now I do not claim that this discussion is first made in the fourth century, the century of Plato and Aristotle. It is as old as philosophy itself. I think we would not be far wrong if we were to say that philosophy comes into being with the search for the non-visible, immutable ἀρχαί or principles of the visible, perceivable universe. Whether these principles are mathematical, as the first man who styled himself a philosopher, Pythagoras, asserted them to be, or whether they are the infinite or even the intellect is of course in itself a legitimate and even tantalizing question. But the quest for the immutable, and the eternal, was for the Greek philosophers the undoubted τέλος or end of philosophy.

George Boas, in his discussion of the various senses of "nature," finds the preoccupation with the eternal and the positing of the eternal as superior to the transitory inexplicable and even mysterious.[10] Plato as well as Aristotle would have found Boas' comment even more amazing than his characterization of what they considered to be the most distinctive philosophic trait, *i.e.*, the quest for the eternal. Is not philosophy the quest for knowledge, for comprehensive knowledge of the fundamental things? Can there be knowledge of *mutable* things at all? In other words, is the changeable intelligible? But is not the changeable such by virtue of its materiality? Now according to Aristotle in the *Physics* (I, 191a) as well as in the *Metaphysics* (1036a) matter is unknowable. We can not know anything but the data of knowledge, the intelligibles, which are of course immutable. Boas' question, then, should have been not "why is the eternal considered superior to the transitory" but rather why has the *noetic* been considered from time immemorial, or perhaps from the time when philosophy came into being, as superior to the *aisthetic*, the sensible, which is

[10] [See George Boas, "Nature," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), vol. iii, pp. 346–51. Cf. esp. p. 347: "It was probably Plato more than any other individual who removed the real from the material world to the world of ideas, by pointing out the ideals (universals, Forms) were immutable, eternal or timeless, whereas the so-called real things (particulars) were constantly changing and obviously temporal. Just why value was associated with the timeless and immutable has never been explained, if indeed any explanation of it is possible."—ed.]

concerned with the perceivable world. The answer is indeed circular. I believe it is worth repeating. The *aisthetic*, that which is concerned with the data of the senses, is of dubious authority. To put it plainly, we can *not* rely on our senses, our perceptions are always relative, relative to the object perceived, relative to the medium, relative to the subject perceiving and to the relative strength of the organ perceiving. Perception is by its *very nature* unsatisfactory. It is illusory. I am not unaware of the view of perception as a necessary stage in the attainment of knowledge, but this is another problem. Perception, αἴσθησις, is an imperfect tool through which imperfect existents are apprehended by imperfect receivers. Plato, and Aristotle no less, taught that the lack of perfection inherent in the world of coming-to-be and passing-away, the κόσμος αἰσθητός, gives perception the lie. If the material is unknowable, what is? That which is the data of the *knowing* part of the human soul, the νοητά, the intelligibles. We may thus transform Boas' bewilderment into the question of why *knowledge* is thought to be superior to *ignorance*, for that is the true significance of his quandary. The Greek philosophers, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic and even Epicurean, would not have considered this question a serious one. No philosopher, no divine, no poet, no sophist would have ever allowed that this question is anything but frivolous. The distinctiveness of man is in his being open to the understanding of the whole. This is the nature of the divinity within him. And the whole is eternal, so Aristotle, and Plato too, if by *whole* we mean not just the visible whole. Knowledge ***means*** apprehension of the eternal. Abstract thought ***means*** looking away from the transitory. The philosopher's true vocation lies in his attempt to know the eternal and to abstract from the transitory.

II

I am sure you have all noticed that I have up to this point spoken about Plato and Aristotle in one breath, making no distinction between them, as if they are similar in every respect, indeed as if they are identical. I believe a few words on this important question are now in order.

There was in the tenth century a Central Asian philosopher who wrote in Arabic and who was considered by all the philosophers who wrote in Arabic and who followed him to be the most important philosopher after Aristotle. Maimonides, the 12th century Jewish philosopher who wrote his philosophical works in Arabic, says in one of his

epistles to his student that all of Al-Farabi's works are "of the finest flour,"[11] and in fact Al-Farabi was dubbed *al-muʿallim al-thānī*, the *Second Master*. The first master, *il maestro di color che sanno*,[12] was of course Aristotle.

Now Al-Farabi, who wrote over 100 books, wrote several books on the philosophy of Plato and on the philosophy of Aristotle. He wrote a number of commentaries on Aristotle's Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας (*De Interpretatione*) which have been published,[13] on other parts of the *Organon*, on the *Poetics* and so on.

But among his works on Plato and Aristotle there are two which I think concern us directly. One is a rather large volume, a tri-partite work called "On the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle,"[14] and the other is a relatively short treatise entitled "On the Harmonization of the Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle."[15]

Now these are two really amazing works. The first part of the larger work is entitled "On the attainment of happiness," and I shall not dwell upon it now. A second, shorter part, is devoted to the philosophy of Plato and in it he purports to give a summary of each one of Plato's thirty-six dialogues (counting the epistles as one "dialogue"). The third part is devoted to the philosophy of Aristotle, in which he again "summarizes" as it were most of Aristotle's works beginning with the Organon and ending with the *Metaphysics*. Why the *Metaphysics*? The clue is provided by the titles of the second and third sections respectively. The second part, on the philosophy of Plato, is called "The Philosophy of Plato, and the order of its parts from its beginning to its end." The third part, the one on Aristotle, is entitled "The philosophy of Aristotle and the order of its parts." There is no "from its beginning to its end" in the title. And in fact, when Al-Farabi gets to the end of the *Metaphysics*, he says, "This is as far as Aristotle got in his philosophy." Where are the *Ethics* and the *Politics*? Al-Farabi does

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[11] [See Maimonides' letter to Ibn Tibbon in A. Marx, "Texts by and about Maimonides", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 25 (1953): 378–80. Cf. Chapter 4: Elia Del Medigo, Averroes and Averroism, p. 55, n. 16.—ed.]

[12] ["The master of those who know," Dante, *Inferno*, 4.131—ed.]

[13] [*Al-Farabi's Commentary and a Short Treatise on Aristotle's* De Interpretatione, ed. and trans. F. W. Zimmermann (British Academy and Oxford University Press, 1981)—ed.]

[14] [An English translation is available in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969, revised 2002).—ed.]

[15] [An English translation is available in *Alfarabi, The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 125–167.—ed.]

not tell us. It appears that Al-Farabi does not accept Aristotle's critique of Platonic philosophy and especially of Platonic political philosophy.

But whatever the reason for his different treatment of Platonic and of Aristotelian philosophy one thing is palpably clear. He clearly sees the differences between Plato and Aristotle, and he apparently prefers Plato to Aristotle—Plato's philosophy is whole—it has a beginning, a middle and end. It is perfect philosophy. Certainly this may be said about Plato's Ethical and more especially Political teaching.

While all of this is interesting, there is nothing especially astounding about Al-Farabi's presentation of Plato and Aristotle, unless we consider Al-Farabi's other work, "The harmonization of the views of the philosophers Plato and Aristotle." In that work, Al-Farabi takes great pains to show that Plato and Aristotle agreed on every question, and anyone who reads these two philosophers differently has simply misunderstood their inner meanings.

Plato and Aristotle may *appear* from time to time to hold views which are at variance with one another, but this is only for the sake of appearance. Surely if we know anything about philosophy, we know that what is apparent and what truly is are not the same. Time does not permit me to describe this work in detail. Again, taken by itself, the work makes perfect sense. As Cicero, the Al-Farabi of the Roman world, puts it when he discusses in the *De Finibus* (V, 12), the differences between Aristotle's dialogues and his treatises which we now possess, Aristotle's extant works are external discourses, *exoterikoi logoi*, popular works, whereas works which are at variance with these public works are obviously those which are meant for more trained audiences, and are known as *akroatikoi logoi*—note, *e.g.*, the title of Aristotle's *Physics*. In other words, the differences between Aristotle and Plato on major issues need not vex us. They *appear* to differ because of the *nature* and literary *character* of their works. There is no *real* disagreement between them.

This is a perfectly legitimate position, except for one thing. Al-Farabi denies it in his major work on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. I propose the following solution: Al-Farabi believes that when Aristotle criticizes Plato, he criticizes Plato's *exoterikoi logoi*. For instance, when Aristotle criticizes certain features of the Πολιτεία, the *Republic*, he has his own good reasons for doing so, but he will not for one moment have us believe that Plato held forth all his proposals literally. That is one part of the answer to our dilemma in reading this interpretation of Plato and Aristotle. The second part of my proposed answer is this.

Al-Farabi wrote a work entitled "*Kitāb al-milla*," "A treatise regarding the (religious) community."[16] In this book, he says that the second lawgiver, the second νομοθέτης, if he wants to do what the first lawgiver did, if he wants to follow exactly in his footsteps, must *do something else*, must act differently, because he is living in different circumstances and addressing himself to a different audience.

From yet another work of Al-Farabi we know that he believed the terms *lawgiver* and *philosopher* to be identical terms and to be attributive to the same kind of man.[17] The second philosopher, Aristotle, if he wished to do (or write—*scribere est agere*) the *same thing* that the first philosopher, Plato, wished to do, must do something else.

(After this pleasant interlude, this tour of Central Asia, I would like, with your permission, to return to Athens.)

III

This leads us directly to the consideration of the second meaning of vocation. The philosopher's vocation, in the sense of *occupation* or *activity*, is to attain the knowledge of the intelligibles, to penetrate the essence of reality, to understand properly the nature of the κόσμος, the various levels of being within it and the relationship between them. But in Plato's view, and in Aristotle's as well, *like* has the capacity first and foremost to understand *like*. The proper study of mankind is man. What Socrates learned from the Delphic Oracle is never forgotten by Plato, and while Aristotle had declared that the one question which he considered more worthy than any other was the question of being, the one *species of being* that he was preoccupied with was his own. The *Organon*, Aristotle's introduction to philosophy, is the summation of the rules by which man's speech—reason or universal language—operates. The *De Anima* is concerned more than anything else with *man's own* soul, as are the *Parva Naturalia*, the many smaller natural

[16] [An English translation is available in *Alfarabi, The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 93–113—ed.]

[17] [Cf. *The Attainment of Happiness* in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969, revised 2002), p. 47, §58.—ed.]

treatises. The Aristotelian corpus, traditionally arranged, ends with his practical works, the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, that is to say the rules of human conduct and those of man's specific and natural association, the political community. Beyond that, a case may be made for seeing the *Metaphysics* as the treatise concerned with man's knowledge and its limitations. One of the most memorable statements of the *Metaphysics* is, we remember, "All men by nature desire to know."[18] Aristotle's philosophy *begins* with man and after a long journey, and a number of detours, *ends* with man.

Mankind in *general*, and man, the truest or *best* man in *particular*. The best man leads a theoretical, contemplative life. Βίος θεορετικός is an Aristotelian term, which in fact is absent in Plato. Plato, the philosopher of the εἴδη (the "forms"), is of course the more *practical* philosopher. But Aristotle's practical philosophy is not lesser in importance than his theoretical philosophy. Raphael's *The School of Athens* portrays Plato holding the *Timaeus* and Aristotle holding the *Ethics* and *Politics*. Theoretical philosophy—even were we to view it as *philosophy proper*—*needs* practical philosophy. The philosopher needs to consider his relationship with the *city*, and this consideration leads him to reflect upon the city properly ordered.

A city lacking order will not be conducive to the growth in it of the best kind of men. Being the *true philanthropist*, the true lover of *humanity* in the *best* sense of the word, the philosopher must devote himself to the affairs of the rest of humanity.

If the philosopher therefore wishes to be the imitator of God, or of the Gods, if he wishes to engage in the divine activity, that is to say in intellecting, he is compelled—whether he wishes it or not—to imitate another *traditional* divine activity. God is not only omniscient, he is also omnipotent. Nevertheless, God, lacking nothing, does not, at least in Aristotle's view, rule the world. He has no need to rule the world in order to engage in his proper activity. But that is because he is a *separated intelligence*. Man, who is possessed of a body, needs to concern himself with the well being of the body, his own individual body and the body collective, the body politic.

The philosopher's vocation, then, is to seek to show how to blend the opposites which are the elements of political society, how to bring about

[18] [980a1, the opening line of the *Metaphysics*.—ed.]

the necessary *harmony* which would transform our imperfect and often corrupt political associations into a *likely* and *practicable* approximation of the best human political constitution or regime.

What was seen by the Classical Philosophers as Man's dual nature complicates the philosophical inquiry into the human things. The search for the true nature of Nature is, to be sure, none too simple. But although, as Aristotle notes, knowledge of the primary things is difficult for us, it is *essentially* simple. There is no *choice* within the realm of the heavenly bodies, and thus there is no praise nor blame, nor virtue nor vice, in the realm of things which lack volition. The cosmos is what it is. It is neither *good* nor *evil*. It is not even *best*. Ours is not, according to the Greek philosophers, the *best* of all possible worlds, because to say that would imply that there are *other possible* worlds, that the cosmos might have been something else than what it in fact is. But that is impossible. There is only one cosmos, one *whole*, one universe, and it is neither good nor bad, neither virtuous nor vicious, neither moral nor immoral. It is by *necessity* what it is.

Likewise, shame is not a *universal* attribute. But it is attributive to man. When that philosopher who brought philosophy down from the heavens, Socrates, is to enter into a common discourse on the human things, there is only one prerequisite his partners to the discussion must fulfill: they must have a sense of shame. The reason is clear: a man who does not know what shame is, is *shameless*, that is to say, he cannot distinguish between moral and immoral acts, he is not aware, even on the most elementary level, of the existence of good and evil, and of the existence of human virtue. He who does not theorize, and does not gaze upon virtue, is likely to gaze upon vice. And as the poet tells us,

> (Vice) seen too oft, familiar with her face
> Is first endured, then pitied, then embraced.[19]

But to be able to walk upon the road of the search for true virtue, one must have, even at the outset, at *least* a positive, conventional notion of it.

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[19] [Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, "Epistle II: Of the nature and state of man with respect to himself as an individual." The actual quote, referring to vice, reads: "Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, / We first endure, then pity, then embrace."—ed.]

In this too there is no disagreement between Plato and Aristotle: in the practical domain we start from common-sense notions. Even if we wish to transcend them, even if we are somehow aware that the commonly-accepted notions of things are unsatisfactory, one can not substitute anything else at the outset. To be sure, a rigorous examination of the *opinions* of the many will show them to be arbitrary. This is true of the *doxa*, and this is true of the *endoxa*, which Aristotle asserts in the *Topics* (I, 100 a–b) to be those propositions that seem true (to all or) to the *majority* or (even) to the wise. This is specifically or perhaps most clearly seen with regard to the notion of δικαιοσύνη, justice. Anyone who has ever traveled knows that while fire burns the same both here in Athens and in Persia, there are apparently different notions of justice here in Greece and in that most well known of the countries of the barbarians, Persia.

This difference, that is to say, the variety of opinion need not faze us, any more than the conflicting stories about the nature of the gods. There *is* knowledge of justice, in the same way that knowledge of the *whole* is possible. True, sometimes our conclusions are certain and sometimes they are probable. But the end of the dialectical process is far-removed from its beginning.

At any rate, the philosopher's duty to examine the fundamental notions of *justice* and the other *political concepts* is three-fold. There is his duty to himself qua contemplative man: human beings are no less *beings* than any other beings which inhabit the cosmos. In other words, the philosopher studies human beings as he studies *natural* beings. Secondly there is the philosopher's duty to himself as bearer of the flag of philosophy and of the philosophic enterprise itself. The philosopher lives primarily within the community of other men, and he must willy-nilly come to terms with it. And thirdly, the philosopher is, as we have noted, moved not only by the love of himself, that is to say, of the *best* that is within his self, but of his kind, again of the *best* that is within *it*, and he feels called upon to bring about as much happiness for the body politic as is theoretically desirable and practically possible.

How does he go about it?

Plato as well as Aristotle thought that whereas there is no is / should-be dichotomy in the realm of *nature*, such dichotomy exists in the realm of the *polis*. This in contradistinction to the Moderns, for whom nature is not as it *should be*, and must be transmuted and perfected to fit the presumed ends, or rather, *needs* of mankind. And the human *is* must be examined in the light of the human should-be, again, in contradistinction

to the view of the philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and their *heirs*. The human *should-be* is for the Greek philosophers identical to *the* human nature, or rather to that within human nature which is divine, to man's divine nature.

Human society must be ordered as harmoniously as possible with what we know about the principles of the cosmos. As nature is ruled by the one first mover, so the best political community should be ruled by its first member, its true king. Aristotle, it is true, has some reservations about the practicability of the *best* within the polis becoming its rulers, but as we know that Plato too was not blind to the *essential* difficulties attendant on his plan for the capture of political authority by those who best know how to rule, perhaps one might accept Al-Farabi's implied suggestion that Aristotle's criticism is directed rather with a view toward the desirability or lack of desirability of promulgating certain outlandish features of Plato's perfect commonwealth even as *popular teachings*.

Be that as it may, both Plato and Aristotle thought that nature is the standard, and the man who possesses practical wisdom, φρόνησις, is ultimately identical to the man who possesses σοφία or theoretical wisdom.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle recommended that the philosopher engage directly in political activity, except perhaps in extraordinary circumstances, extraordinarily good on the one hand or extraordinarily bad one on the other. His political activity would simply interfere with the contemplative life, which is the end of man, and be at opposite end to what he wants to accomplish. It is not the *active* life which is the philosopher's life, and any foray into the life of the *polis* would be bound to deflect him from his true calling.

For, as Aristotle notes at the end of his plea for the life based on philosophy, his *Protrepticus* (I am quoting from Düring's reconstruction of this work):[20]

> 'Ο νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός,' (εἴθ' Ἑρμότιμος εἴτ' Ἀωαξαγόρας εἶπε τοῦτο,) καὶ ὅτι 'ὁ θνητὸς αἰὼν μέρος ἔχει θεοῦ τινος.' ἢ φιλοσοφητέον οὖν ἢ χαίρειν εἰποῦσι τῷ ζῆν ἀπιτέον ἐντεῦθεν, ὡς τὰ ἄλλα γε πάντα φλυαρία τις ἔοικεν εἶναι πολλὴ καὶ λῆρος.

[20] [I. Düring, "Aristotle's Protrepticus, An Attempt at Reconstruction," *Studia graeca et latina Gothoburgensia* 12 (1961). Fragment 110, lines 1–4.—ed.]

'For Nous, the intellect, is the god in us' (whether it was Hermotimus or Anaxagoras that said so) and 'Mortal life contains a portion of some god.' We ought, therefore, either to pursue philosophy, or to say farewell to life and depart from it, since all other things seem to be great nonsense and folly.[21]

[21] See Kaspi, *Maskiot Kesef* ed. Salomo Werbluner (Frankfurt, 1848; photomechanical reproduction, Jerusalem, 1961), on *Guide* II, 12, p. 98:
כי השכל הוא האל והאל הוא השכל ואותו השכל האישי הפרטי שבראשינו בפועל לכל איש ואיש ממנו, הוא המשכיל והמשגיח בפרטי ענינינו ומאורענו וינהיגנו בטוב ההנהגה עד שיגיע היותר שלם למדרגת משה רבינו, ולכן יקרא [איש] אלהים [כי] האלוה היה בתוך ראשו תמיד על יותר שלמות שהיה אפשר, רצוני כח אלוהי, ואין הבדל בין אמרנו האלה או כח האלוה, אחר שאותו כח הוא שכל והאל הוא שכל.... ויהי דוד בכל דרכיו משכיל וה' עמו (א' שמואל י"א י"ד), כי ה' הוא שכל גמור וכ"ש הוא מים נגרים ממקורו והוא מימיו והוא שכלו והוא הוא.
["For Intellect is God, and God is Intellect, and that individual, particular intellect which is in our heads and is active for each and every person is the intellecting subject which has providence in our particular affairs and events, and directs us under good direction so that the most perfect man may arrive at the level of Moses our master. Accordingly, [man] is called "God" (*Elohim*), [since] divinity is always in his head in the most perfect way possibly—I mean, divine power <is in his head>; but there is no difference between our saying "divine" or "divine power" since power is intellect and God is intellect.... "And David acted with intellect in all of his ways and God was with him" (Samuel I, 18:14), for God is entirely Intellect, and all the more so is It water that flows from His source, which is His waters, which is His Intellect; they are one and the same."—ed.]
[Under this, Motzkin wrote the following calculations:]
(146) עולם (31) אל (26) יהוה (342) בשם = 545
(191) הפועל (355) השכל = 546
[These calculations indicate that the numerical value of the quote from *Genesis* 21: 33 that opens the *Guide*, "In the name of the Lord, God of the World," is one less than the numerical value of the expression, "The Active Intellect." Note that at *Maskiot Kesef*, p. 101, Kaspi says that in order to understand the expression אל עולם, "God of the World," one should examine Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ.—ed.]

CHAPTER TWO

HALEVI'S KUZARI AS A PLATONIC DIALOGUE

Article[1]

I

The recent publication of the first satisfactory edition of the original Arabic text of the *Kuzari* provides us with the opportunity to reread one of the most notable books of the twelfth century, and to reconsider some of the perennial problems the *Kuzari* articulates.[2]

II

Since the *Kuzari* is a dialogue, the first question that needs to be resolved is the mutual relations of the views of the Ḥaver, the Jewish rabbi who is the main interlocutor, and those of the author of the dialogue. Any assertion about Halevi's philosophic—or anti-philosophic—positions necessarily presupposes at least a tentative resolution of this problem. This quandary is analogous to the problem of the relationship of the

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[1] [Originally published in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 9 (1980): 111–24.—ed.]

[2] *Kītāb al-radd wal-dalīl fī al-dīn al-dhalīl (al-kitāb al-Khazari)* (the book of reply and demonstration in regard to the despised religion), ta'lif R. Yehudah Halevi, ed. David Hartwig Baneth, text emended by Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1977). Baneth published a few hundred invaluable emendations to Hirschfeld's *Editio princeps* (in which the book is entitled *Kītāb al-hujja wal-dalīl fī naṣr al-dīn al-dhalīl* [the book of proof and demonstration in the defense of the despised religion], [Leipzig, 1887]; reproduced photomechanically, together with critical articles by Goldziher, Horovitz, Efros, Nemoy, Vajda, and Baneth, Jerusalem, 1970) in the *Ignaz Goldziher Mermorial Volume*, part II (Jerusalem, 1958). After Baneth's death in 1973, H. Ben-Shammai was charged with the final preparation of the book for publication. The Baneth-Ben Shammai edition is, as could be expected, definitive. A random scrutiny of a number of problematic locations in the text demonstrates conclusively the superiority of the present edition. This is hardly surprising: Hirschfeld's edition is chock-full of errors in copying the text, errors of judgment, and plain misprints. Regrettably, Baneth's edition is not preceded by an analytic introduction of any kind.

Socrates who appears in Plato's dialogues and the author of those dialogues. As for Plato and Socrates, one may say that hardly anyone asserts today the identity of Plato's teaching and that of the central character of his dialogues. This is the case even if we believe that Plato was more or less "Socratic" only in his "early" dialogues; and it is certainly so if we believe Plato's *Second Epistle*, addressed to Dionysius.[3] After attempting to explain to Dionysius why he, Plato, never wrote (that is, why one should not write) philosophical treatises, for the more rarefied the discussion, the more ludicrous would the vulgar find it—Plato declares that there does not exist (nor will there ever exist) anything written by Plato himself, and that all writings that bear his name were born or generated of a young—or new—and beautiful Socrates.[4] In other words, Socrates of the Platonic dialogues is not, nor is he meant to be, the historical Socrates, but rather the philosophical Socrates, Socrates as he should have been, the ideal Socrates, the "idea" of Socrates, which is of course always "young and beautiful," and does not "become old," that is to say, does not become corrupted, nor withers away forever.[5]

Unfortunately there are no epistles by Judah Halevi in which he explains either his method of writing or his aims.[6]

The problem of Plato-Socrates and its parallel problem of Halevi-the Ḥaver are not presented here as historical riddles. Beyond the question of the similarity or dissimilarity of Plato's Socrates to Socrates,

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[3] Second Epistle, 314 a–c.

[4] οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν τὰ γραφέντα μὴ οὐκ ἐκπεσεῖν. διὰ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πώποτ' ἐγὼ περὶ τούτων γέγραφα, οὐδ' ἔστιν σύγγραμμα Πλάτωνος οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔσται, τὰ δὲ νῦν λεγόμενα Σωκράτους ἐστὶν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος.

[5] See *Second Epistle* 314 a–c; cf. *Seventh Epistle* 341 c.

[6] About Halevi's views of writing in general, cf. II, 72 ff. Halevi calls our attention to the fact that this book is "sealed" and enigmatic at the very outset (I, 1), where he quotes from Daniel 12:10, "and the wise shall understand," thereby also pointing at the immediately preceding verse, "for these things are closed up and sealed, without end." Indeed, there is no need to pile on proofs in order to demonstrate that Halevi and his "spokesman" are not identical, for Halevi in his introduction to the dialogue clearly says: *wa-kāna min ḥujaj al-ḥavēr mā aqnaʿani*, that is, "there were among the Ḥaver's proofs some which persuaded me"; in other words, there were among the Ḥaver's proofs those that did not persuade him and that are not in accord with Halevi's views. Clearly then Halevi and the Jewish rabbi are not to be confused with each other. Cf. Leo Strauss, "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Henceforth: "The Law of Reason") (Glencoe, Il.: Free Press, 1952), p. 101, n. 17. Albeit these words of Halevi solve our problem for all practical purposes, I believe it is useful to broaden the discussion in order to clarify further Halevi's tendency as well as the perennial conflict of philosophy and religion.

son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, who was born in 469 and died in 399 B.C.E.; and beyond the historical questions that the text of the *Kuzari* calls forth, there is the problem of the philosophical interpretation of the text. We can hardly attempt a reconstruction of Plato's or of Halevi's thought unless we have at least a tentative solution to the problem of the identity, or lack of identity, of Socrates and the Jewish Rabbi with the authors of the dialogues in which these two appear as the principal characters. As for Plato, we are fortunate in having his own testimony. Even if we would not subscribe to the authenticity of the *Epistles* (skeptical critics of the *Epistles*, most certainly of the *Second Epistle*, are getting ever fewer), Plato's dialogues themselves furnish us with firsthand testimony of his own views regarding this question, usually implicitly and by way of allusion, but at times quite explicitly.[7] As for Judah Halevi, there is no comfortable solution to the problem posited. The aim is to revive the discussion of this problem, and to demonstrate the inadequacy of the usually accepted answer.

III

That Halevi was intimately conversant with Philosophy has been noted more than once. No philosopher could have represented philosophy better than Halevi in the first speech of the *Kuzari*. Halevi demonstrates in this speech that he knows the works of the *falāsifa*, the Aristotelians who wrote in Arabic, to the core. He repeatedly shows, both in this speech as well as in a number of other speeches in the *Kuzari*, that the philosophic approach, the views of the philosophers, are hardly foreign to him, or, as has been noted, that there was at some point in his life, a "philosophic period."[8] The philosopher opens his presentation of philosophy to the Khazar king with the word *laysa*, *i.e.*, "there is not." Halevi knows full well that the beginning of philosophy consists in a tearing down, in the assertion that "what people say isn't so," or, if you will, that "what we are told is not so."[9]

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[7] Cf., *e.g.*, *Phaedrus* 275d.

[8] Cf. Salo W. Baron, "Yehuda Halevi," *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1951): 259, n. 33.

[9] Compare the opening words of the Ḥaver, "I believe," which are identical to the opening words of the Christian. The Muslim begins his speech with the word "we." The Khazar king asked the Christian and the Muslim to tell him about their "knowledge" and their "action," whereas from the philosopher and the Jews he wishes to learn about their "belief." Cf. "The Law of Reason," p. 104, n. 25. (And indeed

Now, what is the significance of the contention that Judah Halevi had been a philosopher "at some point"? It is true that Al-Ghazzali, for example (there is no difficulty in noting some apparent parallelisms in Al-Ghazzali and Halevi, although their similarity is often overstated), relates that he had decided to "pursue to the end all that these sects [or schools] contain"—including philosophy. Nevertheless, one may reasonably conclude on the basis of his various writings, including his autobiography, that he had not considered himself a philosopher at any time. Can we maintain with an equal degree of certainty that the same was true of Halevi? The situation of Halevi was perhaps analogous to that of Augustine, who was the first to be confronted with the problem of an accommodation or a "harmonization" of philosophy and a monotheistic religion. But whereas Augustine, who refrains from identifying himself with philosophy, "uses" philosophy, Halevi holds the view that an amalgam of religion and philosophy is undesirable. A "philosophic" religion will persuade neither the king nor the multitude, and a religious "philosophy" is not philosophy, for it is neither autonomous nor discretionary. Shall we content ourselves with pointing at the "constant presence of philosophy in the thought of Judah Halevi" and the "apprehension that Judah Halevi had on account of this (presence of philosophy), lest it shake his *Weltanschauung* to its foundations,"[10]

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i'tiqād, belief, is a homonym. Cf. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* I, 50). Otherwise stated, the philosopher is asked about his belief and answers "there is not"; the Jew is asked about his belief and replies "I believe."

[10] Cf. Shlomo Pines, "On Leo Strauss" (in Hebrew), *Molad* 7, nos. 37–38 (1976): p. 457. Pines' contention cannot be lightly dismissed. As Max Beerbohm noted in his *Happy Hypocrite*, "his true person slowly adapted to the make he had put on for purposes of duplicity." (I am quoting from Daniel Patrick Moynihan's citation of this in *A Dangerous Place* [Boston: Little, Brown 1978], p. 167) Indeed, persuasion, while not impossible, is difficult without commitment to the cause one is pursuing. But that is begging the question, which is, What is the cause? One may be just as truly committed to a "necessary opinion" as to a "true opinion." Be that as it may, one can imagine that a view presented as one's own—having been chosen as a lesser evil—becomes as attractive to oneself as it is meant to be perceived by the world at large. The question then would have to be restated as follows: Would Pines argue that one's own notion of the shortcomings of one's professed views or ideology becomes in time completely obliterated, and may no longer be found lurking, as it were, in the shady recesses of one's soul? Let us take Maimonides as a case in point. Pines does not take issue with the view that Maimonides had a double teaching. In fact he considers this view of Maimonides a "glaring" truth, and indeed Pines contributed no less than anyone else to making this reading of Maimonides just about the rule among respectable scholars. Now Maimonides spent the major portion of his adult life serving as the chief rabbi of the Jewish community of Egypt, and writing, first a comprehensive commentary on the Mishneh and then a complete rewriting of the Oral Law, his *Mishneh Torah*.

as if he were a Rabbi Naḥman of Braslav? Is there no intimation that Halevi might not have been as artless as he may seem?

IV

Judah Halevi initiates this book by his retelling of the events that had prompted the Khazar king to start out on his search for a way to please the God whose angel had appeared to him in a dream. The God informed the king that "his intention is commendable but his deeds are blameworthy." And, in fact, religion is first and foremost "deeds," actions, and not "thoughts" or theory. *Lō hammidrāsh hū hā-ʿiqqār ʾelā hamaʿāseh* (action, not study, is the [essential] principle)—this maxim cited in the *Ethics of the Fathers* is a fundamental precept of any religion, an axiom or tendency that points to the gulf separating religion from philosophy.[11] Indeed, the king finds it impossible to acknowledge the truth of the philosopher's speech, for the philosopher does not point at any operative way of fulfilling God's demands, which were revealed to the pagan king in his dream. Nor can the philosopher be of any help if the Khazar's aim is restricted to the attempt of placating the dream's God. From the standpoint of philosophy one can hardly distinguish Christianity from Islam, and for that matter, there is hardly any distinction between these two religions and any other monotheistic religion. All "actions," that is, for the purposes of this discussion, all

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Very few thinkers or philosophers devoted as much time or energy to the promulgation of their exoteric teachings. If in Pines' view Maimonides' true opinions were not overcome by his "necessary opinions," why would he have us believe that the opposite was or is the case with the other thinkers? Is it because they were lesser in stature? For surely Pines does not contend that Maimonides was exceptional in this respect. Since Pines recommends that we honor Strauss by treating him in a similar way, we may ask whether it is Pines' considered view that Strauss' thinking was overcome by what Strauss said explicitly—either about medieval philosophers or about contemporary ideologies, institutions, regimes, countries. If Pines would answer in the negative, then I think he should elaborate on his *prima facie* not unreasonable contention that the mental habit of putting on a mask becomes (second) nature; we would be well-served if Pines would point out which thinkers—he obviously has some in mind—lest their adumbrated and inner teachings slip further and further back into total darkness and abnegation.

[11] See Chapter 9: Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion and Chapter 10: On the Interpretation of Maimonides: the Cases of Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Haʿam. Cf. S. Pines, "Notes sur la doctrine de la prophétie et la réhabilitation de la matière dans le *Kuzari*" ["Notes on the doctrine of prophecy and the rehabilitation of matter in the *Kuzari*"], *Mélanges de philosopie et de littérature juives* 1 (1957): 253.

the various forms of worship, are of no consequence.[12] This is not to suggest that the philosopher does not pray, offer sacrifices, or engage in any other form of public worship. However, the philosopher offers sacrifices because he views these actions as a civic duty: the philosopher who is about to die remembers that he "owes" a cock to Aesculapius.[13] It is in no way a philosophic duty. Nor does philosophy prescribe any actions at all, excluding those actions that are indispensable for the sustenance and consummation of philosophy, and for the material (in the widest sense of the word) well-being and undisturbed intellectual activity of the philosopher.[14]

The pagan king possesses healthy instincts, and he has a compelling common sense. To be sure, this dialogue begins with a personal religious experience, as non-philosophic as can be imagined. Just the same, the king does not allow himself to be hoodwinked. Furthermore, it is not the Ḥaver but the Khazar who is in charge of the discussion; it is the king who decides which arguments are convincing and which are not; it is the pagan who determines who is to get the floor; and he is the one who cuts off the speaker once he decides that he has to yield the floor. Moreover, the Khazar king decides when a subject matter has been exhausted and it is time to pass on to another. This is so not only in the beginning of the discussion (as for example in a number of Plato's dialogues, in which Socrates seizes the reins only at a later stage of the dialogue), but throughout the book.[15] The logographic necessity is clear; for the king's conversion is the ultimate proof (inherent in the dialogue) of the eternal truth of Judaism.[16] If, however, it is

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[12] See *Kuzari* II, 49. Cf. III, 65, end ("four entered the orchard…the third etc.).

[13] [See Plato, *Phaedo* 118a—ed.]

[14] Cf. *Kuzari* IV, 19: "fa-intajaw al-nawāmīs wa-hiya siyāsāt ghayr lāzima lākin mustathna bihā illā in kānat ḍarūra" ("and they [the philosophers] established laws, these being however non-obligatory ways of behavior, to be applied only when necessary"). And further "moreover they are not of the opinion that if they be robbers or murderers they would be punished on account of it." Cf. S. D. Luzzatto, "The Writing of the Mishna and Maimonides," (in Hebrew) in *Meḥqere Hayahadut* (Warsaw: Hatsefira Press, 1913) Vol. 1, Pt. 2, Bk. 4, p. 168. See Chapter 10: On the Interpretation of Maimonides: the Cases of Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am.

[15] This is a "true Socratic dialogue." Cf. S. Heller-Wilensky, "The Relationship of Faith and Reason according to Judah Halevi" (in Hebrew), in *The Philosophic Teaching of Rabbi Judah Halevi* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1978), p. 44. Heller-Wilensky notes further that "Halevi decries blurring the bounds of…religion and philosophy…" Cf. Baron, "Yehuda Halevi," *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1951): 257.

[16] On the other hand, one should keep in mind that four-fifths of the dialogue, that is to say almost all of the *Kuzari*, takes place *after* the conversion of the Khazar king to Judaism, which took place some time before the second part of the book. In

the Khazar king who determines verities, then the Ḥaver, and Judah Halevi, must *nolens-volens* acknowledge the actual existence of a natural good, autonomous of any ethnic, religious, or national belonging—for the king is not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[17]

Let us consider the discussion between the pagan king and the Jewish rabbi beginning in I, 44 and ending, it seems, in I, 68. In this discussion the king interrogates the rabbi about Jewish chronology or chronometry, and this discussion naturally leads to the question of whether the universe was created in time or is eternal. After some general discussion in which the Jew becomes for awhile the one who questions and the pagan the one who answers,[18] the king confronts the Ḥaver with the following difficulty: How can you claim that our universe has been in existence for only a few thousand years, when we possess the testimony of the people of India that there are in their country ancient remains (*athār*) and monuments, which clearly substantiate (*yuḥaqqiqūn*) the allegation that these monuments were erected many thousands of years before? The rabbi cannot come up with a credible reply, and so he is compelled to use the basest of *ad hominem* attacks, he is constrained to denigrate the credibility of all the people of India: the Indians are an "*ummah sā'ibah*," a licentious nation.[19] One should pay no heed to what Indians say, for they wish only to provoke. To be sure, the Ḥaver himself cites the pre-Adamites who are mentioned in the book of Nabatean Agriculture, and Halevi thus quickly disabuses us of the notion that he believes the rabbi's answer to be persuasive.

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other words, the greatest part of the *Kuzari* is a dialogue between two Jews, one of whom is, to be sure, a perplexed Jew. Against this background it becomes clear why the philosophic discussion *tout court* is delayed until part V of the book: as much time as possible passes after the king's conversion.

[17] Cf. Pines, "Notes sur la doctrine de la prophétie," p. 254.

[18] For another instance in the dialogue in which the Jewish rabbi is the questioner and the Khazar king answers cf. I, 71ff. The king is the first to mention "nature." The Jew does not know what nature is. He knows of course only about "the heavens and the earth and all that is between them": there is no "nature" in the Bible. The discovery of nature is the discovery of philosophy; with the birth of the concept of nature, the "way" of the cosmos, philosophy is born.

[19] And not as Even-Shmuel translates, *umma she-ein 'immah masoret*, that is, a nation having no tradition. Cf. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes* (Leiden and Paris: Brill and Maisonneuve, 1927), vol. ii, p. 711: al-mar'ah al-sā'ibah: une femme qui ne se garde pas elle-même et qui n'a personne pour la garder…sā'ibah: une chose qui est commune et publique, qui est en friche; rélâché; trop libre. Cf. A. de Biberstein-Kazimirsky, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français* (Cairo, 1875), vol. ii, p. 643, def. 3: *Esclave affranchi- anta sā'ibah: tu es libre*. In other words, sā'ibah means licentious woman or a liberated slave, or if you will, in modern parlance, a liberated woman.

Says the Khazar king: had you said that I am piling on proof originating with "the people who walk in darkness" (*ʿāmmah dahmāʾ*), *your answer would have hit the mark* (*fa-aṣabta al-jawāb*) [italics mine].

The Khazar king does not permit the rabbi to persuade him by vilifying the Indian nation *in toto*, and he implores the Ḥaver to try and counter the philosophers' assertions by rational argumentation. And what does the rabbi come up with? The philosophers are all Greeks, and are not of the sons of Shem (Semites), and thus have no received tradition, which is *the only testimony* one can rely on. Furthermore, their philosophy is pirated from the Persians, who appropriated theirs from the Babylonians (who plagiarized the Indians?). The proof: no philosophers arose in Greece before the Greeks came into contact with the Persians, nor after Rome conquered Greece. The king shows quite clearly that this answer is acceptable, and we find it difficult to believe—having come to respect Halevi's intellectual stature—that Halevi was persuaded by arguments that he himself notes are unconvincing. Does the rabbi's polemic succeed in showing that Plato's or Aristotle's teaching is in error or devoid of any merit? The *Kuzari* does not inform us of something that was well known to Judah Halevi, who was, as we noted, well versed in Greek philosophical literature: it neglects to mention that the Greek philosophers held the view that they owed more to the Egyptians (sons of Ham) than to any other barbarians, Babylonians or Persians not excluded. Be that as it may, the Khazar king is compelled to cut off discussion of this topic (I, 68). All of the Jew's arguments are, as was pointed out above, *ḥujjaj muqniʿah*, rhetorical proofs, and do not suffice to confound the king. Should the pagan decide, after all, to continue and seek the Ḥaver's company (*wa-ʾin tālat ṣuḥbatī laka*), he would at that time demand that the Jewish rabbi supply him with demonstrative proof (*ḥujjaj qāṭiʿāh*).

Thus we learn that Judah Halevi allows that the Jew's thesis, the dialectic of the best possible spokesman for Judaism that Halevi can fashion, is problematic. Now Halevi's critique of the Jewish rabbi is not analogous to Plato's critique of philosophy. Halevi's critique of his so-called spokesman, however, is not rooted in his religion, his *ummah*. Plato may take issue with Socrates and with Socrates' apology, with Socrates' defense of philosophy, for the success of Socrates' defense before his judges is not unequivocal, even were we to believe Socrates when he avows that he wishes to die and prefers death to exile. As for Socrates, he has reached ripe old age, and thus one may say he has already "lived philosophy." But it is neither expedient nor fitting

that every future philosopher would "live philosophy" in an identical way, and here we come upon the crux of Plato's critique: Plato himself wrote with the view of the hemlock before his eyes, as Lessing noted.

This is not the case with Judah Halevi. The rabbi succeeded in his mission; that this is so we learn both from the *Kuzari* as well as from historical sources. What speeches should Halevi make the Ḥaver utter? Has Halevi one convincing logographic motive that would explain away the obstacles he continually throws in the Jewish rabbi's path? We are forced to conclude that Halevi cannot but let us know that the Ḥaver is not his spokesman, that he and the Jew are not one. We permit ourselves to say then that Judah Halevi is marching to the beat of a different drummer.[20]

Let us return to the question of Plato and Socrates. No one would gainsay that Plato is not Socrates, and that Plato holds the view that the position of Socrates and his way of life are inadequate, as Al-Farabi has already pointed out. Plato thinks that Socratic ethics must be rooted in Timaean metaphysics on the one hand, and protected by Thrasymachean politics on the other. The ethical philosophy of Socrates requires the political philosophy of Plato. Be that as it may, Plato's reservations in relation to his chief spokesman are not extra-philosophic, as we noted above. Could anyone contend (as some do regarding Halevi) that having been stung by that gadfly Socrates and having contracted the fever of philosophy, Plato can return to be what he had been prior to that sting? Would we be content to maintain that this left him with but a faint mark?

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[20] According to *Kuzari* V, 14, the philosophers excelled in human wisdom: "naʿam annahum faḍḍalū bil-ḥikmah al-insāniyyah." Halevi quotes Socrates twice (cf. IV, 13). It ought to be noted that even when Halevi points out in IV, 13 the profound mutual antagonism of religion and philosophy and their essential polarity, his critique of philosophy is limited—like Maimonides' critique—to metaphysics, and is predicated on the multiplicity of philosophic (metaphysical) points of view. He does not "blame" the philosophers: "fa-annahum yuʿadhdharūn"—it is possible to make an apology for them. It may not be accidental that he uses this word in proximity to the name of Socrates. Be that as it may, Halevi disregards the multiplicity of points of view on "human wisdom or the human science." Compare I, 13 where it is said that there is not one proposition about which the philosophers concur with I, 62, where he contradicts this assertion. It is only the philosopher's first speech that the king finds convincing. He says (I, 2): "*qāla lahu al-khazarī inna kalāmaka lamuqniʿ*…" (said the Khazar [king to the philosopher]: your words [or: speech] are convincing). No such encomium is offered after the Christian's speech ("your speech is illogical"), the speech of the Moslem, nor even the Jew's presentation: his first speech is fiercely attacked.

Again, once we perceive that Judah Halevi is aware of the limitations of all standpoints represented in the *Kuzari*, it seems that we have to reflect upon the significance of this awareness. For an awareness of the limitations of any philosophic position, or even of philosophy itself, of the search after human wisdom as such, is not extra-philosophic. Philosophy indeed demands just that: that its own premises do not escape the scrutiny of any of its serious students. However, an awareness of the limitations of any religious position necessarily casts suspicion on any critic of religion who possesses such an awareness. The standpoints of the Christian and Moslem scholars are also presented equably by Halevi, but it is clear from his scathing critique of both Christianity and Islam (and there the Khazar king is Halevi's spokesman) that neither of them is considered by him to be plausible. But what about philosophy, which was rejected at the outset? It becomes clear that it is philosophy—which the Khazar king rejected because it dismisses the notion that dreams (such as the king's dream) or actions (such as religious worship) have any merit—that leaves the king restive, and he returns to it again in the fifth part of the *Kuzari*.[21]

V

A central issue in the *Kuzari* that may aid us in our attempt to determine Judah Halevi's tendency or aim is the problem of knowledge. Does Halevi hold sensual perception or rational knowledge to be superior to the other? A first reading of this dialogue might lead us to the conclusion that Halevi holds sensual perception to be more reliable or accurate. For one thing, the *Kuzari* begins with a retelling of a certain experience the Khazar king underwent, a non-rational experience that occurred in a dream and belongs to the faculty of the imagination. This personal event determines the course of the discussion, it defines at the outset the character of the dialogue. Above all, the dream

[21] All this happens after the indoctrination of the king by the Jewish rabbi throughout the book. Says the king (V, 13): "*arā li-hādhā al-kalām al-falsafi faḍl tadqīq wa-taḥqīq ʿalā sā'ir al-kalām*" (I hold the view that this philosophic speech is more excellent in precision and accuracy than all other speeches). The Ḥaver knows it full well: "*wa-hādhā alladhī kuntu akhāfahu ʿalayka min al-inkhidāʿ*"—this is exactly what I feared will be tempting to you! No religion, certainly not the Kalam nor even Karaism, can be tempting. Philosophy is the real fruit of the tree of knowledge, the only perilous temptation.

experience tips the balance in determining the outcome of the first encounter between the king and philosophy.

The view that Halevi held the testimony of the senses to be superior to that of reason may be further buttressed by citing the words of the king in IV, 16: It has become clear to me what the difference is between *elohim* and *adonai* [both signifying God, the latter sometimes translates as Lord], and I have come to understand how great is the distance between "the God of Abraham" and "the God" of Aristotle: for the Lord (Adonai) on high is longed for by men who have perceived him by the senses, on the basis of an eyewitness (*yatashawwaqu ilāyhi shawqan dhawqan wa-mushāhadatan*), whereas logical reasoning leads to a predilection for God (Elohim). In other words, religion's God belongs to the sensitive soul, or if you will, to its passionate part. The God of philosophy dwells in the domain of rational, intellecting soul. On which side of the fence would we find Judah Halevi? Does Halevi prefer "taste" (sentiment) or "syllogism" (reason)? The view of all readers of Halevi save one is that the answer is palpably clear and indisputable.

In the center of the longest speech in the *Kuzari* (IV, 3), while he explains the term *adoney ha-adonim* (Lord of Lords), Halevi turns the tables on his apparent viewpoint. The senses have no power to know the essence of things, says Halevi. They have merely the power to know the accidents that the beings attach to themselves. The essence of things and their nature (*'amr*) may only be grasped by sane reason. Whoever has acquired the intellect *in actu* will be able to apprehend the essences and natures of substances. Halevi goes on to describe the relation of the intellect to the senses and to the faculty of the imagination as analogous to the relation of one who sees well to another whose sense of sight is weak. Those who rely on the faculty of imagination (and have trust in the experiences that emanate from the imaginary faculty) are as blind people, who must be steered and guided. Who is to guide them and steer them? He who sees well, who has a powerful intellect, he who has attained the active intellect. These are the words of the *Kuzari* and what follows from them. How are we to resolve this shocking contradiction in Judah Halevi? There are two possibilities, if we assume that Halevi's intellectual powers were no weaker than ours, and that he was therefore aware of at least the elementary contradictions in his writings. The first possibility is to believe that the story of the Khazar king told at the outset of the dialogue and the remarks in IV, 16 represent the standpoint of Halevi, while what the Ḥaver says

in IV, 3 is said for political purposes. The alternative is to reflect upon the possibility that what is said in IV, 3 is in accord with the views of Halevi, whereas the scene that opens this philosophical drama must be interpreted in a way that is at variance with the common interpretation. Unfortunately, we cannot revive the author and demonstrative proof in these matters is impossible. The reader must decide which alternative is more reasonable.

VI

One should not conclude on the basis of what is explicitly or implicitly stated here that we maintain that Halevi would not have uttered the very words the Ḥaver is made to speak if he had found himself in similar circumstances. There is no denying that Halevi's Ḥaver is the best advocate of Judaism that Halevi believed he could fashion, and had Halevi been summoned to the court of the pagan king and had been charged with the task of presenting the case for Judaism, he would have carried his mission as zealously and as ably as his Jewish rabbi. He might very well have started off with a philosopher's speech, although he would have known in advance that it would not have any immediate effect. That is precisely why the philosopher speaks first: he is least satisfactory, assuming the king's quest, and he is farthest removed from Judaism. Christianity is the least satisfactory religion, perhaps also because it has established a certain relationship with philosophy; it is in his reply to the Christian scholastic that the Khazar king first mentions nature and natural philosophy. However, the relationship of Christianity to philosophy is apparently analogous to that of magic to science.

As Christianity is to philosophy, so is Islam to Judaism. Islam shares with Judaism a pristine monotheism. Islam, like Judaism, is a religion centered on the *shari'ah*, the Islamic law, which is analogous to the Jewish *halāchāh*. Just the same, Islam is, as far as Halevi is concerned, "magical," for its greatest *hujja*, or proof for its asserted superiority, is the unique and peerless magic of the words of the Koran.

Why do the philosopher and the Jew never confront each other? If Halevi's intention in the *Kuzari* is to demonstrate the superiority of Judaism, would not a conversion to Judaism of a philosopher, who is a far more dangerous and powerful enemy of religion, be far more convincing than a conversion of the remote mountainous *Kagan Bulus*,

prince of the Khazars? Halevi does not pit the philosopher and the Jew against each other. The king is already religious, very religious, "assiduous in the performance of his duties." Religious princes who dream of angels are the best possible candidates for conversion. A dialogue between the philosopher and the Jew, like Plato's *Philosopher*, does not exist because it cannot exist. Are we permitted to wonder whether it is possible that in such a confrontation it would be the philosopher who would emerge triumphant, and it is the Jew who would be converted to philosophy?[22]

Judaism, according to the Ḥaver, is a religion to which one is born, whereas to be a perfect Jew one must dwell in the land of Israel, for only there can one fulfill all of God's commandments. Indeed the Ḥaver announces in the book's epilogue that he is about to take that necessary step in making his Judaism whole: he is "ascending" to the Holy Land. What kind of Jew would one be who is not a descendant of Shem, and who not only refrains from leaving "his land, his birthplace and his father's house,"[23] but actually endeavors to the best of his abilities to persuade others not to go to the land of Israel? For that precisely describes the position of the Khazar king at the end of the dialogue. He had been a pagan, he had become a Jew, but he never ceased to question. As the book ends, far from being a man of dogma, the king retains his original state of mind, clearly portrayed throughout: open-minded, reflective, seeking, alert, doubting, tenacious. Like a philosopher?

VII

We are compelled to address ourselves to the following question: Why did Judah Halevi choose not to adopt the opinions of the *mutakallimūn*, the doctors of Islamic theology, as Saadia Gaon had chosen to do? For the Kalām is not only a paramount system of apologetics. Nor is it possible to claim that philosophy was unknown to the *mutakallimūn* of Halevi's age. It was unquestionably familiar to the fathers of the Kalām as well as to the founders of Christian apologetics, which served as the

[22] Cf. "The Law of Reason," pp. 104–05.
[23] [Cf. *Genesis* 12:1—ed.]

model for the Kalām.[24] Furthermore, the Kalām allowed for greater variation within its pale than did the Aristotelianism of the *falāsifa*.

This dilemma is reminiscent of our perplexity regarding Maimonides. Many have wondered why Maimonides refused to adopt Plato's views on the question of the eternity of the world or its creation in time, since Plato's position, which was usually culled from the *Timaeus*, may be harmonized without undue effort with the demands of religion. It is equally perplexing to ponder Maimonides' reasons for constantly emphasizing the contradiction between the unadulterated religious dogma asserting creation *ex nihilo* and classic Aristotelianism, which affirm the eternity of the world. As to Maimonides, one can not plausibly maintain that he considered Plato's philosophy to be "intellectually unsatisfactory." It becomes clear, and this has been pointed out before, that Maimonides wanted to exacerbate the essential conflict (in the theoretical realm) between philosophy and religion rather than camouflage it. Every student of Maimonides must therefore consider the question whether Maimonides took this position, and whether he had to take it for exclusively religious purposes, or whether he had other aims that he kept to himself.[25]

There is no escaping a similar conclusion regarding Halevi. Had Halevi's primary intention been to shield Judaism against the specter of philosophy, he need not have restricted himself to the way of the Kalām.[26] If indeed Halevi's principal aim had been to safeguard

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[24] [Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* I, 71.—ed.]

[25] Cf. "The Philosophic Sources of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Translator's Introduction" in Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). See also S. Pines, "Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Maimonides and Kant," *Studies in Philosophy, Scripta Hierosolymitana* 20 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1968): 3–54.

[26] Halevi attacks the Kalām with unparalleled acrimony: The Kalām—"*lā fā'id fī dhālika*"—is totally useless. More than that; "*lam yanfa'hu bal rubbama 'aḍarr bihi*"—the art of the Kalām will not benefit him in any way, and may be of great harm. In "The Law of Reason," especially pp. 99–100, Strauss says that "the explicit aim of the *Kuzari* is identical with the aim of the Kalam." This "explicit aim" makes it possible for Strauss to refer to Halevi (p. 100) as a *mutakallim*. Strauss is not unaware of the *Kuzari's* virulent attack on the Kalām. Strauss' point then must be understood as follows: a dialectic such as the one before us must be either philosophical or theological (belonging to the Kalām). Since "it is impossible to call Halevi a philosopher," we have no choice but to call him a *mutakallim*. Cf. also Leo Strauss, "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1979). Compare what Halevi has to say about philosophy and about the great advantages inherent in it (see the notes above), not only for "*al-taḥadhdhuq fi al-kalām*" ["expertise in *kalām*"—ed.]. Cf. V, 16 and compare also with IV, 13 and V, 14. Furthermore, the first philosophers were of

the humiliated religion, to make the faithful of Israel, and especially the perplexed youth, immune to the philosophic virus, he could have chosen to walk the path the great medieval Christian theologians had paved before him. He could have adopted the way of his celebrated contemporary Peter Abelard. At the very same time that Judah Halevi wrote a dialogue in which a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, a pagan, and a philosopher took part, Abelard wrote his renowned work, *A Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*. Abelard's declared position was that Christianity, which represents pristine truth, encompasses and encloses all other truths. Christianity is of course Judaism refined, but it is also filtered philosophy.[27] Nothing would have

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such exalted rank that one may say of them that "*hā'ulā'i afrād lā maṭmaʿ fi darajātihim*" ["They are unique ones, whose level it is not worth aspiring to reach."—ed.].

[27] Petris Abelardus, *Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*, ed. Rudolph Thomas (Stuttgart-Bad Constatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag—Gunther Holboog, 1970). A comparative study of Abelard's *Dialogus* and the *Kuzari*, properly done, would surely prove fruitful. Unfortunately, the study of A. Graboïs, "Un chapitre de tolérance intellectuelle dans la société occidentale au XII^{e} siècle: le Dialogus de Pierre Abélard et le 'Kuzari' d'Yehuda Halevi," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* 546 (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1975): 641–54, falls far short of the mark. Graboïs may be excused for lack of philosophical insight, for as he says (p. 653), "*je suis historien*" ["I am a historian"—ed.], but not for shoddy scholarship, as when he makes the title of the work read "*kitab al-khogue v'al-dalil*," thereby revealing his lack of ability to handle the text; or when he asserts that the dialogue precedes the conversion of the Khazar (p. 644), whereas four-fifths of the dialogue takes place after the king's conversion; or when he states that Halevi's method of pitting against the king one interlocutor at a time who is never heard from again follows Plato's style (p. 644); or when he says that a doctrine of free will is fundamentally opposed to "the monotheistic conception" (p. 647). It is to his admitted "non-philosophic" training that we must attribute his unsuccessful attempts to struggle with the text, as when he gives up trying to reflect upon the absence of a dialogue between the Jew and the Christian in Abelard's *Dialogus* by leaning back on the hypothesis that the *Dialogus* is "incomplete" (p. 650). The thought that a confrontation between the philosopher and the religious (whether Christian or Jew) is more revealing than a confrontation between a Christian and a Jew, whatever the historical or social circumstances of Abelard's time were, never seems to have crossed his mind. He apparently believes that Halevi's rabbi's position is less "*juridique*" than the one of Abelard's Jew, but that strange notion is not substantiated, unless the characterization of Spanish Judaism as "literary and poetic" is to be taken as proof (p. 651). Abelard's *Dialogus* is considered proof of "permanent" and "profound" contacts between Jews and Christians of "urban society," and of "intellectual circles" in Paris, where Jews and Christians (and presumably philosophers) discussed the principles of their faiths (p. 652).

All of the above purports to serve as materials for a theory of a liberal climate, of "intellectual tolerance," and of an "open society" in the twelfth century. That some twentieth-century scholars are quick to parrot slogans of the age is hardly proof that great minds of the twelfth century did the same. Greater profit might be gained from Rudolf Thomas's paper in the same volume, "Die Persönlichkeit Peter Abaelards in

prevented Halevi from asserting, just as his contemporary the Bishop of Chartres—John of Salisbury—did, that the philosopher is a lover of God;[28] or to describe Moses, as Thierry of Chartres, another contemporary, did, as a divine philosopher.[29]

The best solution to the challenge posed by philosophy would be from the standpoint of religion the subordination of philosophy and its domestication, its transformation into a tame, harmless, and perhaps even a serviceable animal in the palace of the mistress theology.[30] The philosopher—or philosophy—is indeed a dangerous wolf of the steppes,[31] its nails are barbed, its teeth incisive. But philosophy may be trapped and caged. It is possible to dull the teeth of the Epicurean,

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Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaem et Christianum und in den *Epistulae* des Petrus Venerabilis: Widerspruch oder Übereinstimmung" ["The Figure of Peter Abelard in *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian* and in the *Letters* of Petrus Venerabilis: Agreement or Disagreement"], pp. 255–69, and especially p. 269, n. 61 and the following citation: "desideravi, intellectu, quod credidi.… Ich schweige ja nicht in meinen Gedanken, selbst wenn ich mit dem Munde schweige.…" ["'I have desired with my intellect that which I believed.'…I am not silent in my mind, even when I am silent with my mouth.…"—ed.].

[28] See John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, VII, V, 646a. For example, in *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policratici sive De Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum*, ed. Clemens C. I. Webb (London, 1909; reprinted Frankfurt A. M.: Minerva, 1965), vol. ii, p. 109.

[29] "Philosophus divinus." See Thierry de Chartres, *De sex dierum operibus* in J. Hauréau, *Notices et extraits de quelques manuscrits latins de la Bibiothèque nationale* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1890), vol. i, p. 62, where Moses is also called the wisest of philosophers, *prudentissimus philosophorum Moyses*. See also Edouard Jeauneau, "Un représentant du platonisme au XII^{e} siècle: Maître Thierry de Chartres," *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, Mémoires* 20 (1954): 5, where Thierry, no less than William of Conches or Abelard, is quoted as attributing to Plato knowledge of the Trinity. Cf. also J. M. Parent, *La doctrine de la création dans l'école de Chartres*, Publications de l'institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa, VII (Paris: J. Vrin, 1938), p. 80, where Parent quotes from *De sex dierum operibus*, in which Thierry identifies the holy spirit with Plato's world soul. One might perhaps also mention that the commentary *Librum hunc* found Thierry's doctrine equivocal and couched in "reprehensible language."

[30] Cf. Ramon Lull, *Declaratio per modum dialogi edita contra aliquorum philosophorum et eorum sequacium opiniones erroneas et damnatas a venerabili patre et domino episcopo Parisiensi: seu liber contra errores Boethii et Sigerii*, in Otto Keicher, *Raymundus Lullus und seine Stellung zur arabischen Philosophie, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters* (Münster i. W., 1909), vol. vii, heft 4–5.

[31] The solitary (*al-mutawaḥḥid*) is indeed dangerous, above all *because* he disengages himself from the general run of men: he commits heresy by dissenting from the dogma that is at the root of every nation, every religion, every society. The philosopher is always "the solitary," even when he engages in the political life of his people. See IV, 18–19: every anachoretic man is considered to be a philosopher. Cf. III, 1: solitary, certainly, but apparently not always. Without the company of young men, whom he loves more than anything else, and with whom he can trade in his ideas, the philosopher can not exist.

the wolf, to trim his nails, and to transform him into a superior watchdog, obliging and tame, an accommodating and faithful servant, who attacks only when ordered, and only the enemies of the nation and of religion.

This solution was adopted, more or less, by the Christian West, and Judah Halevi, whose mastery of philosophical as well as apologetic Christian literature is unquestionable, was no doubt familiar with it. Nonetheless, he himself chose not to adopt it.

The reason for this is that Halevi was convinced that castrated philosophy is not philosophy, and that the true philosophy as it appears in the writings of the classical philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, will always be a challenge to religion. As a prerequisite to our resolution of the problem we posed about Judah Halevi's genuine position must come our answer to the question whether Socrates' dictum about the identity of knowledge and the good is indeed true. In other words, every reader of the *Kuzari* must address the question of whether true knowledge necessarily implies the true way of lie. A positive reply to this question would require a re-evaluation of the book before us.

CHAPTER THREE

MAIMONIDES AND THE IMAGINATION

Lecture

I

In the *Tanbīh*, Or *Nota Bene* (Pines translates this as "A Call Upon the Reader's Attention"),[1] appended to the 10th premise of the *Mutakallimūn* (which is in chapter 73 of the first part of the *Guide*), Maimonides says as follows:[2]

> Know, you who reflect on this treatise [*i.e.*, the *Guide*], if you are one of those who know [*ʿalima*], the soul and its faculties and who has establish the truth of everything [in the way] [*wa-taḥaqqaqa kulla shay'in ʿala ḥaqīqat wujūdihi*], that it truly is [exists], for indeed, you already know that the imagination [*al-khayyāl*] exists in most animals. As for the consummate animal, I mean one that has a heart, it is clear that it has imagination.
>
> [You also know that] man is not distinguished by having an imagination. The activity of the imagination is not [identical with] the activity of the intellect, nay, it is its contrary. That is [because] the intellect takes complex [composite] things apart [*i.e.*, analyzes], makes its parts distinct, abstracts them and represents them as they truly are and through their causes. It [the intellect] apprehends very many notions from one thing, as different for the intellect as the different existence of two human individuals for the imagination. Through the intellect, a universal notion is distinguished from an individual one. No demonstration can be validated except by means of universals, and it is through the intellect that essential predicates are singled out from accidental ones.
>
> Imagination [continues Maimonides] has nothing to do with all of this, for imagination apprehends only the totality of a composite individual as apprehended by the senses, or else it combines things separate in existence, combining some with others. [It can only do it] with a body or a bodily function, *e.g.*, as he who imagines an individual man

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[1] [Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 209–12.—ed.]

[2] [Although Motzkin frequently gave the highest praise for Pines' translation of the *Guide*, the quotes he gives here and in most of his works are his own translation.—ed.]

> whose head is the head of a horse, and who has wings, and the like. This is what is called contrived and false, for it does not correspond to any existent at all.
>
> For the imagination cannot be liberated from matter and its apprehension, even if it totally abstracts from a certain form. Thus there can be no reflection to imagination.
>
> Listen up [*isma*ʿ] to how the mathematical sciences have benefited us, and how great in import are the premises that we have taken over from them.
>
> Know, but there are things out there [Maimonidean *thamma*] which, if a human being turns them over [*iʿtabarha*] in his imagination, he would not be able to represent them to himself in any way. He would, on the other hand, find that imagining them is impossible, just as a conjunction of two contraries is impossible.

Maimonides continues by providing us with two examples, one having to do with the Earth being a sphere. As a consequence we imagine that a human being standing in the Southern Hemisphere would fall off the Earth. The second example is taken from Apollonius of Perga's *Conic Sections* (II, 13), where the concept of a limit is delineated. This cannot be imagined, says Maimonides, or, to use contemporary parlance, it is counter-intuitive.

Maimonides goes on:

> Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that something which the imagination posits with certainty [considers as necessary], namely, that God is a body or a force in a body, is impossible. In the imagination there exist only bodies or bodily things. So, it is now clear that there is out *there* something else through which we consider the necessary, the conceivable, and the impossible. It is *not* imagination. What a beautiful insight this is, and what a great advantage it has for him who wishes to regain consciousness [*ighmāʾ*], by which I mean, from being attached to the imagination [*iqtidāʾ bil-khayyāl*].

Further down, Maimonides continues:

> Look now, and consider, you who reflect. What came up is a way to a profound insight and it is this: there are certain representations. Now, one person claims that these are intellectual representations, while another says that they are imaginary representations. What *we* want is to find something which would distinguish for us intelligibles from imaginings.
>
> If the philosopher says, as indeed he does: reality [*al-wujūd*] [existence] is my witness, and it is through [reflecting on] it that we examine the necessary, the conceivable and the impossible—the adherent of the Law would say to him: this is precisely the issue: *we* claim that this existence is a function of will and is in no way requisite [intrinsic]. Now if

> this be the case, it is quite conceivable that it would have been made differently, unless intellectual representation has a cutting proof that the different existence which you are asserting is inconceivable.

Maimonides continues:

> I have some words to say about this whole issue of conceivability or admissibility, and you shall hear them in various passages of this treatise. It is not something which should be lightly dismissed.

So much for Maimonides' *nota bene*. Having paid attention to his *tanbīh*, let us note what he says in Part I, Chapter 47. I take it up *in medias res*:

> Just as the failing [defect] of the imagination [*naqṣ al-takhayyul*] is obvious, and the defect [failure] of reflection [speculation] [*tafakkur*] and understanding [*tafahhum*] is not obvious.

Imagination is a defect or even a failing for two reasons: one, it is *creative*, *i.e.*, it makes up something, makes up in the sense of the phrase "you are making it up." Two, it leads one away from the domain of abstract entities. The tendency of the imagination is to *supplant* reflection or intellection. The two cannot peacefully coexist. Either mysticism or philosophy, but not both. Or for that matter, we may recall the words of Socrates in the tenth book of the *Republic* (607b):

> μὴ καί τινα σκληρότητα ἡμῶν καὶ ἀγροικίαν καταγνῷ, ὅτι παλαιὰ μέν τις διαφορὰ φιλοσοφίᾳ τε καὶ ποιητικῇ.
>
> …in order that she [poetry] does not level against us the charge[3] that we are sklerotic [harshness] and rubes [rusticity], [we remind her] that there is a discord as of old between philosophy and poetry [*i.e.*, between wanting to know and between making up, between truth and fantasy].[4]

II

This *tanbīh*, or *Nota Bene* of Maimonides, is inserted at the end of Maimonides' discussion of the tenth premise of the *Mutakallimūn*, the men of the *Kalām*, the dialectic theologians of Islam. Maimonides' object in this section of the *Guide*—and implicitly throughout the *Guide*—is to demolish the *Kalām*'s version of the attempt to harmonize

[3] Think of the trial of Socrates.

[4] [Motzkin translation.—ed.] Cf. I, 2, the discord between scripture and history and poetry.

reason and revelation. What is so objectionable about the *Kalām*? Does not the *Kalām* use Greek logic and some other philosophic arts in the attempt to accomplish what so many have seen to be the central project of Maimonides? Is the *Kalām* not successful in foiling the attacks of the philosophers against revealed religion, be it in Christianity—as in Philoponus—Islam, or Judaism? What explains Maimonides' unbridled hostility to the *Kalām*? If indeed Maimonides set out, as is so often claimed, to harmonize reason and revelation, or philosophy and theology, by dulling the teeth of philosophy and perhaps by amending it in order to make it more palatable, *i.e.*, more useful to theology, the *Kalām* would seem to have offered a perfectly acceptable solution. And yet Maimonides slashes into the *Kalām* with unparalleled vigor. It might even appear that the real adversary is not philosophy. And that is very odd.

Now the heart of the *Kalām*'s argument, or as Maimonides calls it, the pillar of the *Kalām*, is precisely that *intellect* and *imagination* are indistinguishable. What the *Mutakallimūn* call intellect, *'aql*, includes the imagination, just as the term "mind," in contemporary philosophical parlance, includes the affections and, in fact, the imagination.

What makes this issue crucial is that the identification, or lack of distinction between, intellect and imagination is destructive of any independent principle of validation, from which it follows that it is destructive of any principle of an independent reality, or simply put, of nature. There is then no nature. We can no longer speak of the *way things are*. What the *Mutukallimūn* seek, of course, is to defend the concept of divine omnipotence, and they believe the concept of divine omnipotence would in the last analysis be untenable if we posit anything besides arbitrary or even capricious divine will, *i.e.*, if we posit natural causality, that is to say, nature as such. Intellect is nothing but the essence, the kernel, or the form of nature, and practically speaking, we validate rational discourse by an appeal to nature. It is this appeal to nature which the *Mutakallimūn* take it upon themselves to demolish. Now the *Mutakallimūn themselves* agree, as Maimonides points out in his discussion of what he calls their "tenth premise," that some things are impossible (such as a substance having no accidents, or substance becoming accident and vice versa), etc. These latter are impossible because they are *unimaginable*, because we cannot *fantasize* them. For these theologians, the appeal to fantasy is legitimate, because it does away with, it replaces, the appeal to nature. Philosophy stands or falls by the distinction between the natural and the unnatural, not to speak

of the distinction between the natural and the artificial, the natural and the conventional, and, of course, the natural and the supernatural. Philosophy is coeval with the discovery of *nature*, nature as the way things are, the way things always *were*, and the way they always *will be.* The intellect, or at least the human version of the intellect, is what nature stands for. It is what corresponds to what exists, *yuṭābiq al-wujūd*. Claims the *Kalām*: since there *is* no nature, apart from God's arbitrary or capricious will, there is no intellect *strictu senso*. There is only "whatever comes to mind," and the distinction between intellect and fantasy or imagination is specious. *Now* the question which we posed, to wit, what is Maimonides trying to do, becomes sharper. Let us pose it somewhat differently: in whose name is Maimonides stepping into the breach?

However we answer that question, it is clear that Maimonides is, as is his wont, pointing out the chasm between *Kalām*, or dogmatic theology, and philosophy.

III

Now, Maimonides' source on the things of the imagination is not Plato, nor the school of Plato, early or late. His sources are Aristotle's treatises on psychology, especially Περὶ Ψυχῆς, the inquiry about the soul.

[What there is to say] about the imagination is not clear, says Aristotle (414b16), perhaps as imagination itself is ἄδηλον; it obscures rather than makes clear. But when the time comes he takes the bull by the horns—imaginatively. In 427b15ff. Aristotle says: Imagination [φαντασία] is different from perception [αἴσθησις] and thought [διανοία], although imagination always *implies* perception in the Περὶ Ἐνυπνίων, *On Dreams* (499a17), he contradicts this when he says τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ αἰσθητικῷ τὸ φανταστικόν, the imaginative and the sensitive, *i.e.*, the aesthetic, is one and the same thing. However that may be, Aristotle is quick to emphasize that whereas imagination is an affection, a πάθος, dependent on our will—we can summon it whenever we want to—ὅταν βουλώμεθα. But in matters related to the domain of noesis [νόησις], of intellection or of hypolepsis [ὑπόληψις] (conception or judgment) *necessity*, rather than will or personal preference, reins; within *that* domain one may either lie [ψεύδεσθαι] or tell the truth [ἀληθεύειν].

Apparently, whereas imagination does not lie, neither does it tell the truth. We shall return to this never-never land lying beyond truth and lying later on.

Noein [νοεῖν], thought, or thinking, belongs to a different domain, for it is other than αἰσθάνεσθαι, other than perceiving or sensing.

Aristotle continues (*On the Soul*, 428a) by distinguishing further between imagination and, in turn, sensation [αἴσθησις], opinion [δόξα], science [ἐπιστήμη] and intellect [νοῦς].

Sensations are ever true (sic!) but φαντασίαι, imaginings are mostly false [αἱ πλείους ψευδεῖς]. And, *a minoris ad majorem*, [קל וחומר], if imagination has little in common with sensation, it has nothing in common with science (knowledge) and intellect. They are *always* true. But what of opinion, δόξα? Aren't opinions sometimes true and sometimes false, *just* like imagination? However, opinion implies belief [πίστις], belief implies persuasion [πεπεῖσθαι], and persuasion is accompanied by a λόγος, a rational discourse.

Beasts have imagination, not a rational discourse. This is how Aristotle downgrades the imagination: it is what we humans have in common withwild beasts, and furthermore it is (429a5ff.) the activity of human beings when they *are* like beasts, which have no mind (μὴ ἔχειν νοῦν), or when their mind is temporarily clouded over by emotion [πάθει], sleep [ὕπνῳ], or disease [νόσοις].

For that matter, says Aristotle in Περὶ Ὕπνου καὶ Ἐγρηγόρσεως, *On Sleep and Waking* (457b26), falling asleep creates ἐκνοία a state of mindlessness, and as a result of this, imagination. That is to say, when the brain is rinsed of νοῦς, of mind, of intelligence, imagination fills the void. Imagination sneaks into the void of empty minds.

So much for Aristotle's imagination.

That Maimonides adopts Aristotle's theory of imagination *in toto* has been made, I believe, clear. For Aristotle, the declaration that the imagination is not an ability, let alone a virtue, an ἀρετή, but a disability, a handicap, presents no problems. What about Maimonides?

Fantasy, or imagination, is the domain of poets, not philosophers. It is, however, according to Maimonides, also the essential attribute of prophets. Let us then repair to what Maimonides has to say about prophecy and prophets.

IV

Maimonides treats of prophecy and prophets primarily in Part II of the *Guide*.

Now of course it can be asserted that Maimonides treats prophecy throughout the *Guide*. Is not the whole *Guide* really an attempt to explain away certain difficulties in scripture, or otherwise put, is not the *Guide* nothing but an exegetical work on some passages in certain of the books of prophecy? In fact, that is precisely what Maimonides himself tells us: the *Guide* is an attempt to elucidate the passage from a prophetic book of *the*, let us tentatively say, Prophet Moses (*i.e.*, Chapter 1 in *Genesis* which Maimonides calls the Account of the Beginning, or *Maʿase Bereshit*) which could in fact be translated as, "How the world was worked out to be what it is" and two passages from the prophetic books of Ezekiel (and perhaps also of Isaiah) known as *Maʿase Merkavah*, commonly translated as the Account of the Chariot (which could be translated as "the workings of the [divine] chariot").

Be that as it may, a central portion of the central part of the *Guide* is specifically devoted to the question of prophecy itself. Now we may note in passing that the first part of the *Guide* is, on the whole, Maimonides' lexicon, his analysis of terms, his setting down of categories and acceptable modes of hermeneutics, and his discussion of those he considered to be the sophists of the day, the men of the *Kalām*. It includes his definitive treatment of imagination, of poetry and of rhetoric. The topics discussed and their order of treatment, I think by now it is clear, is analogous to Aristotle's *Organon*. Part I is Maimonides' "Logic." Part III begins explicitly with the *Maʿase Merkavah*, the discourse on God, Maimonides' theology. From there he goes on to the discussion of being *qua* being, being and non-being, the continuity and preservation of the universe (aside from the question of its generation)—which he entitles "providence." Having treated these questions in detail, Maimonides deals with human actions, what human beings should and should not do. Naturally, ethics here takes the form of the discussion of the divine commandments. From there Maimonides goes on into what he calls his conclusion, but which begins with a parable of a ruler of a city and ends with a discussion of, *inter alia*, *mishpat*, judgment. This is Maimonides' political science.

I think by now it is fairly clear: Part III of the *Guide* follows the traditional order of the second half of the Aristotelian Corpus, from *Metaphysics* to *Politics*. We are left to point out what Part II of the *Guide*

is analogous to, and Maimonides' Introduction to Part II sets the tone: Part II is nothing but Maimonides' physical treatises, his *Physics*, his *De Caelo*, and finally his *De Anima* and the *Parva Naturalia*.

It is in this context that Chapters 32–48, the final third of Part II, the chapters that treat of prophecy, must be read. Just as Maimonides' Angelology is part of his discussion of Celestial Mechanics, so his prophetology is part of his discussion of psychology and its major components, corollaries and appendices.

As Aristotle devotes the greater part of Περὶ Ψυχῆς, *On the Soul*, to the delineation of intellect, sensation and imagination, so does Maimonides. Having made clear in Chapter 32 of Part II that his prophetology is far more akin to the naturalistic prophetology of the philosophers than to the view common to the pagans as well as to the general run of Jews [*ʿawamm sharīʿatina*]—according to which anyone whom God so chooses can be a prophet, without regard to his qualities of mind or soul—and after claiming that he will not touch either explicitly or implicitly (*lā bi-taṣrīḥ wa-lā bi-talwīḥ*) upon the prophecy of Moses (and then proceeds to discuss exactly that for a whole chapter), Maimonides defines the essence of prophecy in Chapter 36.

About Moses, Maimonides constantly refers the reader to his codex, his *Mishneh Torah* or *Duplication of the Law*, his own *Deuteronomy*. Why does Maimonides assert that the prophecy of Moses is not to be discussed in the *Guide*, not even, or primarily not under the rubric of prophecy? It is because Moses, "the Lord of the Prophets," [*sayyid al-anbiyāʾ*] is not himself a prophet? Maimonides says Moses' prophecy can only be termed prophecy *bi-tashkīk*, that is to say amphibolously. Let us merely remark that *tashkīk* is a term normally reserved by Maimonides to distinguish the human from the divine.

However that may be, Maimonides informs us that prophecy is an emanation originating in God through the mediating agency of the intellect working through the reasoning faculty first, after which it arrives at the faculty called *mutakhayyila*, the faculty of fantasy or imagination.

All prophecy is a dream, except that prophecy is a mega-dream, 60 times a dream, to be precise (B. T. *Berakhot* 57b—a dream is one-sixtieth of a prophecy) or in Maimonides' own words: *ʾinnama yakhtalif bi ʾl-akthar wa ʾl-aqall*—the difference between dreaming and prophesying is quantitative, not qualitative.

This mega-dream, this prophecy, is a psychosomatic condition dependent on mental, emotional and physical sanity, which depression

or idleness preempt. It is for this reason that prophecy ceases to occur during times of national depression, that is to say, during time of exile.

Is prophecy then not only naturalistic but in fact materialistic? Maimonides appears to maintain that intellectual perfection is dependent on a prior moral perfection, and that moral perfection and intellectual perfection both—both being prerequisite to prophecy—are in the final analysis inconceivable without bodily perfection. Does Maimonides seriously suggest that matter reigns supreme? If that were the case, would Maimonides be constrained to give matter higher dignity, or are we compelled to conclude that that which is more fragile has higher dignity?

Inventors of constitutions are neither philosophers nor prophets. They belong to a special class of human beings which includes, *inter alia*, priests and dreamers of true dreams. Al-Farabi's identification of philosopher, prophet, imam and original constitutionalist (wādiʿ al-nawāmīs)[5] is gone. Does Moses belong to the first, second or third class of emanation-receiver—in other words, is Moses a philosopher, a prophet or a legislator, *i.e.*, dreamer of true dreams, a utopian? More on that below, but we ought to remind ourselves that the chapter in which Maimonides discusses these classes of men, Chapter 37, begins with a summons to consider the *nature* of existence.

Maimonides devotes to the specific topic of prophecy seventeen chapters (Chapters 32–48 of Part II) and Chapter 40 is the very heart of his, if you will, Treatise on Prophecy. In this central chapter Maimonides repeats Aristotle's dictum in the second chapter of the *Politics* that man is by nature political. Now Aristotle maintains that because it is his view that the commonwealth is natural, and for that matter it is his view that the commonwealth or polis is *naturally*, *i.e.*, ontologically, prior not only to every other association, but to the individual human being. Maimonides cannot assert that the *sharīʿah* or the *Torah*, *i.e.*, the divine law which is the constitution of the Jewish Commonwealth, is natural. And so Maimonides will say that the divine constitution "enters into what is natural"—*lahā madkhal fi'l-'amr al-ṭabiʿi.*

In this chapter, contrary to what he maintained before, Maimonides will identify the prophet with the legislator. Prophecy comes only in a dream, through the imaginative faculty, and a prophetic vision is

[5] [See Ch. 1, p. 13, n. 17 above.—ed.]

never a *meeting* with the divine itself: it is an angelic experience—and what an angel is we (and Maimonides) have already noted above.

V

Now the highest, the greatest prophet according to Maimonides, is Abraham; we keep in mind that Moses is not a prophet. Maimonides lists the eleven ranks or degrees of prophecy in Chapter 45 of Part II of the *Guide*, and the *four* highest rungs on the ladder of prophecy are occupied by Abraham. In passing let us remind ourselves that Jacob's ladder had four rungs, on which four angels were constantly ascending and descending, or perhaps I should have said, descending and ascending.[6] Let us also note that the three parts of the *Guide* open with an invocation in Hebrew, *Beshem Adonai 'El 'Olam*, In the name of *the Lord, God of the Universe*. This is a quotation from Abraham.[7] As Maimonides points out, Abraham's knowledge of God was pre-Sinaitic, *i.e.*, it had nothing to do with God's revealing himself in history. Abraham attains whatever knowledge and understanding he had of this divine realm by using his own powers of reflection on the nature of the universe. Abraham's God, then, is not the god of revelation. It is the God arrived at by reason, and He is the God of Reason. Abraham's discourse on God, his theology, is a natural theology. In a word, Abraham is a philosopher.

Now, according to Maimonides (Part III, Chapter 48), Abraham's way to the understanding of the first cause was an obstacle course, the chief obstacle of which was the experience known in Hebrew as the *'Aqeda*, the Binding of his son Isaac, which for various reasons is known in the Christian world as the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, that is to say, of course, the aborted sacrifice of Isaac.

How does Maimonides interpret the story of the Binding of Isaac? It is, says Maimonides, a parable of the eternal battle between intellect and imagination. Love of God is another way of noting the attachment to the life of the intellect, for, in spite of what Shlomo Pines calls Maimonides' "obfuscatory negative theology," Maimonides tells us precisely what God is in Chapter 68 of Part I of the *Guide*.

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[6] [The text of *Genesis* 28:12 has "ascending and descending."—ed.]
[7] [*Genesis* 21:33.—ed.]

On the other hand, Abraham's love for his son Isaac is seen by Maimonides as an expression of our attachment to the activity of imagination.

Let me quote from the Arabic:

> *Li-anna maḥabbat al-umm wa-ḥanīnahā ʿalā-l-walad laysa huwwa tabīʿan li-nuṭq, bal li-fiʿl al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila al-mawjūda fi akthar al-ḥayawān ka-wujūdihā fiʾl-insān.*
>
> For the love of a mother and her longing [or nostalgia, perhaps compassion] for her child is not a consequence of articulated reason; nay, it is a consequence of the activity of the imagination (or, if you like, of the power of fantasy), *which is present* in most beasts *in the same way* that it exists in a human being.

It is only when Abraham is willing to demonstrate his total control, that is to say the total control of reason over the most powerful of emotions, of the most powerful hold that the domain of φαντασία has on us as animate beings, the love of our children—for that matter what we have here is an even more powerful obstacle, an *only* child—it is only then that Abraham is victorious in his quest for the divine, and it is only then that the divine Providence smiles upon him, that *yoshev ba-shamayim yisḥaq*.[8] As to what Providence means in Maimonides, that has to be left for another discussion.

Maimonides makes this a touchstone of the theoretical way of life; complete and constant *binding* of the common human predilection for image, imagery, imagining, imagination.

Chapter I of Part I of the *Guide* is devoted to the distinction between *form* and *image*, between intellectual essence and physical or sensate likeness. He would return to the very same topic in the last chapter of the last part of the *Guide*.

This is what the evil inclination, the *yetser ha-rāʿ* is, and in Part II, Chapter 30, which serves as a preview to what I called Maimonides' treatise on prophecy, he quotes *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 13: "The snake [in Genesis] was the size of a camel, and it had a rider. It is its rider who let Eve astray. The rider was of course Satan." In Chapter 30 Maimonides hints at, but does not explicitly say: the snake, *i.e.*, Satan,

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[8] ["He who sits in the heavens shall laugh," from *Psalms* 2: 4. Maimonides quotes the first part of this quotation, *yoshev ba-shamayim*, "He who sits in the heavens," in Part I, Chapter 11 as an example where *yoshev*, "sits," means "unchanging." How an unchanging God could "laugh" must be included in the discussion of Providence that Motzkin leaves for "another discussion."—ed.]

is imagination. It hits us from below, it takes a bite out of our heel, our very lowest part, the part of the body farthest removed from the seat of the intellect. What is incumbent upon us is to shatter its head.

In order to be able to enter the divine realm and to contemplate it, we must, at the very least, bind our materiality, if not shatter its head, for the imagination that attempts to rule over the intellect is its intended murderer.

VI

Let us return to the degrees or ranks of prophecy. Abraham's prophecy is the highest, or as we pointed out, the highest *four* categories. On the fifth rung from the top stand Isaiah and Micah. On the sixth (counting from the top or from the bottom) stand, in Maimonides' words, most prophets. Ezekiel on the seventh, below most prophets. The name of Moses is only mentioned on the very bottom rung. Not that his prophecy, if we may call it that, is of that range, but he is mentioned only together with those on the bottom, the judges, and earthly rulers such as Samson, Joseph and the like.

These are hardly prophets. They are political leaders. So Moses is as far removed from the rest of prophets as can be. He is both above and below them at the same time. He seems, in some ways, to be everywhere at the same time. Now the only beings which can be everywhere at the same time are, strictly speaking, nowhere. They are disembodied. They are separate substances. The only separate substances are God and the angels, the angels of the spheres and the series of descending intellects, culminating with the νοῦς ποιητικός, the active intellect, the intellect which makes or creates the sublunary sphere. Aside from his political function, such as that of Samson or Joseph, does Moses stand for something else?

This is the greatest riddle of the *Guide*. Who is this Moses, who does not possess, apparently, the power of imagination and is thus able to speak to God face to face, that is to say, to live the life of intellect constantly and without interruption?

It has been pointed out by others that the power of the imagination makes it possible to communicate with the multitude relative to time and place. That is the key word, relative. The prophecies of most or almost all prophets are variable and may be abrogated. Not so the words of the master of the religion, of the almost divine maker or

founder of the commonwealth. His words, his λόγοι, are not fused, they are not tinted or tainted by imagination, and so they are not relative to time and place, but absolute.

The only other kind of human being who is unimaginative, that is to say, who does not fantasize, is the philosopher.

The supremacy of the law of Moses to the prophecy of all other prophets or, to put it in other words, of the eternal law or order of things, to the dream-like visions of the prophets of the ages which followed is and must be a fundamental principle, a fundamental religious or political principle. But there is something else here to which Maimonides alludes.

Remembering the ranks of the prophets, we should have been astonished to discover that the prophet Ezekiel stood on a rung lower than almost all other prophets. Now we recall that Maimonides says at the very beginning of the *Guide* that his intended topic or subject matter of the *Guide* is "The Account of *the Beginning*," and "The Account of the Chariot." As we mentioned before, Maimonides identifies "The Account of the Beginning" with *al-ʿilm al-ṭabīʿī*, that is to say physics, and he identifies "The Account of the Chariot" with *al-ʿilm al-ʾilāhī*, *i.e.*, the divine science, or metaphysics. Now The Account of the Beginning is part of the Law of Moses, and according to Maimonides, Moses heard it directly from God. The Account of the Chariot is part of the prophecy of Ezekiel, one of the least of the prophets. In what way is physics more dignified than metaphysics?

Maimonides says it elsewhere explicitly: physics, that is to say, the science of the sublunary sphere, is a demonstrable science, completely and absolutely accessible to human reason. Metaphysics, the science of the superlunary spheres, is a dialectical or probabilistic science. To the extent that Maimonides is an Aristotelian, he cannot but give the nod to the apodictic over the dialectic.

I will not go so far as to say as, for example, Pines does in "The Limits of Human Knowledge according to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja and Maimonides," that Maimonides considered metaphysics impossible. I treat this topic elsewhere.[9] For our purposes, suffice to say that there is a world of difference between asserting that something cannot be known in every detail and the assertion that something is of no use. Perhaps the contrary. The classical philosophers, and there is some

[9] [Cf. Chapter 12 of this volume.—ed.]

reason to believe that at least in this respect Maimonides can be counted among them, were of the view that the most exalted topics are not, indeed cannot, be in plain view, and that it is their semi-concealed semi-revealed nature which makes them the most worthy of our attention.

At the same time there can be no doubt that Maimonides held the view that the workings of this world, human and physical, can be validated. The workings of the world of the heavens and that which is above the heavens, celestial mechanics and divine knowledge, well, he would say, what the best human minds, *i.e.*, the Greek philosophers and especially Aristotle, said about them is more respectable than what others have said, and yet we cannot, we human beings cannot ever be sure.

There remains the task of establishing the relationship of the intellecto-imaginary visions of the prophets to the Law of the Intellect in act, I mean to the Law of Moses.

In Maimonides' words—almost—the word of the prophets, of any prophets of the past or of any prophets of the future, must be judged according to their harmony with the words of Moses, with the Law. As long as the imagery of the prophets is ancillary to the eternal truth of the Law it is licit. A prophet yet to come who will deny or contradict even an iota of the Law must be, *per definitionem*, judged a false prophet. In other words, *Imaginatio ancilla rationis est*.

This is of course reminiscent of Plato's account of the relationship of philosophy and poetry, to which we alluded in the beginning of this paper. We cannot go into it in detail, but Plato, who rejected poetry primarily because it does not point to the best human way-of-life, tried and perhaps succeeded in inventing philosophical poetry, a poetry ancillary to philosophic ends. A poetry which is protreptic to philosophy and only a poetry which is protreptic to philosophy is licit.

I believe it is from Plato (*Republic* X, *Laws* III, etc.), that Maimonides learned about the proper relationship between poetic visions and the law of men and of nature, and it is in accordance with this understanding that Maimonides' teaching of image and of imagination, of poetry and of prophecy, can best come to light.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELIA DEL MEDIGO, AVERROES AND AVERROISM

Article[1]

It is almost a hundred years since the publication of Hübsch's study, *Elia Delmedigo's: Bechinath Ha-Dath und Ibn Roschd's: Façl ul-Maqâl*. Hübsch was the first to note del Medigo's dependence on Averroes' treatise. By juxtaposing the two texts Hübsch demonstrated conclusively that del Medigo's treatise is remarkably similar to the *Façl al-Maqâl* in plan as well as in argument. Hübsch did not think his thesis needed further buttressing. He believed, and I think quite rightly, that by reproducing the text he could rest his case.[2]

There have been others, not many, who studied del Medigo's *Beḥinat Hadat* or *Examinatio Religionis*.[3] Unfortunately, no one has relied on the extant manuscripts: to this date all have depended on Reggio's 1840 edition, in itself a poor copy of the *editio princeps* of Basel, printed in 1629. And no one compared *Beḥinat Hadat* to del Medigo's other writings, all in manuscript.

Almost all who have studied del Medigo speaks of his "Double Truth" theory, a theory usually believed to be one of the more distinctive features of Averroism. Guttmann's argument is even more peculiar: while denying to Averroes himself a double truth theory, he asserts that del Medigo nevertheless was a support of the theory of double truth.[4]

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[1] Originally published in *Italia* 6 (1986): 229–236.

[2] Hübsch, "Elia del Medigo's: Bechinat ha-dath, und Ibn Roschd's: Façl ul-Maqâl," *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 31 (1882): 555–463 and 32 (1883): 28–46. Cf. N. Golb, "The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' Faṣl al-Maqāl," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 25 (1956): 93–94. *Beḥinat ha-Dat* was published with introduction and commentary by J. J. Ross (Tel Aviv: 1984).

[3] See, *e.g.*, Bohdan Kieszkowsky, "Les rapports entre Elie del Medigo et Pic del la Mirandole," *Rinascimento* 4 (1964): 41–90.

[4] J. Guttmann, "Elia del Medigo's Verhältnis zu Averroes in seinem *Behinat Ha-Dat*" in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams*, (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion, 1927).

In a recent study, D. Geffen claims that Del Medigo supported what he calls a "variant" of the theory of double truth, although his argument, a restatement of his doctoral dissertation is not very clear.[5]

I have recently prepared an edition of del Medigo's *Beḥinat Hadat*.[6] In connection with this edition I have studied del Medigo's other works and I have found occasion to re-examine the problem of "Averroism" in general and of del Medigo as an "Averroist" in particular.

I

I should like first to discuss Averroes' text, then del Medigo's *Beḥinat Hadat*. The nature of Averroes' views, and of Del Medigo's acceptance or rejection of these views will thus, I hope, be made clearer. What does Averroes explicitly say?

> If the apparent meaning of Scripture conflicts with demonstrative conclusions, that is to say, whenever Faith, or Revelation, conflicts with Reason, Revelation must be interpreted allegorically.[7]

Two things stand out clearly:

1. It is Faith, Scripture, which is brought into line, "reinterpreted." Not once does Averroes call for a "reinterpretation of demonstrative conclusions," that is to say of philosophy.
2. There is no theory of Double Truth in Averroes.

On the face of it, Averroes is arguing before the tribunal of religion that philosophy has a right to exist. In reality, however, he is doing something altogether different. He enthrones philosophy and dethrones religion. It is the strictures of Faith that must now stand before philosophy, before "demonstrative conclusions", whenever the preaching of practices of the former contradict human, *i.e.* philosophical reason.[8]

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[5] D. Geffen, "Insights into the Life and Thought of Elijah Del Medigo," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 41–42 (1975): 69–86.

[6] [This edition was never published, but is complete and can be found among Motzkin's unpublished papers.—ed.]

[7] Averroes, *Kitāb Faṣl al Maqāl*, ed. George F. Hourani, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1959), p. 15.

[8] Ahad Ha'am believed that he had caught Maimonides doing the very same thing. He says: "Maimonides would not and could not attempt to compromise, to harmonize

Now, if reason, or philosophy, can arrive at the truth directly, then those who possess it can dispense with Scripture, *i.e.* faith. Could one say, then, that philosophers are essentially irreligious? Whatever the answer to this question, while Averroes finds Revelation superfluous for himself, he considers it by no means superfluous for the community of non-philosophers.[9] The great majority of mankind, "those who are fated to walk in darkness" (*Haʿam ha-holkhim ba-ḥoshekh*)[10] and are not guided by the light of reason either in their intellectual life, such as it is, or in their moral habits, are emphatically in need of religion.

The philosopher is conscious of the needs of the community, even if the community is heedless of the needs of its most excellent members, and, for that matter, even if it is not aware of its own needs. It would thus be unconscionable for the philosopher to bring about the demise of religion in any way, and so the caring philosopher takes great pains to preserve and buttress religion and even to improve it, to fashion it in the image of natural religion and of the philosophic ethic. The following quotation from Averroes makes this clear:

> Generally speaking, philosophers believe that the [religious] constitutions are necessary political arts, whose principles are based on reason and on the Law, especially those principles which are common to all religious constitutions… They further believe that there is no need to raise objections to these general principles whether by a positive or by a negative statement, such as, are we obliged to worship God or not? Or even a greater question, does God exist or not?… And in general, since they lead to wisdom in a way common to them all, the (religious constitutions) are in their view obligatory, for philosophy only leads a singular intelligent person toward the knowledge of happiness, and it is

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philosophic truth and religious truth. Every compromise entails a concession on both sides, and whoever believes, as Maimonides did, that the attainment of truth by demonstrative methods is the end of man and the only path to his ultimate, eternal felicity, can never concede a particle of that truth to satisfy another lesser truth, supported solely by tradition. And so Maimonides had perforce no alternative: he had to subordinate religion *in toto* to philosophy's requirements, that is to say, he had to interpret the Law in such a way that it would fit philosophic truth throughout, so that the Law would fulfill the role which philosophy assigns to it". See *Shilṭon HaSekhel* (The Dominion of Reason) in *Hashiloah* 15 (1905): 85–90. Reprinted in *Kol Kitve Aḥad Haʿam* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1954), p. 361. Cf. Chapter 10: On the Interpretation of Maimonides: the Cases of Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Haʿam.

[9] This is seen even by those who do not assert Averroes' radical philosophic stance. See George F. Hourani, *Averroes On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: E. J. W. Gibb Mermorial Trust, 1961), p. 26.

[10] Cf. *Isaiah* 9:1 and Maimonides, *Guide*, Introduction.

> then his role to study wisdom and the religious laws, in order to teach the vulgar in a general way.[11]

Religion fulfills a double function: It satisfies the needs of the various classes or ranks of non-philosophers for a likely explanation of the fundamental questions, for indeed, all men by nature desire to know.[12] *By nature desire*: to the extent that *convention* allows them to, to the extent that it has not put impassible roadblocks in their paths. By *nature to know*: as much as their *innate capacity* allows them to.

But in the realm of practice, to which religion essentially belongs,[13] theory (or what substitutes for it) takes a back seat. The main function of religion is to regulate public behavior,[14] to oversee the common welfare. The philosopher is in a way a member of the community; and so his stake in the maintenance of political order which relies on the social tradition that religion is committed to preserve, is twofold. He will hardly desire to bring about the "anarchy and complete confusion" which the abolition of piety would generate.[15] The same anarchy which would make all human activity perilous, would in all probability make the highest human activity, philosophy, impossible.

The two functions of religion are not disjointed: proper practice is built on a foundation of correct opinions. And so the primary theologico-political role of the philosopher is to set down *The Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*. Averroes learned much from Al-Farabi, who first introduced Platonic political philosophy into the Islamic world. Yet Averroes was the more radical philosopher, if at the same time more practically cautious. Al-Farabi may have believed that he had found in Ismaʿili Shi'ism a vehicle for Platonic political philosophy. He believed, as did his great admirer Maimonides, that

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[11] Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, *Dhakhāir al'Arab* 38, (Cairo: Dar al-Maʾarif 1965): vol ii, pp. 866–867.

[12] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a.

[13] Cf. Reggio's commentary to *Beḥinat Hadat* in his edition of Del Medigo's book (Vienna: 1833), p. 37.

[14] There is very little "private" behavior which is at no time exhibited in public; there is hardly any "behavior" which is confined to the individual himself unless he be a hermit. Religion is thus ultimately concerned with regulating all behavior, public or private.

[15] Cf. Cicero *De Natura Deorum* I. ii.4., who continues: "…atque haud scio an pietate adversus deos sublata fides etiam et societas generic humani et una excellentissima virtus iustitia tollatur." ["…and I suspect that turning away from piety toward the gods will entail the disappearance of loyalty and social union among people, and of justice, the single most excellent virtue"—ed.].

the philosopher should actively engage in the improvement of public morals; in other words, he believed in the identity of the terms philosopher, prophet, lawgiver, and *imam*.[16] Averroes would hardly deny the identity of the *true* lawgiver with the philosopher. But Averroes, who lived amidst religio-nationalist fanatics, was not as sanguine as Al-Farabi about the prospects of the philosopher as an *homo politicus manqué*. Averroes' tendency was then to leave religion be, and to carve out for philosophy its own safe niche.[17] It is not difficult to foresee the results. "Unimproved" religion would eventually degenerate into superstition which would then self-destruct. Averroes, seemingly more pious, less wont to tamper with religion, was in effect further removed from religion: he was the more radical philosopher.

It is precisely this attitude of Averroes which gave rise to the strange attribution of "double truth" theory to Averroes and those philosophers who lived between the thirteenth to the fifteenth century and who considered themselves his followers.[18] What does Averroes himself say about the subject? Averroes states quite often that there is a gulf

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[16] Cf. Maimonides' letter to Ibn Tibbon in A. Marx, "Texts by and about Maimonides", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 25 (1953): 378–80. See S. Pines, "Le-Ḥeker Torato ha-Medinit shel Ibn Rushd," *Iyyun* 8 (1957): 68–85, and especially pp. 68–69: "His intention was to teach those who are enlightened to understand from his work that the philosophic state, whose lawgiver need hardly be a prophet, is essentially superior to the most sound Muslim states, and should serve as a paradigm for them." "This passage means, I believe, that in certain states, including those under the Almohads, superior kings may alter in the long run both the actions as well as the beliefs of the citizens in such a way as to transform them into the ideal philosophic states." See also L. V. Berman, "The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy is the Imitation of God" in *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961): 53–61, especially pp. 57–59, and *Encyclopedia Hebraica*, col. 24, p. 557, q. v. "Moses ben Maimon" (philosophic sources of). Del Medigo's political or practical bent may be gauged indirectly from his critique of the Kabbalah and especially of its tendency to alter the heavens rather than human society. See *Behinat ha-Dat*, pp. 12 ff. See also M. Idel, "Ha-Perush ha-Magi veha-Neoplatoni shel ha-Kabbalah bi-tekufat ha-Renaisans" (in Hebrew), *Meḥkerei Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 4 (1982): 60–112, especially p. 76 n. 69, and pp. 89–90, n. 134.

[17] Seven centuries later, after "philosophy" as modern science was on the verge of dealing religion the *coup de grace*, Kant would attempt with a good measure of success the opposite: to carve out of philosophy a safe niche for religion.

[18] "The tendency labeled 'Averroism' in time came to include not only the followers of the explicit doctrines of Averroes but also, and more generally, all philosophers who saw contradictions between conclusions arrived at through reason alone and those imposed by faith and authority." C. J. Ermatinger, "Averroism in Early Fourteenth Century Bologna," *Mediaeval Studies* 16 (1954): 53. For a vivid example one might also refer to the "Averroistic tone" in Dante—see E. L. Fortin, "Dante and Averroism" in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Mediaeval Philosophy—Madrid, 1972* (Madrid: 1979).

separating the few from the many. For the few who are committed to truth and are able to swallow it, truth is like a health-giving medicine; for the many who cannot, truth is like a poison. However, withholding philosophy from the few because it can be harmful to the many is like withholding water from a thirsty person because some people have choked to death on it. The philosopher, the true doctor of souls, decides how much truth he can dispense at any given moment to any specific individual or group. There are those who reside in the happy sunlit isles, the rest in the land of shadows. There is indeed a double teaching. The true teaching for those who can withstand it; for the rest—not the heady wine of truth, but a diluted mixture, to each his specific solution.[19]

The double teaching is necessary both "by nature" and "by art." By nature, because individuals differ from each other, some made of gold, others of baser metals. By art, because ruling conventions render necessary the fabrication of the artifice of a double teaching. But surely the double teaching cannot be presented as a true teaching and a partly true teaching, for in that case it would be self-defeating. The double teaching, that is to say, the true teaching and the circumstantial teaching, must be presented as equally valid. Those who should know, will ultimately be able to separate the wheat from the chaff. For the rest, the true teaching is both unnecessary and potentially dangerous. Those who know will note that while paying due respect to the Law, while appearing to stand in judgment before its bench, the philosopher actually determines the role and value of the Law itself, of religion and of the state in accordance with the supremely valid philosophical criteria.[20]

A double teaching exists. A double truth cannot. For to quote that singular philosopher who was the first to introduce philosophy into a new community and was thus the precursor if not the model for Al-Farabi and Maimonides:

> In the medley of conflicting assertions one thing is certain. Though it is possible that they are all false, it is impossible that more than one of them is true.[21]

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[19] Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, I: 33.

[20] Cf. S. Pines, "Notes on Averroes' Political Philosophy" (in Hebrew), *Iyyun* 8 (1957): 66 (English summary, pp. 126–128).

[21] Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* I. ii.5: "quorum opiniones cum tam variae sint tamque inter se dissidentes, alterum fieri profecto potest, ut earum nulla, alterum certe non potest ut plus una vera sit."

Or to put Averroes himself: *fa'inna 'l-ḥaqq la yuḍāddu 'l-ḥaqq*.[22] Truth cannot possibly contradict truth.

So much for the "double truth" theory of Averroes. This theory would have been less popular with scholars had they not paid scant attention to the only quotation in the *Decisive Treatise*, a verse by ʿImrān Ibn Ḥittān,[23]

> One day a Yamani, if I meet a man of Yaman.
> And if I meet a Maʿaddi, I'm an ʿAdnāni.

It is a charge that Averroes levels at Al-Ghazzali. Could it be that Averroes is trying to convey an additional message through this verse which he inserts into the second, central part of this "long speech"[24] of his?

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[22] *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, p. 14.

[23] See Kamil Mubarrad, ed. W. Wright (Leipzig: 1864–92), p. 532. See below, p. 58, n. 25.

[24] Cf. M. Mahdi, "Averroes on Divine Law and Human Wisdom," in *Ancients and Moderns*, ed. J. Cropsey (New York, 1964), p. 118. The "double truth" theory, then, may be said to refer to the distinction between the abstract or philosophic truth which is attainable by those of an abstract or philosophic bent, and its imitation or image couched in conventional or theological terms. This latter is attainable by the rest of humanity, who are apt to be moved by the devices and contrivances of the imagination. This is a reasonable restatement of the "double truth" theory, but I think it is quite clear that this restatement is not identical to a theory which claims equivalent dignity for sometimes contradictory assertions. The conventional view of the "double truth" theory is found in Stuart MacClintock, *Perversity and Error* (see below, p. 59, n. 27). For a more recent and valuable study of the question, see E. L. Fortin, *Dissidence et Philosophie au Moyen Age: Dante et ses antécédents* (Montreal and Paris: Bellarmin, 1981). Fortin's thesis is captured by his citation of Dante, in *Convivio* III, 10: "E questa cotale figura in rettorica è molto laudabile, e anco necessaria, cioè quando le parole sono a una persona è la 'ntenzione è a un'altra" ["A rhetorical figure of this kind is highly praiseworthy and even necessary, namely when the words are addressed to one person and the meaning to another" (Lansing trans., 1998)—ed.]. Cf. David B. Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981), p. 195, n. 83. See also E. Gilson (see below, p. 59, n. 27) p. 59: "Ces philosophes n'enseignaient aucunement qu'il existe deux vérités simultanées et contradictoires" ["These philosophers do not in any way teach that two contradictory truths exist simultaneously"—ed.]. It is clear, continues Gilson, that the very reserved attitude of a Siger de Brabant was imposed on him by what Gilson calls "his circumstance" (p. 60). Cf. p. 61: "Pour eux, comme pour Averroès, il n'y a qu'une seule vérité, et c'est la vérité de la philosophie… La religion présente cette même vérité sous la forme grossière et imagée qui convient à des esprits ignorants, mais le philosophe n'en a que faire, et de lui nous pouvons dire véritablement: *quod nihil plus scitur propter scire theologiam*." ["For them, as for Averroes, there is only a single truth and that is the truth of philosophy.… Religion presents the same truth with the crude form and imagery that is appropriate for ignorant souls, but the philosopher does not care, and of him we can truly say: 'that one knows nothing more by knowing theology.'" Note that the final quote is proposition 182 of 219 propositions condemned by Stephen, Bishop of Paris

II

As we noted in the beginning of this essay, del Medigo's dependence on Averroes was established by Hübsch in 1882. Hübsch showed convincingly that *Beḥinat Hadat* owes both its form and content to Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*, although the former departs from the latter in several instances, none of them crucial to the argument. Del Medigo never mentions in his treatise that he lifted it almost completely from Averroes. One cannot be certain that he was altogether conscious of what he was doing. But del Medigo's aim was in every way identical with that of Averroes: He thought it both unnecessary and counterproductive to rationalize, *i.e.*, to philosophize, religion. He thus finds himself at odds with Maimonides, although he never once attacks Maimonides. On the contrary, he often uses Maimonides' authority to buttress his arguments. In this he differs from Spinoza, who went a giant step further; Spinoza, who came after the advent of modern science, after the victory of the modern enterprise was just about assured, thought religion altogether dispensable and did not hesitate to attack Maimonides directly.[25]

Del Medigo vigorously asserts that he is at variance with many of "the philosophers of our people" because they tried to intermingle theoretical and legal studies, to transfuse religion through the use of philosophy and to attemper philosophy in accordance with the demands of the well-being of the many, that is to say, religion. He believes that no good can come from either immunized religion or adulterated philosophy. The result of the miscegenation of philosophy and religion would be a wretched mongrel; their offspring would not be true "men of the Law" nor certainly true lovers of wisdom.

Of course del Medigo wished to minimize the conflict between philosophy and religion. But he thought Averroes' method was superior to that of Maimonides. His purpose in wishing to minimize the conflict of Faith and Reason is no different from Maimonides. He is just as civic minded as The Great Eagle: he believes that the community will not last long if religion is overthrown, if philosophy or what passes for philosophy manages somehow to subvert or even tamper with

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in 1277.—ed.] Cf. on this A. Ivry, "The Significance of Averroes' Teaching for Jewish Philosophy" (in Hebrew), in *The Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. A. Shinan (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1977), III, p. 322.

[25] Cf. Chapter 9: Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion, p. 123, n. 51.

religion. He recognizes, just as Maimonides did, that religion must rely on unshakable principles.[26] These principles would remain unshakable so long as they would remain unquestioned, that is to say, so long as they do not become the subject of philosophical inquiry.[27] And so philosophy and religion must be totally divorced from each other, lest any harm befall religion.

But there is another reason for the disjunction of philosophy and religion, and it demonstrates that del Medigo is not simply a defender of the faith. Since the principles of the faith cannot be rationally explained, there is a danger that perplexed young men would be led to a rejection of reason, to a rejection "of the intellect and all its activities." That danger is no less disturbing for del Medigo than is the destruction of religion. So philosophy and religion are to be separated from each other not only for the sake of religion, but for a reason that is of at least equal importance: the well-being of the philosophic enterprise.

This posture of del Medigo led a number of scholars, *e.g.* Julius Guttmann, to believe that del Medigo held a "double truth" theory. According to these scholars, philosophy or science may contradict religion or Law, and del Medigo would not find it the least bit disturbing. However, there is not one instance in either *Behinat Hadat* or in any of del Medigo's other writings which substantiates this description of del Medigo's views. What we find in del Medigo is hardly different from what we find in Averroes: truth cannot contradict truth. Can philosophy contradict religion? It may. What are we compelled to conclude? The conclusions are clear, but del Medigo does not choose to drive the point home, for the sake of the *common* good, and for the sake of the *exceptional* Good.

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[26] Del Medigo reduces the number of fundamental principles from thirteen to three, just as Albo before him. They are: God's existence, unity and the principle of creating *ex nihilo*. He derives the rest of the principles of the faith from these. According to Maimonides (*Guide* I, 55–56) these are the roots according to the philosophers.

[27] See Etienne Gilson, "La Doctrine de la double vérité," in his *Études de philosophie médiévale* (Strassbourg: Université de Strasbourg,1921), pp. 60–62: "Si nous comparons les attitudes des ces divers philosophes, ni les uns ni les autres n'ont jamais soutenu la doctrine de la double vérité…peut-être simplement par prudence" ["If we compare the attitudes of these various philosophers, not one has ever upheld the double truth doctrine…perhaps simply on account of prudence."—ed.]

Reggio, in his keen, although uneven commentary on his edited text of *Beḥinat Hadat*, calls attention to del Medigo's way of writing. He says:

> [del Medigo], whenever he discusses a subject which might be a stumbling-block for the many, reveals a little and conceals twice as much, for…had he wanted to demonstrate [what he says]…he would have had to write a very long treatise, which would have been useful for the few but harmful for the community in general.[28]

Reggio clearly sees that del Medigo is after a method which would leave religion intact even when "the things of religion are not in harmony with the ways of reflection."[29] Reggio notes that "this author," namely del Medigo, is constantly on the watch lest interpretations of the wise be made public and thus become a stumbling block for the many.[30] Del Medigo is wary lest he transgress the commandment, "You shall not…put a stumbling-block before the blind."[31] Reggio points out what the stumbling-block is: doubt.[32] Of course, "doubt is the root of all investigation." And so Reggio is astonished to find del Medigo saying that "we men of religion should at no time doubt any of the fundamental principles of religion." Reggio justly notes that doubt is the natural state of mind of any thinking man. Could it be that Reggio does not pay sufficient attention to the phrase "we men of religion"?

Lest we sell him short, let us mention that Reggio exhibits in what follows his awareness that del Medigo makes certain assertions because they have been agreed upon by men of religion. We cannot exclude the possibility that Reggio read del Medigo in the same way del Medigo read Averroes, and Averroes Aristotle. Reggio assumes as a matter of course that del Medigo is an Aristotelian, and he knows what follows, namely the denial of miracles and the reinterpretation of prophecy.[33] Does he only feign astonishment at del Medigo's counting the belief in Reward and Punishment among those beliefs which are "agreed upon" rather than "demonstrated"?

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[28] *Beḥinat Ha-Dat*, cit. (supra p. 54, n. 13), p. 2.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 3. Cf. also Stuart MacClintock, *Perversity and Error: Studies in the "Averroist" John of Jandun*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956), p. 71.

[30] *Beḥinat Ha-Dat*, p. 8.

[31] *Leviticus* 19: 14.

[32] Reggio, *op. cit*., p. 8.

[33] For Reggio, however, one miracle is above all others: the continued existence in exile of the Jewish people for two thousand years in spite of constant harassment and persecution.

For del Medigo, one thing is clear: truth is only that which reason establishes to be so. Del Medigo continually harps on this point. He argues as follows: If religion bids us believe something which is against our better judgment, against the dictates of our intellect, we cannot be expected to accept it.[34] If *our* religion would posit that God is a body,[35] or that one substance can be transformed into another not by way of generation and corruption, *we would not have to obey religious strictures*. In fact, del Medigo continues, he would then recommend the rejection of religion.

But del Medigo does not fear the wrath of God. Was it not God who implanted Reason in us? He would not have done so unless he wanted us to follow Reason. If Reason leads us astray, God will surely forgive us. In fact, He would rather have us err as a result of our having followed Reason, than obey Him irrationally. Furthermore, we would obtain no reward from accepting anything as true "with our eyes closed," having "trampled under our feet knowledge," which is God's precious gift to man.

Del Medigo's attack on the Kabbalah is parallel to Averroes' attack on the Ashʿariyya. In speaking against the Kabbalah (del Medigo was one of the first to attack the Kabbalah) he says explicitly: "We cannot accept anything based on generally accepted opinion and tradition alone, if we find that it contradicts what reasoned argument establishes." And Reggio adds: We are compelled in that case to reinterpret our Divine Law.

But on this point del Medigo contradicts himself and Reggio notices it.[36] There are things, says del Medigo, which are outside the purview of reasoned argument, and yet we are forced to accept them. The

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[34] *Beḥinat Ha-Dat* cit. pp. 11, 14.

[35] From a strictly religious point of view, as del Medigo notes further on (p. 15), the belief in God's innate incorporeality is of no consequence. Note that the roots or fundamental principles of religion admitted by del Medigo are the roots or principles of natural religion, except one. Cf. Reggio's commentary to p. 23, where he calls attention to the difference between *dat*, *Religio*, and *torah*, legislation.

[36] *Beḥinat Ha-Dat*, p. 21: "This author (del Medigo), while being an important philosopher, nevertheless appears in this treatise to tend to both sides (philosophy and religion) and to be riding on top of two horses… while he rejects with his right hand what should be rejected lest his views appear to be the same as those of the ignorant, with his left hand he beckons to himself even what he cannot countenance out of fear of being accused of turning his back on some of the religious things, and that would be a stumbling-block for those of weak intellect; quite possibly he was justified in being afraid of the people of his time and thus he was forced at times to hide his true intention and to pay his respects to those opinions which were generally accepted by the many, in spite of the fact that in his heart he believed otherwise."

emphasis here is, of course, on "we." But there is an additional argument. What is "generally believed" is *in a way* a necessary belief.[37] In what way is it necessary? Is it necessarily true, or necessarily politic? Del Medigo does not clarify his position.

Del Medigo does not tire of repeating one point that should put to rest the claims of those who somehow find in his writings a "Double Truth" theory. He says: "We are in no way compelled to believe in contradictory things nor deny the data of our senses or the postulates of our Reason."[38] For indeed, positing contradictories is equivalent to the rejection of both.

III

We conclude: del Medigo is an Averroist or, more properly, Averroan, in that he follows the teaching of Averroes. He is a follower of Averroes in that he believes with Averroes that Philosophy and Religion should be kept distinct and separate. They should be kept as far removed from each other as possible because "philosophical" religion is as unnecessary to the well-being of the religious community as it is the source of the disintegration of religion. But what is more important to the philosopher, they should be kept apart because "religionized" philosophy is emasculated philosophy; if the claim is made that philosophy and religion teach the same teaching, then religion (or any other reigning ideology), which always was and always will be the more powerful of the two, would eventually succeed in stifling philosophic inquiry as either superfluous or subversive, or (even if it makes little sense) both.

As to the "double truth" theory, it was supported neither by Averroes, nor by del Medigo, nor, we may add, by any other philosopher; to a philosopher, there is only one true science and only one true way-of-life: the love of wisdom.[39]

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[37] *Behinat Ha-Dat*, p. 12, and cf. Reggio *ad loc*. Cf. Ch. Touati, "Croyances varies et croyances necessaries," in G. Nahon and Ch. Touati (eds.), *Hommage à Georges Vajda* (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), pp. 169–82.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 14.

[39] Cf. al-Farabi, *Falsafat Aflātun*, in *Alfarabius, De Platonis Philosophia*, ed. F. Rosenthal and R. Walzer, Plato Arabus Vol. II (London: The Warburg Institute, 1943), pp. 10–12. English translation in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. M. Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969, revised 2002), pp. 58 ff.

CHAPTER FIVE

PADUAN AVERROISM RECONSIDERED[1]

Lecture

On March 30, 1867, Lord John Emerich Edward Dalberg, first Baron and eighth Baronet of Acton, published a two and one-half page article in *The Chronicle* of London on Fra Paolo Sarpi, best known for his *History of the Council of Trent*, and spoke as follows of the subject of his inquiry: "It is now certain he despised the doctrines which he taught, and scoffed at the mysteries which it was his office to celebrate."

Paolo Sarpi marks the end of the [pre-enlightenment period],[2] and there is little doubt that he was one of the most outspoken historians, scientists, and political philosophers of his or any other century. Even so, Lord Acton could say of him that the "exact nature of his religious opinions are still open to controversy…"

Our uncertainty, such as it is, about Sarpi, is no doubt due at least in some measure to his relative obscurity. Sarpi's thought and teachings were eclipsed by those of the preeminent Italian historian and philosopher of the sixteenth century, whose fame or infamy has caused us to overlook Sarpi's more startling doctrines, probably because Machiavelli's teachings present themselves against the backdrop of a city and society notorious for religious indifference and for a refined immorality.

Both Sarpi and his illustrious predecessor, Machiavelli, stand astride that chasm in the history of thought, that radical shift of direction which marks the beginning of what we call modernity. It is the contention of this paper that the thought of the notorious Florentine and his successors which forms the basis of what we refer to as the modern

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[1] [The title for this lecture is probably a response to an essay on Eliah del Medigo by H. Randall, entitled "Paduan Aristotelianism Reconsidered," in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance essays in honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. E. Mahoney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 275–82. While it appears that the lecture was given at a conference, I have not been able to ascertain when or where the conference took place or even what the topic of the conference was.—ed.]

[2] [It is not clear from the manuscripts which period is referred to here.—ed.]

enterprise would have been impossible without the preparatory clearing of the underbrush made by the Italian Averroists and Alexandrists, whose center of activity was in Padua.

Of these, I would like again to call attention to Elia del Medigo, in whose *Critique of Religion* we can see delineated just about every motif of that school of thought which considered Ibn Rushd its guiding light. Although del Medigo's own work is only recently getting the attention it deserves and although I view del Medigo as the connecting link between Averroism and the Florentine milieu which sparked the modern project, many of the propositions regarding the import of Averroes and his school were put forth by intellectual historians and historians of philosophy such as Renan, Mandonnet, Charbonnel, Gauthier, Gilson, Lagarde, Nardi, Dethier, and others. These have been challenged in more recent years by Van Steenberghen, Kristeller, Randall, and MacClintock, among others.

I believe a reexamination of Renaissance Averroism is now called for, and I further believe that an unprejudiced re-reading of both Latin and Jewish Averroists, published and unpublished, will not only support Renan, Mardonnet, et al., but will bring to light the roots of modernity and of the enlightenment.

In what follows I would like to highlight the distinguishing characteristics of Averroism, medieval and renaissance. The necessary conclusions, it seems to me, stare us in the face.

The major enterprise of medieval philosophy, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian, was the attempt to find a safe niche for philosophy in a world which held philosophy as such with varying degrees of suspicion, mistrust, and contempt. In order to assure the success of this philosophic politics, Moslem, Jewish, and Christian philosophers alike engaged in painstaking constructions of complex theologico-political edifices whose primary purpose was to make it possible for Greek philosophy to reach some sort of accommodation with the three monotheisms, to peacefully coexist with the great orthodoxies. For most Jews, Moslems, and Christians, philosophy was stamped with the indelible imprint of paganism, and was thus anathema to them.

Among the Jews the best known practitioner of this reconstructioning was of course Maimonides. His purpose was two-fold, as was his method. On the one hand Maimonides held the view that a restatement or a reworking of the religious law was absolutely needful. On the other hand, those who are serious in their quest for enlightenment, *i.e.*, potential philosophers, must be encouraged in every possible way.

But enlightenment of all those who can and ought to be enlightened is impossible in a public climate hostile to enlightenment, in a community ruled by superstition, *i.e.*, in his words, within a "people walking in the darkness." And so equal energy must be expended in both directions: the encouragement of philosophic speculation, *i.e.*, theory, and theologico-political restructuring, *i.e.*, practice. To say that Maimonides attempted to harmonize enlightenment or philosophy with the general climate of belief or faith is, if properly understood, absolutely correct. Was Maimonides' undertaking ultimately successful? We are not very charitable when we say that it was at least a partial success.

I

It is against the background of the great reformulators and reconstructurers, Maimonides with his *Duplication of the Law* (*Mishneh Torah*), Ghazzali with his *Regeneration of Religious Science*, Aquinas and his *Resumes*, all of whom asserting that they are merely repeating—and summarizing in works considerably more compendious than those they were "duplicating"—it is with these in mind that we must read del Medigo and his fellow disciples of Averroes. Although del Medigo expresses his admiration for Maimonides often and enthusiastically, he parts company with the Platonic Farabism of Maimonides in some crucial respects.

Del Medigo's position, much of it explicitly stated in *The Critique of Religion*, may be summarized as follows: Where a brief argument or a brief statement of a problem and its solution will not suffice to persuade an opponent, not even ten thousand book-carrying camels will do the trick. A man of intelligence recognizes a logical demonstration for what it is, and is thereby compelled to concede to its authority. But if, in del Medigo's words, "a man . . . will not be awakened by what we said in regard to these principles, not even as many books as can be borne by ten thousand camels would suffice for him—speaking to him would be superfluous."

This statement is in fact the very last sentence in del Medigo's short treatise and is far more than a way for del Medigo to bring his work to a graceful conclusion. In it we find encapsulated the core of del Medigo's theologico-political teaching, based on the complete disjunction between the wise few and the ignorant many. By itself, this scheme is neither novel nor startling, but del Medigo draws completely different

conclusions from this view of the human condition, or at the very least he draws conclusions completely at variance with those drawn by philosophers who trace their roots to the Socratic schools, be they Platonic or Aristotelian.

A few words about this position of del Medigo. It is certainly true that it can be ultimately traced to the Platonic corpus, but whereas Plato, whether in the *Republic* itself or in *Alcibiades I* or the *Minos* is sometimes explicit but sometimes oblique in regard to his view of the (absolute) disjunction between philosophers and non-philosophers, and the necessary conclusions which must be drawn from it, del Medigo presents his views with a startling frankness. One can not, *i.e.*, one should not, even try to reveal the true interpretation of scripture, because it would be of enormous harm to the many, but furthermore it will be absolutely useless.

כאשר נגיד אלה העמוקות
כאשר המה על אמיתתם להמון
לא יועיל להם...אבל נזיקם מאד

> If we were to reveal these deep (or esoteric)
> (interpretations) as they are in truth to
> the many, it would be profitless for them…
> we would cause them enormous harm.

And why is that? Because, according to del Medigo, those who follow appearances, who accept the world as well as those things which are highest in it, namely revealed scripture, as they *present* themselves, those for whom the only universe is the phenomenal universe, are human beings only homonymously.

Those who יאמינו דברים כפי פשטם are אנשים בשיתוף.[3] In other words, the many are not even human beings, properly speaking. Again I do not claim that del Medigo is unique in having entertained these notions. Maimonides, and his master Al-Farabi, come perilously close to voicing such sentiments, but with them caution prevailed. And thus caution is both a way of speaking as well as a way of acting. Either way it determined their theologico-political doctrines. If, on the other hand, the many are human beings only homonymously, we need not bother with either the views or the actions such as they are, of any of the brutes, of any of the (other lower) species.

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[3] [Those who "believe things according to their simple meaning" are "human beings homonymously."—ed.]

Del Medigo further argues, sometimes explicitly, mostly implicitly, as follows: the ignorant many will in any case hold fast to whatever views and actions are dear to them, because the many are, to use Aristotle's attribute in the *Rhetoric* (although there he refers to a different human group) "inconclusive."[4] For Aristotle, "inconclusive" refers to the inability to appreciate necessary conclusions for what they are and to change one's views accordingly. And so for del Medigo. But Plato, Al-Farabi, and Maimonides each engaged in what he considers to be a sham exercise. Even a worthy set of popularized views and values is bound to degenerate, and all caricatures are in the final analysis identical.

Whether this is a fair summary of the position held by all Averroists I am not ready to say. But certain it is that this is the position carved by del Medigo. It certainly bears more than a coincidental resemblance to the classical Averroistic double-truth posture, a posture which Gilson, refers to as not more than a posture of double talk.[5] Be that as it may, let us continue to follow del Medigo's line of reasoning.

The esoteric reinterpretation of scripture followed by both mystics and philosophers, by both Kabbalists and rationalists is counterproductive, according to del Medigo, for two separate reasons. The mystics he holds in utter contempt as having invented out of whole cloth a presumed authoritative tradition of the secret and true intention of scripture. What about the rationalists, such as Maimonides, for whom he has the highest respect? They engaged in self-delusion, as we have seen above. You can't go home to the cave again.

Now, while the esotericism of the rationalists is useless, the esotericism of the mystics is far more dangerous, and del Medigo saves his most powerful invective for them. Del Medigo is probably the first to call attention to the intimate connection between Kabbalah, by which he means the theosophic-theurgic Kabbalah, and Renaissance magic. He makes use of the dictum, התורה לא נתנה למלאכי השרת, "The Law was not given to the ministering angels,"[6] in an ingenious way. He implicitly understands this statement to mean not only that the law was not specifically directed to the separate intellects, but that they are

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[4] [I am unsure to what Motzkin is referring here.—ed.]

[5] [See, *e.g.*, E. Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), pp. 58–69. Cf. also Gilson, "La doctrine de la double vérité" in *Études de Philosophie Médiévale* (Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 1921), pp. 50–69.—ed.]

[6] [B. T. *Berakhot*, 25b.—ed.]

ontologically incapable of deriving profit from either the ideological or behavioristic aspects of the Law. The angels, not to speak of the godhead itself, are superior to men; they are over-men, and thus are beyond good and evil, beyond morality, the regulation of which being the primary purpose of the Law.

The Kabbalists, however, have come up with what del Medigo views as a preposterous notion, namely that human beings can affect the supernal world. This is a topsy-turvy universe, the universe of the Kabbalists, which ultimately turns the first cause into the last effect. If it is true that the divine world is incorporeal, then, as anyone even trivially schooled (by this I mean educated in the rules of logical trivium) would know that God—and the angels—lack passions and affections, *i.e.*, cannot *per definitionem* suffer change. העליונים פועלים בנו, לא מתפעלים מאתנו, "Those on high act upon us, and are not acted upon by us."

In fact, just look around you, he says. Are human beings capable of repairing or perfecting themselves? Are human beings effectual in this world? If, as we can plainly see, human beings are impotent in arranging their own affairs, what unbelievable wild fantasies could have led some human beings (such as the Kabbalists) to believe that they can rearrange the whole universe, not to speak of its ruling principles?

For del Medigo, Kabbalah is a slightly sophisticated form of magic, and magic, mystical or not, far from being the correct and esoteric meaning of scripture, is precisely the greatest adversary of the Law. It is part and parcel of that world view which the Law is out to eradicate, namely *Avōdāh zārāh*, alien worship, idolatry, paganism, which rests on nothing but theurgic principles.

The notion that in fact human beings can affect at least the inanimate world, or the visible universe, more successfully than they can put their own house in order, *i.e.*, that physics can show, at least in the short run, more impressive results than ethics and politics, does not seem to have crossed del Medigo's mind. In some ways both Kabbalah and Averroism, both the later Florentine academy and the sixteenth century Aristotelians, were in my view instrumental in bringing about modern science and, in its wake, modernity. Showing this in detail must be left for another occasion.

What remains is the Avempacian solution, which is, *mutatis mutandis*, the Epicurean solution: let the people go. Let each of us do our thing, and let *our* philosophical politics consist simply in the public declaration that all positions are equally truthful. Let us henceforth posit

that both A and not-A be coevally correct. Do we who follow all of the commandments, both positive and negative, of Aristotle's *Organon* really mean this? Let the reader be the judge.

Having epistemologically declared in favor of Protagoras, it follows that reforms of any political stripe, theological or secular, are of course superfluous. Does del Medigo arrive at his position because he believes that convention or tradition is too strong or too weak, *i.e.*, is tradition not amenable to reform because it is unshakeable, or is it too weak to matter? The answer is: it makes no difference whether convention is too weak or too strong. In either case, we can dispense, if not with it, then at least with the necessity of reinterpreting it. We *may* dispense with it. But from this it follows that we should dispense with paying any attention to it.

From here it is a short step to Machiavelli's view that all religion is temporal, in both senses of the word. But if religion is of the age, be that age one century or sixteen, then it cannot lay claim to transcendence. Every historicism is ultimately subjectivism, and thus we arrive at the privatization of religion. Religion, no longer a legitimate political actor, becomes a matter of private business, of free initiative or individual conscience. That is, I believe, the true intention as well of Fra Paolo Sarpi, whom we mentioned earlier. Machiavelli's project was taken up by Bacon, Spinoza, and others and these projects parallel Sarpi's by the sixteenth and seventeenth century libertinists (and beyond them the encyclopediaists) form one half of that enterprise which we refer to as modernity—the other half being the conquest of nature.

In these few pages I have attempted to present a skeleton of the argument that Averroism was a needful precursor to modernity. This argument is suggestive and does not pretend to be demonstrative. Let me propose other possibilities, some of which I try to follow myself; let others take up the rest: del Medigo spend some considerable time in the Padua of Marsilius and in the Florence of Machiavelli. Could he be the missing link between the two? Whether we can find historical evidence to this effect is unclear. What I do believe, however, is that in this chain of ideas all links are sufficiently strong to warrant the making of an argument from probability.

CHAPTER SIX

PHILOSOPHY AND MYSTICISM

Lecture[1]

The dichotomy between Jewish (medieval) philosophy and the Kabbalah and their academic and scholarly treatment as two mutually exclusive domains has been recently criticized from several quarters. Generally speaking, the historian of the Kabbalah does not write about the history of (Jewish) philosophy, while his colleague, the student of philosophy, views the things of the Kabbalah as being outside his purview. Critics of this dichotomy argue that this division of labor is artificial, erroneous and misleading. What, they ask, is the difference between philosophy and Kabbalah? The concern of both is "the other world," both treat of "spirituality," and both examine, each in its own way, man's relation to himself (his soul), to the whole and to the principle of the whole, "the God of all deeds, the Lord of all phenomena." The Kabbalah is of course Jewish mysticism, and what these critics really assert is that the distinction between philosophy and mysticism is only one of semantics. For, they argue, although it is true that philosophy and mysticism have drawn water from different wells, in the final analysis the distinction between philosophy as such and mysticism as such is no greater than the distinction between any two philosophical schools, and, as we all know, the various philosophical schools and trends take issue with one another on almost everything.

This argument is ultimately based on the implied notion that the term "philosophy" itself has no distinct significance, *i.e.*, that there is really nothing which unites everything that is within philosophy and distinguishes it from everything which is without it. These critics are as a rule also moved by another consideration. Philosophers have had in the past "secret doctrines," an esoteric teaching. The terms "secret," "esoteric" and "mystical" would seem to be related, if not identical.

[1] [I was unable to ascertain when or where this lecture was given. Aryeh Motzkin had filed the text of this lecture in his "Unfinished Documents" folder.—ed.]

Since in recent decades there is constant increase in the number of those who have come to see Maimonides—the most important medieval rationalist—as having had an esoteric teaching, it would seem, then, that he was also a mystic. "The Great Eagle" exemplifies in the flesh the identity between philosophy and mysticism. And if a flame has betaken the cedar that is in Lebanon, what will the hyssop that grows out of the wall do?[2]

In what follows, I shall try to point out the distinguishing characteristics of philosophy as well as those which define mysticism, and to show that the gulf which separates them is indeed real. I believe that nothing can be gained from blurring these distinctions, and that the attempt to fuse the two into one can have no salutary consequences. Emphasizing the separation between philosophy and mysticism, even if taken to extreme, is a needful antidote to what I believe to be an increasingly popular, though necessarily erroneous and misguided conception of philosophy and of mysticism alike.

1) The term *Kabbalah* means literally "that which has been received," or "that which has been accepted." And indeed the kabbalist, the *mequbbal*, receives and accepts not only the commandments and their daily performance, but also, perhaps especially, a transmitted authority which is handed down by each generation to its successor. Philosophy *tout court* accepts no authority. There were philosophers who performed—for various reasons—those transmitted religious commandments, but an argument which takes the form, "This is a tradition which has been transmitted to us through our master, Aristotle, who heard his master, Plato, say that he heard, his master Socrates pronounce on . . . ," just does not exist. The way of the philosopher is to attempt to defend his position before what he posits as the most supreme court, the court of reason. Indeed, the philosopher has one aim, and one aim only: to bring about the rule of reason, upon himself and upon mankind.

2) An essential characteristic of philosophy is that no ceremony or rite of any sort is associated with it. To be sure, the philosopher is always born as a child of a certain community, a certain people, a certain religion. If he should not turn his back on his people or on his fatherland, he will uphold or keep their customary practices. But these are not the

[2] [Cf. B. T. *Mo'ed Qatan* 25b.—ed.]

customary practices of philosophy, for philosophy commands neither custom nor usage nor ritual. All that philosophy commands is to obey reason, follows its path and act in accordance with it. Not so mysticism. Every mystical school (say Sufism, or Hasidism), has its own specific ritual, rites specific even to the tiniest schismatic group of that school. Furthermore, every school of mysticism is intimately connected with the religion in whose milieu it developed. On the other hand, either Jew or Moslem may be Aristotelians, but even if their Aristotelianism is not identical, the differences between their individual teachings do not correspond and are not even related to the differences between Judaism and Islam.

3) Possibly the most important distinction between philosophy and mysticism is that between what Aquinas terms in the *Summa Theologiae*, *cognitio dei experimentalis, i.e.*, the knowledge of God through experience, and what Spinoza—one of the greatest anti-mystics of all time—calls *amor dei intellectualis*, the intellectual love of God. Apparently the banner of the theologian is *cognitio* whilst *amor* is the philosopher's banner, and that is, paradoxical as it may seem, true enough. Yet the two critical terms of these formulas are *experimentalis* and *intellectualis*, and here we again find philosophy's most radical characteristic. Whatever the philosopher does is for the sake of the intellect, and his singular purpose is to attain intellection, the perception of the world by means of the human intellect, which the philosopher singles out as the one tool man possesses which is not, in spite of its limitations, patently invalid.

For the mystic, however, mystical *experience* in its multifarious variety is his foundation stone. "*Taste* and see that the Lord is good…"[3]—that is mysticism encapsulated. In the words of Judah Halevi in the *Kuzari* (IV, 16) : "For God on high is *desired* by those men who have perceived him through the *senses*" (italics added). One can not separate between ecstasy, between profound emotional experience and mysticism. But in the words of a central contemporary philosopher, Martin Heidegger, (expanding on a dictum of André Gide), "Sentiments, even the finest, have no place in philosophy."[4] Philosophy's aim is to *control* the emotions and the passionate aspect of man, and philosophers,

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[3] [*Psalm* 34:9 (34:8 in the King James edition).—ed.]

[4] [Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), p. 23. The statement of André Gide is, "With fine sentiments bad literature is made." (from André Gide, *Dostoievsky* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1923), p. 247). See Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 23, n. 1.—ed.]

certainly ancient but for the most part also modern, tend to view passion, emotion and sentiment in a negative light. In contradistinction, mystics strive to nurture passion and sentiment, to be sure, the sublime passions, and they view intellect as a part, not necessarily the superior part of man. The present-day popularity of the so-called holistic approaches may, I believe, be traced back to the mystic world view. The resurgent popularity of mysticism seems paradoxical in a modern-scientific-oriented age. This appears as a paradox however, only because we assume modern science to be rationalistic. It is not. Modern science is monistic, materialistic, mechanistic and anti-theological. Modern science and mysticism are, in fact, perfectly suited bedfellows. Their affair is consummated on the bed of anti-humanism and anti-rationalism. Philosophy came into being in fifth century Athens as an anti-mystical movement. Plato notes the difference between the *philosopher* and the *philomythos*, between the lover of wisdom and the lover of myth. The vocation of the philosopher, as Socrates—the prototype of the philosopher—describes it, is demystification. In other words, the fundamental question posed by the philosopher is always "How can this be made intelligible, how can it be grasped by the human intellect?" This question is applied by the philosopher to every problem of philosophical interest he chances upon. The mystic constructs myths. The principal or at least the primitive function of the philosopher is the destruction of myths. Not to build, but to destroy, as Hegel put it. Having devastated the fictive, the sham construction to its foundations, the philosopher will build anew, from the bottom up. But first and foremost to erase—*écrasez l'infâme*:[5] The first word of the philosopher in the *Kuzari* of Judah Halevi is "No!" or "This is not so!"

In order to arrive at maximum clarity one must preserve one's alertness. The story is told about Socrates that he had once stood on his feet for twenty-four hours and did not stop thinking.[6] This may or may not have really happened, but the moral of the story is clear: Sleep is the foe of enlightenment, the perception of the world by man. Enlightenment comes to man while he is awake and at the height of his powers. The philosopher, unlike the mystic, does not seek hypnotic or sleep-induced experiences, situations in which the world is viewed

[5] ["Crush the infamy," referring to superstition or possibly clericalism or the church, is a recurring statement in Voltaire's letters.—ed.]

[6] [Plato, *Symposium*, Alcibiades' speech, 220c–d.—ed.]

when the mind and the sense are dulled at times even by artificial methods. It is well-known that mystics-kabbalists, as well as Sufis, did try to attain experiences of this sort in order to arrive at the state of "tasting God through the senses." I once heard Buber relate the Chinese tale about the man who dreamt he was a butterfly. When that man awoke he asked himself: Am I a man dreaming that he is a butterfly? Perhaps I am a butterfly dreaming that he is a man?[7] These questions undoubtedly disturb the mystic; not the philosopher. An important contemporary school of anti-rationalistic thought posits as one of its basic principles the proposition that understanding man required at the outset an understanding of his world of dreams. Man is, then, essentially dreaming man, not man awake. Not man at the zenith of his rational powers, but man at the nadir of his capacities.

This brings us to yet another paradox. Philosophy asserts, as we learn from Plato's *Hipparchus*, self-centeredness, to be sure a purified, sublime egotism. The philosopher is an enlightened egotist. But where does this egotism steer him to? To an activity—the search for wisdom—which is entirely self-forgetting, to a transcendence of the self toward all that is neither body nor tied to body. Above all, this search leads the philosopher to transcend the complexity of desire, emotion and need contained in the concept of the I. The mystic, too, aspires toward God—Whom he believes to be identical to the naught[8]—but in order to be God-intoxicated, again, a sense-related term. Whether he is "in a great sadness" on account of the "breaking of the vessels" or whether he strives to live always in great joy, as the Hassidic rabbis used to recommend to their followers, it is not by accident that all these terms are borrowed from the lexicon of the affections of the soul, as Spinoza calls them, although Spinoza searched for a way by which the man of reason would subdue his affections. The mystic, on the other hand, wishes to hone his passions, if to purify them, neither to disregard them nor to subdue them.

In the final analysis, the mystics' concerns are limited to himself, and to God. Since all the rest is trivial for him we are not surprised

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[7] [Buber's Chinese tale is undoubtedly referring to the "Butterfly Story" appearing in Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, Burton Watson translator, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 88.—ed.]

[8] [E.g., the mystic 'Azriel of Gerona (c.1160–c.1238) in his *Perush ha-Aggadot*, refers to a stage of *devequt*, or cleaving to God, called the "nothingness of thought," quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), pp. 370–1.—ed.]

when we find a mystic who thought that even these terms are identical. "I am God," says the greatest mystic of Islam, al-Ḥallāj, and he was not unique. "This world" does not exist for the mystic.

Not so the philosopher. His aim, too, is to try and find out whether there exists a world "beyond this world," a transcendental world, and it is also true that the philosophers or at least the great majority, held the view that there is indeed such a universe. The philosopher, however, leaves the world and returns to it, comes out of the cave and goes back inside, enters the *Pardes* and exits from it.[9] Practically speaking, the philosopher continuously strives to train and develop temperance and sobriety, and that means that he must always keep in mind that he lives in this world. It follows that the philosopher must come to a certain *modus vivendi* with this world. This quintessential activity is called political philosophy, and there is hardly a philosopher who denies the utmost importance of political philosophy as a necessary philosophic enterprise. It is most often a central component of his philosophic activity. This is not true of the mystic. The latter abjures this "vale of tears"[10] and there was never a mystic who engaged in political thinking, let alone political philosophy. The philosopher, too, is a loner in the innermost parts of his soul. The mystic dispenses with all the paraphernalia of this world. There is no salvation for the aggregate of mankind. Salvation is exclusively individual, the soul's journey into itself, coeval with a constant and mutual relationship with God.

This does not imply that the mystic does not attempt to change the world. He knows, just as the philosopher knows, that this world is far from perfect. He does not accept this, and one could say that he accepts the world even less than the philosopher does. But the

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[9] [The *locus classicus* for the term *Pardes* (lit. "orchard") is Babylonian Talmud, *Ḥagigah* 14b (see also *Tosefta Ḥagigah* 2:3–4). Rabbi 'Aqivah is said to have "entered [the Pardes] in peace and [to have] left in peace." The *Pardes* is often used in medieval kabbalistic texts to signify the mystical transcendent realm. For Maimonides it signifies the philosophical transcendent realm reached through knowledge of physics and metaphysics. See *Mishneh Torah*, Yesode ha-Torah, 4:13 and *The Guide of the Perplexed* I 32.—ed.]

[10] [This phrase, which probably originates in the 'Emeq ha-bakhā of *Psalm* 84:7, was used by kabbalists to refer to the mundane world. Probably the best known occurrence of this phrase occurs in the *Lekha Dodi* poem of Shelomo Halevi Alqabeṣ of Safed (c. 1500–1580):

קוּמִי צְאִי מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲפֵכָה \ רַב לָךְ שֶׁבֶת בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא \ וְהוּא יַחְמֹל עָלַיִךְ חֶמְלָה

"Arise, leave from the midst of turmoil / Long enough have you dwelt in the vale of tears / And He will be greatly compassionate toward you."—ed.]

philosopher—at least the pre-modern philosopher—sees nature, notwithstanding its obvious imperfections, as the standard or model, and he attempts to find, and then point out, the way to the perfection of human society by looking for the principles of cosmic order and then imitating them. In a word, the philosopher believes in acting in harmony with nature, with this world as it appears to man. For a mystic, however, nature can not be the standard, because it is itself in a state of disrepair. The cosmos is corrupt. Can it be mended? Yes, answers the mystic, through the use of theurgy. The nether world may influence the upper (superior) world. The "spiritual" world of man may exert its influence not only over man's material, terrestrial world, but also upon the heavens. In other words, man may alter the order of the cosmos by discovering the secret of the cosmos and putting it to use, by discovering the secrets of letters and, in the words of Cornelius Agrippa, using them in wondrous theurgic ways in order to *realize his desires*.[11] If there is one principle uniting all mystics, from the first-century Apollonius of Tyana to the sixteenth century Peter of Alcantara, it is the belief that it is both possible and desirable to employ "white magic" in order to change the ways of the universe. The manipulation of thaumaturgic and transmundane powers is one of the mystic's principal ways, and it transforms the Ideas into divine entities possessing personality. Baring the secrets of the cosmos gives man power which transcends ordinary human capacity (in the words of Iamblichus in the *De Mysteriis*) by means of which man may compel the divine entities to do his bidding. Does mysticism (perhaps principally the Kabbalah) have a hand in paving the way to the revolution in philosophy and science which took place in the sixteenth century, or is this mystic principle one of the corollaries of the technological progress continuous throughout late antiquity and medieval times? This is the theme which could, I believe, be profitably investigated. Whatever the answer, we find ourselves here far removed from the way of the philosopher who from Socrates on aspired to *human* perfection, not to manipulating the heavens. Whenever the philosopher speaks of the

[11] [See Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic. Book One—Natural Magic* (1533), ed. Willis Whitehead (Chicago: Hahn & Whitehead, 1898; reprinted London: Aquarian Press, 1971), pp. 216–220, esp. p. 219: "it is observed by all wise men that the Hebrew letters are the most *efficacious* of all, because they have the greatest similitude with celestials and the world" (emphasis added).—ed.]

divine world, he identifies it with the world of the mind, the world of the intellect, which is the supreme *human* word.[12]

The mystic has a third partner in his liaison with God. This middleman is the mystic's master. For the central Jewish mystical movement of recent times, Hasidism, this partner or intermediary became an exceptional personage, awe-inspiring and miracle-making. The faith in the Hassidic rabbi, in his unique essence and sanctity quickly became a supreme tenet which existed in and for itself. We need hardly remind ourselves that wondrous stories about the "masters of philosophy," about Plato and Aristotle, simply do not exist. These masters of philosophy had of course a myriad of disciples throughout the ages. None of these philosophers ever thought of his master as a miracle-making saint. If anything, philosophers took pains to stress the opposite point of view. Socrates is my friend, Plato is my friend (says Aristotle about his master and his master's master), but the truth is my best friend.[13]

What we are discussing here is the history of philosophy and the history of mysticism, and our first duty should be to posit the question, how did these great minds see themselves? This is a fundamental methodological question. We know full well that there was no mystic who saw himself as a philosopher, nor a philosopher who saw himself as a mystic. The great philosophers and the great mystics were clear about the chasm which separated them, and they and their disciples wage incessant war on one another. May the historian of ideas permit himself to declare that these giants knew not of which they speak, whereas he understands Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Ezra, Moses de Leon and Isaac Luria, Samuel Ibn Tibbon and Jacob ben Sheshet better than they understood themselves? Since we are a long way from

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[12] See Ibn Kaspi, *Maskiot Keseph* on *The Guide of the Perplexed* II, 12.

[13] [Though widely attributed to Aristotle, this statement is not found in his extant writings. A similar statement is found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "We had perhaps better consider the universal good and discuss thoroughly what is meant by it, although such an inquiry is made an uphill one by the fact that the Forms have been introduced by friends of our own. Yet it would perhaps be thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends" (1096a11–1096a16, Ross translation). Isaac Newton, at the beginning of his *Quaestiones Quaedam Philosophicae*, wrote: "Amicus Plato, amicus Aristoteles, magis amica veritas"—"Plato is my friend, Aristotle is my friend, but the truth is my best friend." The same saying also appears at the beginning of Walter Charleton's *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletonia* (London: 1654) and was probably in vogue in the scientific literature of the 17th century.—ed.]

understanding both those who have been walking in the path of philosophy and those marching under the banner of mysticism, it seems to me that it would behoove the historian of ideas to concentrate on understanding and explaining their teachings, before he allows himself the luxury of proclaiming that he is both wiser and more clever than, say al-Ghazzali or Averroes, before maintaining in effect that they did not know who they themselves were.

What motivates scholars to argue for blurring the distinctions between philosophy and mysticism? A similar question could be addressed to other scholars who have recently maintained that philosophy and dogmatic theology (for instance *falsafah* and *kalām*) are "Western categories" imposed on two ways of thought (and of life) that are essentially indistinguishable from one another. I believe there are two principal explanations for this phenomenon. The first is the decline of philosophy in recent times, for reasons which I plan to discuss elsewhere,[14] and the transformation of the word "philosophy" into a term identical with "ideology" or "general view" or even "method" or "a way of doing" something. Where is there no method? Willie Sutton, the lately demised bank robber, had a sure "method" for robbing banks, and to be sure he discusses in his autobiography his "philosophy of bank robbing."[15] That being the case, philosophy is no longer a specific domain, or science, not to speak of a way of life, as Al-Farabi, the father of Arabic philosophy has thought. If the term, if not the field of philosophy has itself gone bankrupt, can we expect contemporary scholars, who maintain that thinkers always express the "spirit of the times," to rise above the prejudices of *their* age?

The confounding of philosophy and mysticism has still another explanation. Mysticism takes its name from the *unio mystica*, the mystic or mysterious union between man and God to which it aspires. Now in philosophy there is something which seems to suggest a similar if not identical orientation. Throughout the history of philosophy, at least from its origins in ancient Greece up to the end of the eighteenth century, there was a doctrine and a way of communication known as esotericism. Although the term esotericism appears to be derived from

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[14] [Such a discussion has been found among taped recordings of Motzkin's lectures, but has not been prepared for publication. See also Motzkin's "What is Philosophy?" *Philosophia* 28 (2001): 69–70.—ed.]

[15] [Cf. Willie Sutton and Edward Linn, *Where the Money Was: The Memoirs of a Bank Robber* (New York: Viking Press, 1976).—ed.]

a root meaning "secret," this is an error. It means "inner" or "private," and is probably artificial and coined to correspond to what Aristotle called exoteric, *i.e.*, "external" or "public." It is interesting to note, in passing, that the term is first found to refer to solid Aristotle, not playful Plato. Until not very long ago, that is to say, until the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century, philosophers used to believe that certain truths should best be kept private and not be made public, for a variety of reasons. In the main, philosophers thought it best that "the people who walk in darkness"[16] should not be made aware of certain things because knowledge may be harmful when it is thrust upon the unmatured, unstudied and unequipped. They went so far as to maintain that making certain truths available to the general run of men is criminal, and is analogous in the words of Maimonides, to "letting babies eat meat."[17] Such truths must be kept private, transmitted only to the mature and the schooled. Thus philosophers had, as a rule, two teachings, one private, one public. However, the private teachings of the philosophers are not identical with either the private or public doctrines of the mystics. One may even say that for the most part the secrets of the philosophers and the secrets of the mystics bear little likeness to one another. Suffice to recall that one of the primary aims of philosophy is demystification. The esoteric teachings of the philosophers come sometimes under the rubric of political philosophy, a mundane enterprise with which mysticism is hardly involved.

This misreading, this lack of attention or of understanding of the not so subtle distinction between esotericism and mysticism has been indeed a very great stumbling-block and has made it possible for some scholars to try and argue that the most important Jewish philosopher of medieval times, Maimonides, an uncompromising "rationalist," was in fact a mystic. This is of course preposterous, and this paper is at least in part an attempt to show why a philosopher and a mystic could not reside simultaneously in any body, and Maimonides is no exception. If you will, the esoteric teaching of the philosophers is nothing but this, that mysticism, or the esoteric way of life, has its origins in a false reading of what is human and ends with leading humanity to the abyss.

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[16] [הָעָם הַהֹלְכִים בַּחֹשֶׁךְ, *Isaiah* 9:1 (9:2 according to the King James edition).—ed.]
[17] [Maimonides, *The Guide* I, 33.—ed.]

PART II

MEDIEVALS AND MODERNS

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAIMONIDES AND SPINOZA ON GOOD AND EVIL[1]

Article[2]

"The Good" is a central concept of Plato's and Aristotle's Metaphysics.[3] It is sometimes discussed as a synonym of "the end."[4] (and so as a synonym for "that which is most due"), whereas at other times it is another way of saying "that which is beautiful," *i.e.*, that which corresponds to the paradigm of shape, or of arrangement, or of intended product, or of "that which truly is."[5]

I

The *locus classicus* of Maimonides' position on Good (and Evil) is found in chapter two of the first part of *The Guide of the Perplexed*.[6] Maimonides had devoted chapter one to a discussion of the various senses of the

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[1] A discussion of the distinction between bad and evil, which after Nietzsche is almost mandatory, is outside the purview of this essay.

[2] [Originally published in *Daat* 24 (1990): v–xxiii.—ed.] Earlier versions of this paper were read at Boston University, Brandeis University, the University of Illinois (Urbana), McGill University, The University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), The Pennsylvania State University, Trinity College, and Washington University at St. Louis. I thank all faculty and students at these institutions who attended and participated in the discussions which followed my presentations. The present version owes much to those discussions.

[3] Plato *Republic* 379d–381a, 517b–c; *Theaetetus* 153b–c. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 988a 8–16; 988b 6–16; 1013a 20–24. See also Plotinus *Third Ennead* IX, 3; *Fifth Ennead* I–VI, XI, 10. Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* I, 4–6, 21.

[4] Plato *Symposium* 204d–206b; *Timaeus* 29d–30a; *Philebus* 20c. Aristotle *Topics* 107a 3–11; *Physics* 194a 26–194b 8; 195a 22–26; *Metaphysics* 982b 7–10; 966a 21–35; 1013b 25; 1050 a3–b1. Bacon *Novum Organum* 1, Aphorism 48. Pascal *Pensees* 425–426.

[5] The question of the identity or lack of identity of the good and the beautiful in Plato and Aristotle (and others) is, of course, important in itself. See, *e.g.*, Seth Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Cf. Plato *Greater Hippias* 289d.

[6] The standard English edition of *The Guide* is that of Shlomo Pines: Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (2 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). Unless otherwise noted, all citations [in this chapter] refer to that edition.

term *image*. It is an appropriate beginning, for Maimonides's explicit intention in part one of *The Guide* is to discuss all the anthropomorphic or otherwise inappropriate terms in the Hebrew Scriptures, in order to explain them away, thus establishing securely the existence of a realm of separate intellects, hierarchically ordered.[7]

The very first instance of a Biblical verse which can be anthropomorphically interpreted occurs in the first chapter of *Genesis*. It reads as follows: "And God said, let us make a man in *our image, after our own likeness*."[8] This phrase, "in the image" (**בצלם**), is apparently considered so significant by the author of *Genesis* that it is repeated *thrice*, twice in the next verse: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him." Now the original sense of the verse is probably explained straightaway, in light of verse 26 itself: "And let them" one would assume both the male and the female who are mentioned in the next verse, "have *dominion* over . . . all the earth." In other words, man is God's viceroy on earth, and he is in the image of God, he imitates God, in the sense of ruling. God is the ruler of the universe (which includes light, day and night, the heavens and the water above them, the sun, the moon and the stars), and man is the ruler of the earth, and specifically of all that the earth and the sea bring forth, all that grows and all that is alive. That seems to be the intention of the Biblical author.[9]

But that is not what Maimonides makes of it. Maimonides wants to establish, as we noted, a realm transcending the observable phenomena, a realm beyond the sensible universe.[10] He insists on the existence of metaphysics because he wishes to demonstrate the potentially divine nature of man, which he understands to be the noetic nature of man.

In other words, man is created in the image of God, because God is a pure intellect, and man shares in that intellect. Man is the only observable existing being that bridges the realm of matter and the

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[7] *The Guide*, II, 4.

[8] *Genesis* 1:26.

[9] Cf. *Psalm* 115:16 (The heavens are the heavens of God, and the earth he has given to human beings). See Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (trans. by John Marks; 3rd ed.; Old Testament Library; London: SCM, 1972), pp. 57–60.

[10] This particular problem was first addressed by Philo in *De opificio mundi*, in which he asserts that the two creation stories in *Genesis* relate the story of the creation of the ideal world of forms first and then the physical world of the senses.

realm of mind, and thus partakes in the divine. It is in this sense that we may say that man is in the image of God and after his own likeness.[11]

This interpretation by Maimonides serves two complementary purposes: it establishes the exclusively intellectual character of God and it establishes the essentially intellectual character of man. In this way Maimonides makes metaphysics, or the science of the separate intellects, possible, and he makes the central issue of metaphysics (*i.e.*, of natural theology or the science of being),[12] the knowability of God, or of the ground of being a legitimate area of inquiry. This means that man can, in the final analysis, know God through introspection. If God and man share essentially an identical nature, then the Delphic oracle could have intended by his maxim not only to lead to human awareness, but also to the awareness of God by way of what both Aristotle[13] and Ibn Kaspi[14] (to name only two) called "the God within us."[15]

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[11] "Now man possesses as his proprium something in him that is very strange as it is not found in anything else that exists under the sphere of the moon, namely, intellectual apprehension. In the exercise of this, no sense, no part of the body, none of the extremities are used; and therefore this apprehension was likened unto the apprehension of the deity, which does not require an instrument, although in reality it is not like the latter apprehension, but only appears so to the first stirrings of opinion. It was because of this something, I mean because of the divine intellect conjoined with man, that it is said of the latter that he is *in the image of God and in His likeness*, not that God, may he be exalted, is a body and possesses a shape." *The Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 1 (Pines, p. 23).

[12] Aristotle. *Metaphysics* III and IV.

[13] I. Düring, "Aristotle's *Protrepticus*: An Attempt at Reconstruction," *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 12 (1961). Cf. Anton-Hermann Chroust, *Aristotle: Protrepticus; A Reconstruction* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961) pp. 11, 110. [Cf. the section of the Protrepticus quoted above in Chapter 1, pp. 17–18.—ed.] For some studies of the Protrepticus which are related to issues in this paper, see H.-G. Gadamer, "Der Aristotelische Protreptikos und die entwicklungsgeschichtliche Betrachtung der Aristotelischen Ethik," *Hermes* 63 (1928): 138–165; Bernard Einarson, "Aristotle's *Protrepticus* and the Structure of the *Epinomis*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 67 (1936): 261–285; and Suzanne Mansion, "Contemplation and Action in Aristotle's Protepticus," *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century*, ed. I. Düring and G. E. L. Owens, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 11 (1960): 56–75.

[14] Kaspi, *Maskiot Keseph* on *The Guide*, II, 12 (p. 98) ed. Salomon Werlumer (Frankfurt: 1848; Photomechanical Reproduction, Jerusalem: ʾUrṣal, 1961). [Cf. Chapter 1, p. 18, n. 21 of this volume.—ed.]

[15] This interpretation of the Delphic oracle begins with Plato's Socrates himself, who reasons in *Alcibiades I* that knowledge of oneself resides in the soul: "The soul must look at itself, that means at the virtue of the soul which is wisdom. This part of the soul is like the divine, so that anyone who looks at it knows all that is divine, God and thinking, so also in the highest sense he knows himself." (133C) For the history of interpretation of the oracle in Antiquity, see H. D. Betz, "The Delphic Maxim ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ in Hermetic Interpretation," *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970): 465–84.

That this central Maimonidean enterprise runs counter to his explicit negative theology is, of course, obvious.[16] This issue, however, must be left for discussion at a future time. Just the same, we could not speak of chapter two of *The Guide* without having reference to chapter one, as brief as this reference had to be. To Maimonides as well as to Plato,[17] Aristotle,[18] Spinoza[19] and Kant (to name only a few), morality has a metaphysical underpinning, and before speaking of the central issue of morality, one must first speak of the foundations of the metaphysics of morals.

Chapter One of *The Guide* is indeed the introduction to the whole book (not counting the methodological introductions which precede it) and it leads immediately to an examination of what is to Maimonides one of the central issues, if not *the* central issue of philosophy, namely, the relationship of philosophy and the Law, or of philosophy and religion, or of metaphysics and ethics. All of these pairs of terms are to Maimonides more or less synonymous. He goes about it in the following way: It appears there is a contradiction between chapters one and two of *Genesis*. We have just learned that man was created in the image of God. We have interpreted this to mean that man's essential characteristic is his noetic character. God is the universal *nous*, man the sub-lunar *nous*, or, at the very least, man may unite with the sub-lunar *nous*, the *working mind*, the *nous poietikos*.[20] What this means is that man is homo sapiens, man the wise, or man the knower, the knower even of universal truths, let alone of the things around him, of the things that move, of the things which are active, of motion and of action. He knows about action, about how *things* act, and of course about how he acts and should act.

Cf. Eliza Gregory Wilkins, *"Know Thyself" in Greek and Latin Literature* (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1917, reprinted New York and London: Garland, 1979). The ancient philosopher most identified with the concept of an interior search for the divine is Plotinus. Maimonides thus combines Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism in his psychology and epistemology, as well as in his metaphysics. On Plotinus, see Pierre Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicitè du regard* (Paris: Plon, 1963); for post-Kantian ideas on this theme, see Harry R. Klocker, *The God Within* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

[16] Cf. *The Guide*, I, 68. Compare Narbonni's Commentary, ed. Goldenthal (Vienna: K. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1852) *ad loc*.

[17] Passim, and cf. *Republic* 386c–394b.

[18] Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.

[19] Spinoza's *Ethics* begins with a discussion of God, then of ideas and the intellect. Ethical principles are then derived from the metaphysical formulations.

[20] Cf. *The Guide*, III, 52.

But what does chapter two of *Genesis* tell us? It tells us that man was placed in the Garden of Eden, that he was permitted to eat of the fruit of all the trees in the Garden, including the Tree of Life. "But the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou shalt not eat thereof, for in the day that thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die." So *Genesis* 2:17.

Man is explicitly forbidden to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Man is forbidden *to know*.[21] He may eat of all other trees, including the Tree of Life, and may thus partake of eternal life. But he may not know.

If we interpret literally, in accordance with my suggested interpretation, namely, that the Scriptures make explicit the divine character of man as viceroy or guardian of the earth, there is no difficulty. Rulers need not be omniscient. If God is everlasting and rules eternally over the whole universe, so man must be everlasting and rule eternally over the earth. He may therefore eat of the Tree of Life.[22] But a master gardener need not know everything there is to know. If knowledge is power, then omniscience entails omnipotence. A supremely powerful man might rebel against the owner, the original planter of the garden and may try to overthrow him. He may, for instance, build a tower and try to reach the heavens for that very purpose. And so one must take measures to make this impossible: Thus, "thou shalt not eat…"[23]

Yet one can immediately see that Maimonides is confronted here with a difficult problem, which seems to fly in the face of his, if you will, intellectual interpretation of *image*, and of the relationship of God and man. If man imitates God by "intellecting," how can he be prevented from knowing?

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[21] "It is manifest from the clear sense of the biblical text that the primary purpose with regard to man was that he should be, as the other animals are, devoid of intellect, of thought, and of the capacity to distinguish between Good and Evil. However, when he disobeyed, his disobedience procured him as its necessary consequence the great perfection peculiar to man, namely, his being endowed with the capacity that exists in us to make this distinction." *The Guide*, I, 2 (Pines pp. 23–4).

[22] It might be useful to reflect on how Maimonides understood "Tree of Life." Cf. *The Guide* I, 42, esp. his citation of B. T., *Berakhot*, 18a–b.

[23] Indeed, a central concern of primeval human history in Genesis is in fact *usurpation* of God's prerogatives. Eve usurps the right to create life, producing "a man" (4:1), Cain then usurps the right to take life (4:8), men then attempt intercourse with the divine (6:2–3) and even after the flood they attempt to build a tower and pathway to heaven, the private sphere of God (11:4).

Maimonides solves this contradiction in an ingenious way. It is made clear in *The Guide*[24] that man does imitate God in God's exclusive and essential activity. God is pure intellect, and the activity of pure intellect is, for want of a better word, *intellecting*.[25] To "intellect" means to grasp the intelligibles, the objects of the intellect. These objects are the eternal verities. They are changeless. Since, as Maimonides makes clear in chapter 68 of Part One, the intellect, the act of intellecting, and the intelligibles (*nous, noein* and *noeta*) are identical, God intellects, by definition if you like, *only* changeless, eternal things.[26] To assert otherwise would be to attribute change to God. But that is impossible, for change is an attribute of bodies: change and motion are identical. Motion of whatever variety—*e.g.*, locomotion, generation and corruption, growth—is impossible for God. God does not move. He is not born, he does not die. There is no amelioration in God, and there in no deterioration, either. If God's knowledge increases, this means that at one point it was not complete, not perfect. If it decreases, this means that it ceases to be perfect. In short, God has no *history*, and he is outside history.[27]

To return to the problem: to the extent that man may imitate God, he imitates him by being open to the knowledge of these eternal verities, by being open to the whole. Man may, so to speak, *plug into* God. It is at that instant, and as long as man remains plugged in through this intellectualizing activity, that we may say of man that he shares in the divine, that he is a divine being. Generally speaking, says Maimonides, man is *potentially* divine. When his intellect is in *actu*, he is in fact, *actually* divine.[28]

Now, what about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Good (and evil), says Maimonides, are not objects of pure knowledge.[29] They are not identical with true or false, which are the proper attributes of

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[24] *The Guide*, I, 1; I, 30; I, 42; I, 68; III, 51.

[25] νοεῖν.

[26] "His essence is the intellectually cognizing subject, the intellectually cognized object, and the intellect, as is also necessarily the case with regard to every intellect in actu." *The Guide*, I, 68 (Pines, p. 166).

[27] *The Guide*, I, 55.

[28] *The Guide*, I, 68.

[29] "Fine and bad (the Arabic uses two cognates of the words 'good and evil')…belong to the things generally accepted as known, not to those cognized by the intellect." *The Guide*, I, 2 (Pines, p. 24).

pure knowledge. Good (and evil) refer to a radically different domain. They refer to the domain of practical philosophy, or morality.[30]

Now what is morality and why and for whom is it necessary? It is clearly not meant for beasts. You don't say about a cat or about a horse that it has committed a *shameful* act, nor do you say about a parrot or about an elephant that it has acted in a *noble* way. For that matter, says Maimonides,[31] you do not attribute shame or nobility to an idea or to an intellect. Three plus four equals seven, always. That is eternally true. It is neither noble nor good. To say that three plus four equals eight is false, always, forever. It is not base to say it. It is not evil. Thus one may not attribute nobility or shame to the separate intellects, to God or to the secondary causes. *Morality* is the peculiar domain of that ambiguous creature, that unique ambiguous creature, man. It is a corollary of his peculiar semi-divine, semi-brutish nature, or perhaps one should say of his peculiar status, which may gravitate upward toward the divine or downward, toward the brutish. Morality, or Ethics, is the science of the proper control of man's brutish passions in order to make possible his dedication, or his absorption, perhaps his obsession with his superior or potentially divine nature. Morality is thus a consequence of man's fall and of his infra-divine status. It is unnecessary as long as man inhabits God's own orchard and abstracts from his body. As long as man is not aware of his body, of his animal nature, it is of no consequence.

Only what man thinks about, only what man knows, is significant, in other words, truly is. To paraphrase Descartes, "sola sunt ea quia cogitat homo, (Only those things are which man thinks about)." The moment man becomes aware of his body, or, as the Bible says, "of his nakedness,"[32] that means, of course, of his reproductive, sexual,

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[30] Cf. Shlomo Pines, "On Spinoza's Conception of Human Freedom and of Good and Evil," in N. Rotenstreich & N. Schneider, *Spinoza, His Thought and Work* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1983), pp. 149 ff. Pines traces this idea back to the distinction in Aristotle between the theoretical and practical soul (*On the Soul* 433a 13ff, *Ethics* 1141a, 23). Of the commentators on Aristotle known to Maimonides, John Philoponus in particular holds that "the Good" is the goal of the practical soul, while the theoretical soul, which is superior to the practical soul, has "truth" as its end.

[31] "For one does not say: it is fine that heaven is spherical, and it is bad that the earth is flat; rather one says true and false with regard to these assertions."—*The Guide*, I, 2 (Pines, pp. 24–5).

[32] *Genesis* 3:7.

animal nature, does he coevally discover shame.[33] That is what shame means to the author of the Biblical narrative as well as to Maimonides: the realization of Man's poor estate, of his infra-divine nature, of his limitations, of his physical nature. The realization of his physical and animal nature leads, or should lead (the fact-value distinction never occurred to Maimonides or his predecessors), to the institution of morality, *i.e.*, to the institution of general guidelines to the solution of the problem of man's ambiguous nature.

That shame is most intimately connected with the animal-nature of human beings, with human sexuality, can be learned from Maimonides' repetition of the phrase, "The sense of touch is a shame to us."[34] He attributes this notion to Aristotle.[35] I need not elaborate on the connection between sexuality and the sense of touch. It is only necessary to remember that every other one of the senses has an organ associated with it: for sight, the eyes; for hearing, the ears; for smell, nose; and so on down the line. Whatever Aristotle may have thought of it,[36] it is clear that Maimonides was quite annoyed by the fact that human beings have five, rather than four senses, thus bringing them down from time to time to the level of the irrational beast.

Maimonides's discussion of shame reminds us of the one prerequisite Socrates demanded of his interlocutors: the possession of a sense of shame. Those who did not possess shame, say Thrasymachus in the *Republic*,[37] or Callicles in the *Gorgias*,[38] did not, indeed, could not communicate with Socrates. They disappear from the dialogues in which

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[33] *Genesis* 3:10: "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

[34] *The Guide*, II, 36, 40; III, 8, 49.

[35] The passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (III, x, 11) reads: "Hence, the sense to which Profligacy is related is the most universal of the senses: and there appears to be good ground for the disrepute in which it is held (δικαίως ἐπονείδιστος εἶναι) because it belongs to us not as human beings, but as animals." (ὅτι οὐκ ᾗ ἄνθρωποί ἐσμεν ὑπάρχει ἀλλ' ᾗ ζῷα)." Cf. *The Guide* I, Chapters 43, 28, 49, II, Chapters 2, 6, and in general chapters 3–12, where Maimonides discusses the spheres (and their souls and intellects), *i.e.*, the angels. Cf. also Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus*, I, 1, where Porphyry quotes Plotinus as having said that he was ashamed to be found in a body. (φιλόσοφος ἐῴκει μέν αἰσχυνομένῳ ὅτι ἐν σώματι εἴη).

[36] Aristotle mentions τίνα μέρη, which Maimonides takes to include the mouth: III, 8 reads: "they take as their end the sense that is our greatest shame, I mean the sense of touch. Accordingly they have no thought and no perception except only in relation to eating and copulation, as has been clearly stated with regard to these wretched people wholly given over to eating, drinking and copulating." (Pines, p. 433).

[37] *Republic* 336b–354c.

[38] *Gorgias* 481b–527e.

they appear soon after registering their total disgust with the proceedings, usually by means of an *emotional* outburst.[39]

Why does Socrates insist that he speak only with those who know shame?[40] Because shame implies at least a rudimentary notion of the existence of Good (and evil), that is, of the existence of morality, if of conventional morality. Socrates, that is to say, the philosopher, searches to be sure for a natural morality, a morality based on reason, a morality which is non-conventional, or trans-conventional. But the nature of the search is such that unless the searcher knows in his bones, so to speak, that morality *as such* is absolutely (that is, relative to the human condition) necessary, there is always the danger that he would misinterpret the search for a universal morality at mid-inquiry. He would then be left in limbo, having abandoned conventional morality, not having as yet established a natural morality. This would lead to moral anarchy and the disintegration of civil society. Thus the insistence on a well-developed sense of shame. This prerequisite that the participant in Plato's dramas possess a distinct moral profile is precisely the prerequisite that Maimonides demands of the participant, in this case the reader of his *Guide*. He paints an exact picture of him in *The Guide*.[41]

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[39] Callicles does reappear toward the end of the Gorgias. However, in 482c ff. he reveals his true colors, and makes a long speech in which he claims that philosophy is only useful as an embellishment.

[40] In the *Symposium* Plato's Socrates speaks of the necessity of a sense of shame as part of eros: "For the guiding principle we should choose for all our days, if we are minded to live a comely life, cannot be acquired by kinship or office or wealth or anything so well as by Love. What shall I call this power? The shame that we feel for shameful things (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνην) and ambition for what is noble; without which it is impossible for city or person to perform any high or noble deeds." (178c) In the *Gorgias*, however, he speaks of shame in his interlocutors as disqualifying them form participation because it prevents them from being truthful: "I meet with many people who are unable to test me, because they are not wise as you are; while others, though wise, are unwilling to tell me the truth, because they do not care for me as you do; and our two visitors here, Gorgias and Polus, though wise and friendly, are more lacking in frankness and inclined to shame (αἰσχυντηροτέρω) than they should be: nay, it must be so, when they have carried shame (αἰσχύνη) to such a point that each of them can bring himself, out of sheer shame (διὰ τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι), to contradict himself in face of a large company, and that on questions of the greatest importance." (487b) And later, "Callicles, that is how I upset Polus and Gorgias, and struck them with shame (αἰσχύνεσθαι ἐποίησα); but you, I know, will never be upset or ashamed (αἰσχυνθῇς); you are such a manly fellow." (494d). There is of course irony here, but his intention is also reminiscent of the dictum of the sages: "לא הבישן למד," he who is struck with shame cannot learn [*Aboth* ii, 5].

[41] Compare Maimonides' description of Joseph as one "worthy to have the secrets of the prophetic books revealed to" him (Introduction), with what he says in I, 34 about those to whom the Account of the Chariot may be revealed. Cf. especially the

The moral habit is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition for gaining entrance to the orchard of Maimonides.

Now it might appear that it is in the moral sphere rather than in the contemplative sphere that man's perfection lies. Is it not true that it is morality which is specific to humanity, which is, if you will, the specific differentia of mankind? Morality is neither animal nor divine, but the *vita contemplativa* is divine as well as human. After all, the contemplative life, the life of the intellect, is not the exclusive domain of man. It is also the domain of God and the angels.[42] One could therefore reasonably argue that the vocation of man lies in the sphere of morality, that it is incumbent upon man, if he wishes to attain his ultimate felicity, to ceaselessly devote himself to the nurturing and refinement of the moral virtues, of the moral life.[43]

But that is not the position of Maimonides. He makes quite clear, in chapter two, throughout *The Guide*, and everywhere else in his voluminous corpus of writings, that the moral virtues are a poor second to the intellectual virtues, that the moral man stands on a lower rung on the ladder to perfection than the contemplative man.[44] How would Maimonides defend this position, notwithstanding his acceptance of

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end of the chapter where Maimonides continues: "Rabbi Yohanan said to Rabbi Elazar: Come, so that I should teach you the Account of the Chariot! Whereupon Rabbi Elazar said to him: I am not yet old; he means: I am not yet aged and up to now find in myself the effervescence of nature and the recklessness of adolescence" (Pines, pp. 78–9). Recklessness is akin to shamelessness, each is present in the imprudent and the intemperate (cf. p. 91, n. 39 above). The reckless and the intemperate Alcibiades, once no longer in Socrates' company, lets his tyrannical nature rise to the surface. Compare MacDuff to Malcolm (*Macbeth* IV, iii, 66–67): Boundless intemperance in nature [*i.e.*, in man's nature] is a tyranny. What is then the relationship between the search for wisdom (where, as Socrates points out, shamelessness and recklessness are desirable) and tyranny? Cf. A. Kojève, *Tyrannie et sagesse*, in L. Strauss, *De la tyrannie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954). Compare *The Tempest* and Sonnet 94.

[42] On the angels, cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Prophetic Eclogue*, 56, Origen, *On Prayer* 27.10 and Evagrius Ponticus, *Gnostic Chapters* 3.4. On God, cf. Origen, *Commentary on John* 32.28 and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 38.9; cf. *The Guide*, I, Chapters 43, 28, 49; II, Chapters 2, 6, and in general chapters 3–12, where Maimonides discusses the spheres (and their souls and intellects), *i.e.*, the angels.

[43] This is the position of Kant, who believed, further, that the moral life had no purpose beyond itself. It is not only divorced from contemplative experience, it supplants contemplative experience.

[44] Maimonides' position conforms as well with the Platonist tradition. On the moral stage preceding the higher stage of contemplation, Origen and Evagrius Ponticus were particularly important. See J. LeMattre, R. Roques & M. Viller, "Contemplation chez les grecs," Section B. Origène, 1. La division de la vie spirituelle, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, ed. M. Viller et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–95) 2. 1769. These two stages were often called "φυσική" and "θεωρία".

the classical position that, since the essence is the definition, and the definition consists of the genus plus the specific differentia,[45] the perfection of any being consists in exclusive dedication to the refinement of those differentia?

Although Maimonides never speaks of this directly, but rather assumes that the solution to this problem is self-evident, I believe it is necessary at this time to sate certain things explicitly which were viewed by Maimonides, his predecessors and his contemporaries as obvious. To repeat, morality is an unfortunate if ineluctable consequence of man's fall, of man's ambiguous nature. It is required in the same way that in order to ride a race horse one requires reins, blinders and spurs. But the superior or perfect race horse is not the horse that has superior reins, blinders and spurs. All of these may be paraphernalia for a distinctly inferior horse. The superior or perfect race horse is the one that runs fastest, the horse that develops to the utmost that within him which is his superior part. And so with man. Morality is but reins, blinders and spurs. It is an exigent, but clearly an inferior human sphere, needful by man *in order* to attain his superior nature.[46]

What I have outlined here is a world-view based on certain assumptions which were shared by almost all classical and medieval philosophers. These assumptions are that truth is superior to falseness, that cosmos or order is superior to anarchy, in short, that being is superior to non-being. These are assumptions no longer viewed as self-evident. And one of the first to call them into question was, of course, Benedict de Spinoza.

II

When I say that the seeds of both modern (as distinct from classical or medieval) ethics as well as metaphysics are all found in Spinoza, I am not unmindful of the fact that Spinoza is in many ways beholden to his predecessors, not the least of whom to Maimonides.[47] But Spinoza

[45] Aristotle *Posterior Analytics* 96b 15–97b 34; *Topics* 101b 16–19, and esp. 103b15.

[46] Cf. Plato *Timaeus* 30b; *Laws* 961d–e, *Phaedrus* 247c and ff.

[47] S. Pines, "On Spinoza's Conception," pp. 151ff. Pines asserts that Maimonides prefigures Spinoza in making knowledge of good and evil a decline from man's perfect state, and implies that this Maimonidean as well as Spinozistic position points to Spinoza's making freedom from the notion of good and evil a philosophical imperative (*Ethica* IV, LXIV and Scholium to LXVIII.) Pines further claims (p. 150, n. 9) that

most explicitly called for a break with the whole tradition of Philosophy. "Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, they do not carry much weight with me."[48] The only one he exempts from criticism is Democritus. The only philosopher whom Spinoza actually eulogizes is Machiavelli.[49] And he very often singles out Maimonides for specific, even scathing criticism.[50]

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according to "both philosophers…knowledge of good and evil is in itself a defect." I cannot agree with Pines that Maimonides' and Spinoza's positions are in any way identical. As is his wont, Maimonides simply uses the Biblical account to assert the superiority of theoretical to practical wisdom, a perfectly acceptable Aristotelian thesis. Further on (p. 153) Pines notes that Spinoza's position is different from Maimonides' on several points, among which is that, according to Maimonides at least, recourse to judgments of good and evil are, "given the human condition,…unavoidable." Pines does call to our attention the remarkable similarity between Nietzsche and Spinoza, and quotes from Nietzsche's letter to Franz Overbeck (30 July 1881): "I am astonished and charmed! I have a forerunner. I hardly knew Spinoza.… I recognize myself in five main points of his doctrine.… he denies freedom and will; final ends; the moral order of the world; that which is the unegoistic; evil." Nietzsche's ideas of morality are the ruling notions of morality of the twentieth century, and one of the main points of this article is that Spinoza's morality is indeed the fountain of contemporary ethics or morality. Maimonides is emphatically not the "father of Spinoza's *logos*," but Spinoza is, indirectly, the father of Nietzsche's.

[48] Spinoza, *Letter* 50 to Hugo Boksel, (sometimes numbered 56): "*non multum apud me Authoritas Platonis, Aristotelis, ac Soctratis valet.*"

[49] Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, ch. V.

[50] See Letter 43 (to Jacob Ostens, and sometimes 49) see C. H. Bruder's edition in Benedicti de Spinoza *Opera* (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1846), vol. ii, p. 297, and especially *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Chap. VIII, *e.g.* "we dismiss Maimonides' theory as harmful, useless and absurd." (*Quapropter hanc Maimonidae sententiam ut noxiam, inutilem et absurdum explodimus.*)

One of the more serious contemporary Maimonidean scholars, Warren Z. Harvey, wrote an article on the same topic as this one, "הרמבם ושפינוזה על ידיעת טוב ורע—Maimonides and Spinoza on the Knowledge of Good and Evil," *Iyyun* 28, 2–3 (1978): 167–85. As usual, Professor Harvey's article contains many illuminating points.

The thrust of Harvey's article is that Maimonidean ethics is, *mutatis mutandis*, Spinozan ethics, and is based on the same understanding of "good." He adduces several texts to buttress his argument. I fear, however, that I must disagree with Harvey's interpretation of some of these texts. It is no doubt true, as he points out, that Spinoza's ethics is primarily utilitarian. He quotes Spinoza: "the good is what is useful to us." (Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* 4; *Ethics* 1.2; Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 167). It seems to me, however, that here (as elsewhere) Spinoza makes a radical break with the understanding of "good" which preceded the advent of modernity.

A consideration of the amphibolousness of "good" cannot of course be avoided. On the one hand, the term "good" is understood as a synonym of "the best," or "the ideal," or "the good in theory," as for example in Plato, but this understanding of good crops up in all of philosophical literature, and I believe that there is hardly a philosophical author that does not use good in an amphibolous sense. (Cf. *e.g. Nicomachean Ethics* I, vi, esp. 1096a 7–26.)

Now to *The Guide*, III, 13. Here Maimonides asserts that good is "that which is in conformity with our purpose." What he means by this phrase is "that which is in conformity with the final cause," *i.e.*, that which is in harmony with the intention

What was the nature of Spinoza's quarrel with the ancients, and how did this quarrel manifest itself in his teaching about Good (and evil)?

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or purpose of *man*. The "useful" in classical ethics, which Maimonides represents, is understood in contradistinction to the "noble" or "beautiful." The purpose of man, "our purpose," corresponds more to these supererogatory notions than to the "useful." This tension does not exist in Spinoza's ethics, in fact, that is its most telling characteristic. I think that the basic point to keep in mind at all times when we read Maimonides and Spinoza is that in Maimonides there is a cleavage between the dual nature of the whole which is not present in Spinoza. One can speak of course of a certain dual aspect of the whole, that is to say, one can point to Spinoza's speaking about the only two known attributes of God's nature, thought and extension. But for Spinoza these are but two aspects of *one* nature.

Spinoza's understanding of God or Nature is completely antithetical to Maimonides' teaching. It is true that Maimonides speaks of the divine actions as natural actions in *The Guide* III, 32. But nowhere does Maimonides identify God with the whole of Nature. To say, as Harvey points out, that in Maimonides the law of physics correspond with the divine (Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 169, fn., 21) is not tantamount to saying that Nature and God are one as such. In fact, the whole enterprise of *The Guide of the Perplexed* is precisely to counter that approach, in other words, to show that God is not extensive, not corporeal, and therefore to make the identification of God with Nature *as such* an impossibility. For Spinoza, God (the only meaningful God) can be known, because Nature can be known, because the Book of Nature, as was pointed out by Spinoza's predecessor, Francis Bacon, is a book that can be read (See the beginning of *The Advancement of Learning*) whereas for Maimonides—as has been pointed out by Professor Pines, although I take issue with Pines' radical formulation—God is hidden ("The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Al-Farabi, ibn Bajja and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Twersky, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979], vol i, p. 98). That does not mean that we can say absolutely nothing about God, it does not mean that metaphysics is *ipso facto* impossible; it does mean that we cannot assert simply that God is knowable.

Between these two extreme formulations—that nothing can be said about God, which is the way we understand what Maimonides says explicitly, and between saying as Professor Harvey seems to say here, that God can be known—there is, I believe, another way in which Maimonides can be understood, and that is that discourse about God is possible in the classical philosophical sense. Ultimate knowledge is not simply (*i.e.*, absolutely) available, yet this is not sufficient ground to state with finality that we can say nothing worthwhile about its themes. This is the classical understanding of the core of the philosophic enterprise.

In this connection it is crucial to note that for Maimonides the notion of final cause is absolutely fundamental, whereas for Spinoza final causes are human fictions. That notion in itself determines the whole discussion of good (and evil) as well. This is not to deny that there are some areas of agreement between Spinoza and Maimonides, nor would I deny that Maimonides' true teaching is far more complex than his explicit teaching on this subject. This was well known to almost all of Maimonides' early commentators, the most useful (in both the Maimonidean and the Spinozan sense) of them being Narbonni and Ibn Kaspi.

To repeat, I believe that Harvey is correct in calling attention to *The Guide* I, 68, in which Maimonides identifies God with "the scientific system of the universe," and it is true, as Professor Pines points out (Translator's Introduction, The Philosophic Sources

It might be well to keep in mind what has been pointed out time and again: once you accept Spinoza's definition of substance (as well as the six definitions and seven axioms in the beginning of Part One of the *Ethics*), everything follows. His whole system is in fact grandly conceived, carefully planned, and is carried out in an exemplary, precise fashion.

If God is everything, then God is nothing. If God is both thought *and* body, or intellect *and* matter, then the term God ceases to be a meaningful concept.[51] Maimonides never says it this way, but I believe that what I have just asserted is in harmony with Maimonides' position, and it is with this fundamental Maimonidean enterprise (the separation of God from the world) that Spinoza quarrels. Although Spinoza does not mention Maimonides by name, it is clear from the language of the scholium to Proposition Fifteen of *The Ethics* that Spinoza is thinking of Maimonides when he criticizes those who deny that God is corporeal.[52] God *is* corporeal, and there is no reason to

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of *The Guide of the Perplexed* in *The Guide*, p. xcviii) that here Maimonides comes close—Pines' phrase is "perilously close"—to identifying God with Spinoza's "attribute of thought." But not to Spinoza's attribute of extension, and I believe that everything else in Maimonides—including his discussion of ethics in the strict sense—is based on this distinction.

Furthermore, for Spinoza, as there is no distinction between human beings and other species, divinity resides in all beings equally, in fish and in human beings. This is not true for Maimonides. Maimonides' ethics rests on a distinction between, if you will, God and matter, between the ultimately refined and the ultimately crass. In a sense, good is what corresponds to what is divine in Maimonides. Bad corresponds to what is anti-divine, if you will, matter. Many passages can be adduced to support this.

For Maimonides the heavens are not the earth. They are in fact constructed of different material and the two domains are inhabited by two totally different beings. For Spinoza the world is one, as it is (in no small part due to Spinoza) in modern science, and there is no distinction between the heavens and the earth. Their elements are identical. This formulation of Spinoza's determines as well man's place in the new universe which Spinoza inhabits. Maimonides inhabits a different universe, one in which the one creature that unites the two domains, or which has access to both domains, is man, and that determines his way of life and his understanding of good (and evil). Man bridges the nether world and the sublime world. It is perhaps an uncomfortable position to be in, in many respects. But it is not the position in which Spinoza places man. In regard to this fundamental issue, as in regard to so many other ones, Maimonides and Spinoza are poles apart.

[51] On this aspect of Spinoza's thought and its ramifications, see James Collins, "God, Idea of, 1400–1800," *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Scribner's, 1973) vol. iii, pp. 350 ff.

[52] He says, "First, the opponents think that corporeal substance, insofar as it is a substance, is made up of parts, and so they deny that it can be infinite, and consequently that it can pertain to God.… They say that if corporeal substance is infinite,

assert that matter is unworthy of him. Among other things, God is most definitely matter.

Now we know that all previous philosophy (with the exception of Epicurus, Zeno and their respective followers) could not see its way to reducing mind or intellect to matter, or vice versa. That is primarily true of the Platonists (old or new), but it is equally true of the Peripatetics. There is, so they all asserted in different ways, a basic dichotomy in the cosmos, a fundamentally unbridgeable chasm.[53] Furthermore, and that is of specific interest to us, these two irreducible spheres are not equal in dignity. The intellect is immortal, the body is mortal.

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suppose it to be divided into two parts. Each of these parts will be either finite or infinite. If the former, then the infinite is made up of two infinite parts, which is absurd. If the latter, then there is an infinite which is twice as great as another infinite, which is also absurd." Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, ed. S. Feldman (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Press, 1982), pp. 40–1. Cf. *The Guide*, *passim*, and esp. I, 55–58.

See also Sylvain Zac, "Spinoza, critique de Maimonide," *Les Etudes Philosophiques* (1972): 411–428. Zac notes that Spinoza and Maimonides have some common themes, but always with "un sens different." Contra such readings as Harvey's (see above, n. 50), Zac notes, "Et surtout, ce qui est certain, c'est que Spinoza lui- même, loin de manifester une sympathie quelconque pour Maimonide, lui est franchement hostile" ["And above all, what is certain is that Spinoza himself, far from showing any sympathy for Maimonides, is openly hostile to him."—ed.]. And, Zac correctly notes that Spinoza takes every precaution to distinguish the rationalism of the "true philosophy" from the false rationalism of Maimonides, which for the latter serves only, according to Spinoza, to mask his own philosophic prejudices.

In a later study, "A Portrait of Spinoza as a Maimonidean." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981): 151–172, Harvey continues in his quest to paper over the enormous chasm which separates Spinoza from Maimonides. It is not clear why he relies on such uneven philosophizers (to use del Medigo's favorite term) as Leon Roth, who asserted that "Maimonides and Spinoza speak throughout with one voice." Roth was long ago answered by Leo Strauss in his *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (p. 297 n. 238): "If Spinoza and Maimonides agree on anything it is because they are philosophers." Harvey notes that Maimonides is often seen as having had a "formative influence" on Spinoza, but not a "distinctive influence" on his philosophy. "How reasonable," asks Harvey (p. 155), "is the second point in light of the first?" The answer is, quite reasonable. What is meant by the first assertion is that Spinoza read Maimonides attentively, and his reading undoubtedly helped him *form* his own thoughts (thus, "formative"). It does not follow from this that Spinoza's developed philosophy has Maimonides' imprint on it ("distinctive influence"). Spinoza could have, indeed did use Maimonides. Spinoza could also have, indeed did, reject Maimonides. Harvey's further assertion (p. 163) that both Maimonides and Spinoza denied the notion that the universe has any final end outside itself (or God) (Compare *Ethics* I, app., *The Guide* III, 13, *Physics* II, 7, 198a and *On the Generation of Animals* I, 1, 715a) does not hold. Maimonides indeed states that the final end of the universe is God. But, and this is crucial, the universe and God are not one and the same for Maimonides, as they are for Spinoza (see n. 50 above).

[53] In Plato, the division is between the world of Forms and the material world. In Aristotle, there is a further division between the sub-lunar and the heavenly realm.

Aristotle's final cause is certainly superior to the rest. Indeed, as the Stoics would have said, form is superior to matter. Few have called these postulates into question during the two millennia that separate Plato from Spinoza.

Since, however, only what is eternal can be perfect, and so what comes-into-being and passes away is obviously imperfect, it was clear—prior to Spinoza—that the intellect, being incorruptible, is good, and matter, by definition the domain of the corruptible, is evil. If this sounds Neo-Platonic, this is only because the Neo-Platonists, even Plotinus, but certainly Proclus, worked it out in a systematic fashion.[54] But in fact nothing that is outlined here may not be found in Plato's dialogues (or in his epistles), nor would it have been disputed by Aristotle.[55]

Now, as we have noted above, the one being which more than any other represents this dichotomy is man, who is the only union of the eternal with the corruptible, and classical morality—I have selected Maimonides as a spokesman of classical morality—is grounded upon this dichotomy. The very definition of morality as the science of the control of man's animal nature, the science whose end is to facilitate man's intellectual perfection, adumbrates this notion of the universe.[56]

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[54] See, *e.g.*, Plotinus, *Ennead* II, iv, 16: "Is matter, then, also evil because it participates in good? Rather, because it lacks it." (translated by A. H. Armstrong in *Plotinus*, 6 vols. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979], vol. ii, p. 149). Cf. also *Ennead* V, ix, 10: "…there is no question of an ideal archetype of evil: the evil of this world is begotten of need, privation, deficiency, and is a condition peculiar to Matter distressed and to what has come into likeness with Matter." See, *contra*, Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II, iii, 17ff.: "For nought so vile that on the earth doth live / But to the earth some special good doth give, / Nor aught so good but strain'd from That fair use / Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse: / Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied; / And vice sometimes by action dignified.

[55] *Metaphysics* 988a14; *Physics* 192a 16–24; where matter is identified with the ugly, and as the contrary to the divine, good and desirable. The origin of this outlook is indeed Platonic, in fact Pythagorean, but Aristotle, although sometimes clearly uneasy with it, can not find his way to put in place of the identity of matter and evil any other scheme. See also *Metaphysics* 985a 1–10, where the implication is that matter is evil, since matter is the cause of multiplicity or strife, and strife, according to Empedocles, who is here quoted with approval, is bad. See especially *Metaphysics*, end of Lambda (XII, 10, from 1075a 25 down). Notwithstanding his critique of the pre-Socratics, Aristotle cannot but end Lambda with the Homeric dictum that "The rule of many is not good; let there be one ruler" (*Iliad* II, 204). The metaphysical analogue to the rule of the *demos* is the rule of the *hyle*.

[56] Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 6 1106b 28–35, where Aristotle makes a connection between the Pythagorean identification of evil with the unlimited and his own

When Spinoza overturns this ancient dichotomy of mind and body, he overturns classical morality as well. What friction there is in the world, the world of nature as well as the world of man (this distinction is in itself anathema to Spinoza), is not born of the desire for perfection (the love of becoming for being, as Aristotle put it[57]). This is not the endless eternal battle of good trying to overcome evil, that is to say, of mind trying to overcome matter, or more precisely, of matter trying to be overcome by mind.[58] In short, there is no longer any justice, according to Spinoza, distinct from the way things work themselves out. Large fishes devour small fishes. That is just, because that is the way of the world. That is also the way of man. When the strong overcome the weak, that is just.[59] *Man is no longer a creature distinct from fishes*. Man and fishes are divine in equal measure.[60] They both share in God in the same way because they are both contained in God. What is morally good? To do anything you have the power to do. So *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* 16, 2. Or, if you will, part four of *The Ethics* (appropriately titled, "On Human Bondage") Proposition 37, note 2:

> We can now easily see that in the natural state there is no notion which…is good or evil.

And further down:

> That is to say, in a natural state there is nothing which can be called just or unjust…Justice and injustice, therefore, sin and merit are external notions, and not attributes.

This is the origin of all modern relativism, and ultimately, after several transformations, of all nihilistic ethics.[61]

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assertion that men are good in *one* way, bad in *many*. All this, of course, in order to lay the proper groundwork for Book X.

[57] See Yehuda Landau, *The Desire of Matter Towards Form in Aristotle's Philosophy* [original title: *Hishtoqequt ha-ḥomer la-ṣurah be-maḥshevet Aristo*] (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, Faculty of the Humanities, 1972), pp. 19–22, 151–154; cf. *Metaphysics* 1072 a23–b4.

[58] See Jacob Klein, "Aristotle, An Introduction," in his *Lectures and Essays*, ed. R. B. Williamson and E. Zuckerman (Annapolis, MD: St. John's College Press, 1985), esp. pp. 183–187.

[59] Cf. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, XVI, 2. See Chapter 8: A Note on Natural Right, Nature and Reason in Spinoza, p. 105.

[60] *Ibid*. Spinoza undoubtedly had in mind *Nicomachean Ethics* 1141a23: "What is healthy or good is different for men and for fishes…." Cf. Plotinus, *Against the Gnostics* V.

[61] See Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 78, n. 36, where Rosen quotes Jacobi as claiming that Spinozism and

Spinoza learned his metaphysics from Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius. Unlike Epicurus, however, whose well-known dictum was λάθε βιώσας, live in a retired fashion,[62] *i.e.*, away from the political community, Spinoza was distinctly political.[63] Together with Maimonides, Spinoza believed that the political community cannot, indeed should not, be shunned. Maimonides, following his Greek and Arab masters, believed that society must be gently re-formed, and *that* only to assure that it does not take on a bestial character.[64] Spinoza, in spite of his recognized disdain for the general run of mankind, actually believes in the perfectibility of man. If the masses are ignorant, if they are in the dark about what the good really is, that is only because they have been kept in the dark by those who were in authority during what in fact we call "the Dark Ages:" the functionaries of established religion. In only a somewhat more subdued fashion Spinoza prefigures Voltaire's famous formula: "écraser l'infâme."[65] From whom did Spinoza learn both his innate belief in the perfectibility of all men and his rage against religion? From the man he most admired, Niccolo Machiavelli. Spinoza's teaching of good and evil is indeed Machiavellian.[66]

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idealism are atheism and nihilism (*Jacobi an Fichte*, in *Werke*, vol. iii, p. 44). Jacobi says later on: "Alles löset sich ihm dann allmählich auf in sein eigenes Nichts. Eine solche Wahl aber hat der Mensch; diese Einzige: das Nichts oder seinen Gott. Das Nichts erwählend macht er sich zu Gott; das heisst: er macht zu Gott ein Gespenst" ["Everything would then gradually dissolve into its own nothingness. Man has such a choice, but only one: nothingness or his God. By choosing nothingness, he makes himself into God; that is, he makes a phantom God."—ed.] (pp. 48–9).

[62] Fragment 551.

[63] See James H. Nichols, Jr., *Epicurean Political Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Pres, 1976), pp. 179ff., where Nichols shows that modern political philosophy (he limits the discussion to Hobbes, Montesquieu and Rousseau) is Epicureanism politicized. The title of Nichols' book is, naturally, ironic. Nichols' remarks on Hobbes are, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to Spinoza.

[64] Cf. Al-Farabi, *Kītāb al-Millah*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār el-Mashriq [Impremerie Catholique], 1968), *passim*, and esp. pp. 57ff., the section on philosophic medicine. [Butterworth translation: "The Book of Religion" in *Alfarabi the Political Writings*, ed. C. Butterworth (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 93–113, esp. pp. 104 ff.—ed.]

[65] Voltaire, *Letter to M. d'Alembert*, Nov. 28 1762. [Cf. p. 74, n. 5 above.—ed.]

[66] Arising from the identification of good and useful or expedient first encountered, *i.e.*, first openly defended by a respectable thinker in *The Prince*, ch. VIII, ch. XV. That the good is equivalent to the expedient or useful was of course not first asserted by Machiavelli. Socrates, in his presentation of Protagoras' "phenomenology," shows that the identification of the good with the useful leads to relativism and then proceeds to show that Protagoras' relativism denies all possibility of moral science. See *Theaetetus*, 152ff., esp. 162e and 172a–b.

Spinoza was the first philosopher to dare to praise Machiavelli publicly.[67] Hobbes could not bring himself to do it, and Bacon's praise, in *The Advancement of Learning*, is far more gingerly, and in fact is in reference to a different matter altogether.[68] Spinoza's reference is to the *Discourses*, Machiavelli's commentary on Livy.[69] Indeed, in Part I, chapter 58 of the *Discourses*, which Machiavelli titles "The Masses are more knowing and more constant than the Prince," he says outright: "should there be masses regulated by laws, there will be found in them the same goodness as we find in kings." And further: "More *virtue* will be found in the populace than in the prince." Spinoza's source, Machiavelli's philosophy,[70] is as alien to Plato's lover of wisdom as the true ruler and to Maimonides' disdain of the many as "those who walk in darkness" as can be. Contra Spinoza, Maimonides asserts that the connection of the many to the good is accidental. For Spinoza, on the other hand, the severance of the many from what is good and virtuous is accidental and an historical quirk.

How remote all this sounds from all previous philosophy, as Machiavelli was the first to note,[71] is immediately recognizable. The classical view (which Maimonides shared) of the ambiguity of man's nature, made for a tension between the "good" and the "useful."[72] What is good simply (or absolutely) was seen as that which in some way corresponded or led to the rational or intellectual. What is evil corresponded to or led to the irrational, to the corruptible domain. The "useful" was seen by Maimonides, as by the classical philosophers, as belonging to the domain of necessity. "Useful" described anything or any act which made it possible for man to wend his way more easily through the evil world, the world of coming-to-be and passing away.

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[67] See Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, V, 7, where Spinoza praises Machiavelli as a great lover of liberty. See also *Tractatus Politicus* X, 1.

[68] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in The *Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. Spedding, Ellis and Heath (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1881), pt. III, p. 327. "So that we are much beholden to Machiavel and others, that write what men do and not what they ought to do." Bacon goes on, "without this [knowledge of 'all forms and natures of evil'] virtue lieth open and unfenced."

[69] Spinoza, "the last of the Medievals," knew that any predecessor of his dating from the last medieval century would have been more subtle and more theoretical in an "exegetical" work. See Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 69ff., 186.

[70] I am using Aristotelian terminology.

[71] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters XV and XXV.

[72] Cf. above, pp. 93–4, n. 47.

Spinoza, just as Maimonides, sees "the human things" in the light of his view of the things of nature. As the *kosmos*, or God, is monistic, so is the world of man. For Spinoza, there is no distinction between the *kosmos noetos*, the intelligible *kosmos*, and the *kosmos aisthetos*, the perceivable *kosmos*, because there is no distinction between the *noeta* and the *aistheta*, the data of the intellect and the data of the senses.[73] Ultimately, there would be no distinction between the man who dedicates his life to the world of the *noeta*, the lover of wisdom, and those for whom the world of the *nous* does not exist—the rest of mankind.

As Spinoza abolished the distinction between these domains (and this corresponded to his abolition of the distinction between the sublunar world and the quintessential world in physics), he also abolished the distinction between the "good" and the "useful," and he says so explicitly: "By what is good I understand what is useful to us."[74] That is of course a species of Epicureanism:[75] ultimately the good must be identified with the pleasant. Of course we know what the Epicureans meant by pleasure, by the highest pleasure: they meant philosophy. But, as noted before,[76] the Epicureans, *i.e.*, the *classical* Epicureans, were not public-spirited. Spinoza may be seen as the founder of neo-Epicureanism, which differs from its ancient progenitor by its insistence on the political, in fact, by its insistence on the politically radical.

Spinoza was "the last of the medievals" in one very important way: the best man is still the philosopher. To be sure, the right kind of philosopher, or I should say of philosopher-scientist (the distinction between philosophy and science had not yet been made). A philosopher-scientist who does not bother with final causes, which are but "human fictions."[77] A philosopher-scientist whose own "final cause" as it were is deciphering the book of nature in order to master it, to

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[73] See above, p. 99, n. 58. [See also above, Chapter I, pp. 8 ff.—ed.]

[74] *The Ethics*, Part IV, Definition 1. Cf. Part IV, Proposition 20.

[75] It is seen as basically Stoic by S. Pines, "On Spinoza's Conception," p. 148: "…the impulse (conatus) to preserve oneself is according to Spinoza the essence of a thing. The Assimilation of the good to what is useful is Stoic doctrine. Spinoza clarifies it by explaining that seeking what is useful to oneself is tantamount to seeking to preserve one's being. All this may be summed up in the statement that the good is the affirmation of one's being and the effort to preserve it."

[76] See p. 100, n. 63.

[77] "*Natura finem nullum sibi praefixum habet, et omnes causae finales nihil, nisi humana sunt figmenta*" ["Nature has set no end before herself, and all final causes are nothing but human fictions," Motzkin translation—ed.]. (*Ethics* I, appendix [Bruder, ed., p. 218]). Cf. Chapter 9: Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion, p. 121.

overpower it. Nature must be mastered, because it is no longer seen as the model of the *good*.[78] Spinoza's philosopher-scientist no longer looks upwards to Maimonides' divine intellect, he looks downwards. He is down to earth; his interest is in the useful, not the noble or edifying. Maimonides would have been amazed to find anyone believing that power over nature, rather than wisdom, would lead to happiness, *i.e.*, that there could be a neutral physics. Of course Spinoza was right at least in this. Spinoza's (and others') transformation of the original senses of good and evil did lead to the success of the modern enterprise. Man *is* now able to manipulate nature. Did man's newly acquired power make him *master* of his fate in any serious sense? Maimonides, for whom "good" was more akin to "noble" or even "prudent," would have had grave doubts.

[78] Aristotle, *Politics* 1252b33; *Physics*, 230b20, 198b10–199b32; *On the Generation of Animals*, 731a24. Cf. Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), ch. 3: Genesis of the Conception of 'Nature' as Norm, pp. 103–116, and Appendix: Some Meanings of 'Nature,' pp. 447–456, as well as the texts cited in notes 3 and 4 to this chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A NOTE ON NATURAL RIGHT, NATURE AND REASON IN SPINOZA

Article[1]

Spinoza's doctrine of natural right awaits further study; no one has stated more plainly the view that "might is right":

> Fishes are naturally conditioned for swimming, and the greater for devouring the less; therefore fishes enjoy the water, and the greater devour the less by sovereign natural right.[2]

The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is apparently the origin not only of modern Biblical criticism, but what is far more significant, of modern behavioral social science as well. Since for Spinoza there is no profound distinction between fishes and human being, he goes on to draw the inevitable conclusion:

> For it is certain that nature, taken in the abstract, has sovereign right to do anything she can; in other words, her right is co-extensive with her power.

And further:

> …it follows that every individual has sovereign right to do all that he can.[3]

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[1] [A Hebrew version of this article appeared in *Iyyun* 28 (1978): 73–6. This English version is Aryeh Motzkin's own work and appears to have been made before the Hebrew version.—ed.]

[2] "Ex. gr. pisces a natura determinati sunt ad natandum, magni ad minores comedendum, adeoque pisces summo naturali iure aqua potiuntur et magni minores comedunt." *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Ch. 16, 2. (Bruder edition in Benedicti de Spinoza *Opera* [Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1846], pp. 207 ff.)

[3] "Nam certus est, naturam absolute consideratum ius summum habere ad omnia, quae potest, hoc est, ius naturae eo usque se extendere, quo usque eius potentia se extendit…hinc sequitur unumquoque individuum ius summum habere ad omnia, quae potest" (*Ibid.*).

Ius and *potentia*, right and might, are identical. Contemporary relativism, which sanctions (by not authoritatively condemning) every political and social aberration, finds its first explicit masterly defense in Chapter 16: there is no difference whatsoever between rational and irrational personal or political behavior, nor between fools and madmen on the one hand and wise and sane men on the other. Reason is downgraded and desire upgraded to the same status; they would eventually be indifferently addressed as "values."

The origin of this doctrine is to be sought in the transformation of the idea of Nature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which will be considered in a separate study.[4] The natural had always been understood as the prior, but whereas priority had throughout the history of philosophy been identified with the essential, with the sixteenth century priority assumed a temporal and existential character. Thus, in the first instance, the "natural man" was always understood to be a fully developed adult human being, both in body and in mind; but in the second instance, when temporality and existence overshadow essence, it is the child who has priority, who is "father to the man." It took only a little more than two centuries for the discipline concerned with the understanding of the human soul to center itself on two main branches: child and abnormal psychology. The reason for this is first stated coherently by Spinoza: before [men] can learn the right way of life and acquire the habit of virtue, the greater part of their life . . . has passed away.[5]

What is significant for Spinoza in his study of human psychology (and thus of what is natural for man as individual and as member of the political community) is the question of how "in fact" most men behave, from birth until—and that is the exception, desirable as Spinoza is still willing to grant it—they have seen the light of reason. The natural becomes the prior in time. Thus, in his search for natural right, Spinoza is constrained to consider as equal in consequence the thoughts and affections of the child and the adult, the ignorant and the wise, the mad and the sane. Vice can no longer be differentiated

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[4] [This may refer to Motzkin's unpublished monograph, "Nature as it Is, the City as it Should Be," which details the transformation of nature and politics from the ancient world to modernity.—ed.]

[5] "Antequam veram vivendi rationem nascere possunt et virtutis habitum acquirere, magna aetatis pars . . . transit." *TT-P*, 16, 7. (Elwes' translation [New York: Dover, 1951] p. 201.)

from virtue. "Neither strife, not hatred, nor anger nor deceit, nor any of the means suggested by desire" would henceforth be offensive, for they are no less natural than their opposites.[6]

I reassert: Spinoza's views were occasioned by the complete about-face in the attitude toward nature, universal and human, which took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What has previously been known as defects of the soul ceased to be regarded as such because predominance was now being read as dominance. Normalcy and Standard were redefined, and so was Human Nature. Coeval with this revolution in philosophy, however, an opposite trend took place in the attitude toward Cosmic Nature. Catastrophes such as floods and earthquakes had been regarded by the Ancients as examples of the beneficent even-handedness of Nature. The Moderns of the sixteenth century began to view these events as intolerable flaws in the scheme of things. Cosmic Nature became the enemy, and they began to plot its conquest. Tolerance would henceforth be extended only to the Is of man; his Ought would be postponed, if not altogether dispensed with. In contradistinction, the Is of Nature would no longer be tolerated and must be conquered. What one would henceforth attempt to subdue would be the vices of Mother Nature, not those of her human children. However, although these trends were antithetical, their outcome would prove to be identical: in every possible way, in Nature and in the City, the lesser would displace the greater, the lower would eject the higher.

For Spinoza, nature is still the standard; but it is the standard only in proportion to its power. Natural right becomes for Spinoza not right in the light of nature, but right over nature.[7] This right is limited solely by *potentia*, which is only rarely rational, if by rational we mean that which is directed by reason, rather than that which reason makes use of. The abolition of teleology, the declaration that final causes are but human fictions, has this one immediate corollary: appetite and intellect become indistinguishable. If there is no *telos* and no entelechy, then action and passion (or intellect and affection) have

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[6] *Ibid.*, 16, 9. (Elwes' translation, p. 201).

[7] *Tractatus Politicus*, Ch. II, 4 (Bruder edition, p. 54): "Atque adeo totius naturae, et consequenter uniuscuiusque individui naturale ius eo usque se extendit, quo eius potentia; et consequenter quicquid unusquisque homo ex legibus suae naturae agit, id summo naturae iure agit, tantumque in naturam habet iuris, quantum potentia valet" (Elwes' translation, 2: 292).

identical natural status.[8] The only consideration which limits the uses of the products of knowledge [or of science][9] is the will, which is synonymous with affection and mood and only rarely with reason, for we steer our ship in the light of, and directed by, the many: are not *homines magis caeca cupiditate quam ratione ducuntur*?[10]

As to the turning away of the Moderns from constructing the Best Cities in speech, I suggest that it may be traced to the Averroistic critique of Platonic and Farabian political philosophy: since philosophers will never be kings, for intrinsic as well as extrinsic reasons, the philosopher would be advised to let sleeping dogs lie. The well-being of the philosophic enterprise would best be assured by publicly upholding generally accepted doctrines, however unenlightened they may be. Meddling with dogma is unnecessary, wasteful, and doomed to failure. An attempt to bend it to accord with philosophic truth should be made only in extreme circumstances.[11]

And so the Ought is removed from political philosophy. The progress of technology in the late Middle Ages and the advances in the understanding of the material universe made the Moderns change their sights and concentrate on prodding the armies of succeeding generations of physical scientists. They perceived the conquest of Nature as the triumph of Reason. The triumph of Reason over Nature would in any case bring about the rational political constitution, the same utopia longed for but wrongly sought by the Ancients.

This tendency, which the triumph of Modernity made supreme, would not have been possible without the disjunction of Reason and Nature,[12] which the Ancients considered as complementary, if not synonymous attributes of κόσμος, order. It is not sufficient to say that

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[8] So do, as we noted before, the adult and the child. This position would eventually lead to the questioning of the criteria by which the rule of the many is limited by age: note the current controversy about whether juveniles should be allowed to vote.

[9] [This remark is included parenthetically in the Hebrew version of this article.—ed.]

[10] *Tractatus Politicus*, Ch. II, 5, ["Men are more led by blind desire, than by reason" (Elwes trans., p. 292).—ed.]. Cf. *Ethics* IV, prop. 37, schol. 2.

[11] "We are compelled to admit miracles in any case, so why should we alter the evident meaning of a [Biblical] verse? I think, rather, that one should not do so at all, except in evidently contradictory cases." Elia del Medigo, *Beḥinat Hadat* [Motzkin translation].

[12] Cf. Fr. Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, in *Werke*, ed. Ludwig Bellermann (Leipzig u. Wien: Bibliographisches Institut, 1895), vol. ix, Sechster Brief (end), p. 191.

Nature (understood in the sense of that which refers to the domain of extension) was thought to be "reasonable," and thus the eternal standard, simply because the material code had not yet been cracked. There is ample evidence to suggest that the Ancients consciously rejected the enterprise of the conquest of nature not as a result of lack of ingenuity, but because of forethought as to the possible consequences. Sometime irrational nature, the quirks of the material universe, were accepted as preferable to "rational" nature, subdued matter, potentially (and the potential becomes actual sooner or later) controlled by irrational men, against whose quirks there is no defense.

CHAPTER NINE

SPINOZA AND LUZZATTO: PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Article[1]

I

Pierre Bayle was not the first to attack Spinoza on account of his atheism; to be sure, Bayle's own thoughts on this subject are, to say the least, ambiguous.[2] However, since the *Dictionnaire* was published only thirty years after Spinoza's death, and since Bayle's importance and influence were far more considerable than those of the various historians, mostly Dutch, who are often cited, Bayle's judgment should not be lightly dismissed.

Bayle, as we know, calls Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* a despicable book, containing all the seeds of the atheism so plainly seen later in his *Opera Posthuma*, that is to say, mainly in his *Ethics*.[3] Bayle's attacks on Spinoza are so sharp that we begin to suspect that he "doth protest too much." The thrust of his criticism is aimed at Spinoza's utility-centered ethics (so similar to the ethics of the Epicureans), which precludes providence as well as reward and punishment—both central pillars of religion. Bayle reproduces the views of the Epicureans fully, clearly, and faithfully.

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[1] [Originally published in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 17 (1979): 43–52. © 1979 Journal of the History of Philosophy, Inc. Reprinted with permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.—ed.]

[2] See Zephyra Porat, "The Art of Deception: The Rhetoric of Hidden Writing in Pierre Bayle" (in Hebew), in *Prometheus Among the Cannibals* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), pp. 60–81.

[3] "Livre pernicieux et détestable, où il fit glisser toutes semences de l'athéisme qui se voit à découvert dans ses *Opera posthuma*" (*Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* [Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969], 13, pp. 416–68; *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, ed. and trans. by Richard H. Popkin [Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965], p. 293). According to Bayle, Spinoza holds a special position in the history of atheism: he was the first to have reduced atheism to a system (Art. "Spinoza," Rem. A). It is the Epicureans who first declared God to be matter, and Forms to be imaginary accidents having no entity, according to Alexander of Aphrodisias (quoted by Albertus Magnus in *I Phys*., tract. 3, chap. 12).

During the greater part of the eighteenth century, when knowledge of the art of reading of circumspect texts was still widespread, Bayle's judgment of Spinoza was not generally disputed,[4] and the philosophy of Spinoza, whether for this or for other reasons, did not enjoy a huge following. Those who did consider themselves followers of Spinoza usually did not admit it in the open, and the term "Spinozist" had a pejorative ring to it. When Jacobi related that Lessing described himself as a Spinozist,[5] not a few eyebrows were raised, and none other than Mendelssohn rose to defend his friend, vehemently denying that Lessing was guilty of Spinozism.

Not long after the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a *volte-face* in philosophy, and the perennial dispute between philosophy and theology was so artfully covered up that the gulf between them, which was common knowledge throughout the history of philosophy, ceased to be understood. Coeval with this revolution came also the extinction of the art of reading philosophic texts. If until that time it was self-evident that every philosopher writes in a circumspect way, and that every philosopher's statements cannot be understood literally but must be listened to, as it were, with one's inner ear, beginning with the early part of the nineteenth century philosophic texts were being interpreted in a manner that cannot be termed other than simplistic: a philosopher who paid lip service to the ruling religion or currents of thought of his time was (from that period onward) understood to mean

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[4] See Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Grätz: Andreas Leykam, 1797), 2, §87, pp. 189–90: "We can indeed imagine an honest man (such as, for example, Spinoza) who is totally convinced that there is no God, and…that there is no afterlife."

[5] See F. H. Jacobi, *Spinoza Büchlein* (Breslau: Löwe, 1785), 1, pp. 481–82. See Fritz Mauthner, *Jacobis "Spinoza Büchlein" nebst Replik und Duplik* (Munich: Georg Müller Verlag, 1912), pp. 66ff. Lessing (speaking about Spinoza) said "Und doch…Wissen Sie etwas Besseres?" ["And yet…Do you know something better?"—ed.] Further: "Es gibt keine andre Philosophie, als die Philosophie des Spinoza" ["There is no other philosophy like the philosophy of Spinoza"—ed.]. Mendelssohn, who refused to credit Jacobi's account of his conversations with Lessing, or at least Jacobi's proper understanding of Lessing, nevertheless took it for granted that to be a "Spinozist" is tantamount to being an atheist. See "Moses Mendelssohn an die Freunde Lessings: Ein Anhang zu Herrn Jacobis Briefwechsel über die Lehre des Spinoza," in Mauthner, *Jacobis "Spinoza Büchlein*," pp. 201ff. Cf. Alexander Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn on Leibniz and Spinoza," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 246–74. Mendelssohn's reaction was hardly exceptional. One need only remember Wolff's defense against Joachim Lange's venomous attack on him as a Spinozist. See Christian Wolff, *Erinnerungen wieder diejenigen, die in seiner Metaphysik den Spinozisinum endecket zu haben vermeinen*, in *Leipziger gelehrte Zeitungen* (1723): 527ff.

exactly what he said. The germinal liberal age coming on the heels of the French revolution, the age that attempted the abolition of classes within society, saw also the abrogation of the need for philosophic gradation. It was no longer philosophers on the one hand, the vulgar on the other. As for the *vulgus*, it would henceforth consist of potential philosophers (everyone is potentially equal, and everyone can scale all heights, intellectual or other), and would become philosophers (or scientists) *in actu* in the right circumstances, which were just around the corner.[6] That being the case, the need for the philosopher to be cautious became superfluous. The forces of darkness, ecclesiastical or other, had been conquered, and these had been philosophy's perennial enemies. Furthermore, rationalism had won; everything became possible, and Utopia, philosophic or non-philosophic, became attainable. There was no longer a need for a philosophic Regime on the one hand and for non-philosophic, exoteric, reformist Laws on the other.

This view quickly became generally accepted. At the same time, the fact that philosophers of previous ages did not share this view was also quickly forgotten. One can hardly explain otherwise the fact that historians, poets, and others turned Spinoza from an atheistic philosopher into a God-saturated philosopher, as Novalis described him.[7]

I cannot, in this limited space, delineate the history of the interpretation and misinterpretation of Spinoza in recent times. Hence, this essay is devoted to a keen and consistent critic of Spinoza, who published his critique of Spinoza over a hundred years ago. Rereading the writings of this anti-Spinozist, who read Spinoza without regard to the dominant "spirit of his times," is a needful corrective.[8] A sharp-witted and learned theologian, he succeeded in tearing off the mask concealing Spinoza's philosophy. From his writings we relearn about the unbridgeable opposition of philosophy and theology. This important theologian was Samuel David Luzzatto.[9]

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[6] See *Tractatus Politicus* 2, 5, p. 292 (Elwes translation).

[7] "Spinoza ist ein gotttrunkener Mensch. Der Spinozismus ist eine Übersättigung mit Gottheit." ["Spinoza is a man intoxicated with God. Spinozism is a super-saturation with divinity."—ed.] (*Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn [Leipzig: 1892], 3: 318).

[8] His critique of Maimonides is equally vigorous. See Chapter 10: On the Interpretation of Maimonides: the Cases of Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am.

[9] Luzzatto, born in Triest in 1800, died in Padua in 1865. Some of Luzzatto's chief writings (in Italian and Hebrew) are "Dogmatic Theology"; "Judaism Illustrated"; "A Dialogue on the Kabbalah"; "The Essence of Judaism"; "Lectures on Ethical-Jewish Theology"; "An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Exegesis"; writings on Genesis, Exodus, and Isaiah; "Fundamental Notions of the Torah"; and various writings

II

In 1858 Luzzatto wrote the introduction to his interpretation (written in Hebrew) of *Ecclesiastes*, which had been written thirty-eight years earlier in Trieste, when Luzzatto was only twenty years old. Making use of the opportunity, Luzzatto expresses his "disgust" for Spinoza. As a matter of fact, the real purpose for the publication of his commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, which lay in his desk-drawer for thirty-eight years, was the hope that it might serve as an antidote to the philosophy of Spinoza. Luzzatto informs us that "in these days Spinoza's ethics prevails everywhere"[10] and that even the "great of Israel" and their rabbis praise Spinoza. Luzzatto is amazed to find that the rabbis of Israel do not hesitate to term "a fool" and "a crude person" whoever "sees the snake" wrapped around Spinoza's words, and he attempts to warn the many "not to be charmed by him, and not to be trapped by [his] tissue of lies." Spinoza's teaching, says Luzzatto toward the end of his introduction, stands in total opposition to religion, and specifically to the religion of Israel, and that is the reason for his hating it.

Luzzatto wrote five articles relating to Spinoza, most of them in the 1820s. They were originally published in *Hamishtadel*, in *Otzsar Neḥmad* (Vol. 2), and in *HaMagid* (Vol. 3), and were reprinted under the title "Anti-Spinoza" (*Neged Spinoza*) in *Meḥqere Ha-Yahadut*.[11]

Luzzatto's opposition to Spinoza is none other than the natural opposition of theology and religion to philosophy. Philosophy defines man as ζῷον λογιστικόν, the animal possessing reason. What distinguishes man from other beings inhabiting the cosmos is his λόγος, his reason ("thought" is the term used by Luzzatto). If the distinction determines the definition, and the definition the essence, then the essence of man is his reason, his intellect. A corollary of this is that man's perfection lies in the perfection of his intellect. When, then,

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collected under the headings of "The Written Law" and "The Oral Law" (including "The Writing of the Mishna and Maimonides" and "Against Spinoza"). Several of these works were collected in his *Meḥqere Ha-Yahadut* (Warsaw: Hatsefira Press, 1913); some are reprinted (with an additional selection) in his *Ketavim*, ed. Menahem Immanuel Hartom (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1976).

[10] "A Commentary on Ecclesiastes," *Otsar Neḥmad* 4 (1864): 47; reprinted in *Meḥqere Ha-Yahadut*.

[11] Vol. 1, pt. 2, bk. 4, pp. 198–222.

should be man's sought-for way of life? The attempt to attain this way of life. That is the whole of man.[12]

That is not the viewpoint of theology, for which Luzzatto serves as a spokesman. Happiness, or, in medieval Hebrew idiom, *hatslaḥa* [which also means "success"—ed], will be attained (that is the charge leveled at philosophy) by a mere few, those gifted by God or Nature.[13] The many are thus constrained to continue to "walk in darkness,"[14] never to be blessed by nature or divine salvation. This is the issue at stake, the origin of the natural opposition of philosophy and theology: religion cannot sanction the philosophical definition of man, nor the philosophical ethics, the philosophical way of life leading to happiness that is contained in this definition. That political order that is religion's primary goal will not be possible, unless some sort of reward is guaranteed for the sanctioned activities of the many—unless they too can share, potentially, in human perfection.

It becomes exigent, then, for Luzzatto and theology to magnify, nay, to exalt that function of the soul (according to some) or that part of the soul (according to others)[15] that philosophical ethics insists on

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[12] Cf. Al-Farabi, *Falsafat Alfātun*, in *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi*, vol. II, ed. F. Rosenthal and R. Walzer (London: The Warburg Institute, 1943), *passim*, esp. pp. 12–17 (Arabic text), pp. 9–15 (Latin text).

[13] The equation of God and Nature is, of course, far older than Spinoza and in fact was revived before Spinoza. See Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* III, 32: *idhā ta'ammalt al-afʿāl al-'ilāhiyya aʿnī al-afʿāl al-ṭabiʿiyya* ("if you consider the divine actions—I mean to say the natural actions"). See also Quirinus Breen, "Melancthon's Reply to G. Pico della Mirandola," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13 (1952): 424. One might consider the possibility that this doctrine originated with Numenius, possibly as a result of his interpretation of Plato's *Second Epistle* (312e). Numenius's tripartite God is both ποιητής [creator—ed.] (or νομοθέτης [lawgiver—ed.]. Plato's δημιουργός [artisan or maker—ed.]) and ποίημα [thing created—ed.] (or ἀπόγονος [thing born—ed.]). See E. A. Leemans, *Studie over den Wijsgeer Numenius van Apamea met Uitgave der Fragmenten* (Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belgique, classe des letters, 37 [1937]: 2), fragm. 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 28, and testim. 24. Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria* 1. 303, 27ff. (testim. 25), where Proclus believes that Numenius found his tripartite God in the *Timaeus* (39e7). See E. R. Dodds "Numenius and Ammonius," in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 12–16. Although Dodds is, as usual, both clear and in command of the sources, I believe the subject has not been exhausted and calls for further discussion. I intend to come back to it in a future article. [Note that Motzkin never returned to this theme in his writings and this footnote stands as his most extensive treatment of the subject.—ed.]

[14] [*Isaiah* 9:1 (9:2 according to the King James edition).—ed.]

[15] Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* 402b10, 411a30ff., 413b13, 414b29, 432a20, 436a1, 449b5, 450a16, 454a12, and *passim; De Iuventute Et Senectute* 467b17ff.; *De Respiratione* 477a15; Plato, *Republic* 436b, 504b, 550b, and 580d–e.

subduing; namely, the emotional or bestial part of the soul.[16] As philosophy has pictured it, the emotional or bestial part of the soul is but the horses pulling the cart, and these need a horseman to keep a grip on the reins.[17] That horseman is reason.

Theology does not banish reason altogether, but relegates it to a secondary role. "The power of thought," according to Luzzatto, is half of man, but the less reliable half.[18] We can see with our own eyes where reason may lead us: to counterfeit opinions that corrupt mankind, that is, "to the perfidious views promulgated in his *Ethics* by the famous philosopher Spinoza." Religion is led to define virtue as a moral, not an intellectual, good. The bestial, emotional part of the soul is rehabilitated. It is, after all, that part of the soul that is, in Luzzatto's words, the origin of "pity and mercy." And it is commiseration that is, according to Luzzatto, the whole of man.

Elsewhere,[19] Luzzatto tries to explain that intellect and reason are not even helpful for man in his attempt to attain success (happiness), whereas "commiseration alone is sufficient to make man choose the good and shun evil."[20] Apparently, pity is more than half of man; at any rate, it is his better half. It is not reason, not logos, that should guide man, but emotion, albeit pious emotion.

But what does Luzzatto find in Spinoza's *Ethics*? "Pity and mercy are nothing but the portion of fools and a womanly weakness," or as Spinoza says, *muliebri misericordia*.[21] As a philosopher, Spinoza determines that one should try to see to it that "one does not have compassion for anything." A man who lives according to the dictates of reason endeavors as much as possible to prevent himself from being touched by pity.[22] According to Spinoza, one must obey only the commandments of sane reason (*sana ratione*).[23]

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[16] See *Ethics*, 5, Introduction: "quantum et quale imperium in affectus habeat ad eosdem coercendum et moderandum" ["The extent and nature of its [sc. the mind or reason's] dominion over the emotions, for their control and moderation" (Elwes trans.)—ed.].

[17] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 246aff. On a related topic, see the interesting article of P. H. von Blanckenhagen, "Two Horses and a Charioteer," in J. Cropsey (ed.), *Ancients and Moderns* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 88–94.

[18] *Mehqere Ha-Yahadut*, p. 198.

[19] See *Yesode Hatorah* (Padua: 1865), p. vii.

[20] *Ibid*., p. 16.

[21] *Ethics*, 2, prop. 49, schol. Cf. 4, prop. 37, schol. 1.

[22] "Homo qui ex dictamine rationis vivit, conatus quantum potest efficere ne comiseratione tangatur" (*Ethics*, 4, prop. 50, cor.)

[23] *Ethics*, 4, prop. 37, schol. 1.

The philosopher, then, does not have a high regard for the many who are ruled by emotion, and he calls attention to their etiolated, sun-deprived state. The multitude, the vulgar, do not attain the degree of humanity that inheres potentially in the species. But since the real is identical with the perfect, as Spinoza notes,[24] human beings are, *strictu senso*, human beings only when they are philosophers, a lesson already learned once the proper corollary is drawn from those twin dialogues, the *Hipparchus* and the *Minos*.[25] One can say that the aim of Spinoza's *Ethics* is to demonstrate the superiority of the philosopher over the ignorant, that is to say, over the nonphilosopher, as he notes at the end of his book: "From [all] that has been said one can see how powerful the wise man is, and how much he surpasses the ignorant [*i.e.*, the multitude of nonphilosophers]."[26] This position of Spinoza's is not original; and here, as much as on any other occasion, he is an authentic spokesman of the philosophic tradition. This is indeed the perennial, the central, aim of the philosopher: to goad the able, that is to say, the potential philosopher, to set out on the road of philosophy, on the constant quest for his own nature and that of the cosmos.

For the sake of whom does the philosopher undertake this enterprise? For the sake of the enterprise itself, and for the sake of its bearer, the philosopher himself. The philosopher is, in fact, as the *Hipparchus* makes clear, the true φιλοκερδής, that is, the lover of profit: to be sure, rarefied, superior, true profit. Does not Spinoza himself define the good as the profitable or the useful? He says: By good I understand that which we certainly know is useful to us.[27] The problematics of the tension between the good and the useful (or the profitable) are, however, absent in Spinoza; and here he parts company with the ancients and walks the path prepared only a short time before by the philosophers of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, Machiavelli, Bacon, and Hobbes.[28]

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[24] *Ethics*, 4, intro.

[25] See L. Strauss, "On the Minos," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 74–75.

[26] *Ethics*, 5, prop. 42, schol.

[27] "Per bonum id intelligam quod certo scimus nobis esse utile" (*Ethics*, 4, definitions). See also 4, prop. 35, cor. 2. Cf. *Republic* 581c.

[28] Spinoza is, to be sure, far more radical than Hobbes. For Hobbes, justice is still possible, whereas for Spinoza it no longer is. See Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 28, 71, 169–70. Cf. also Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schoken Books, 1965), pp. 229–36.

Spinoza's definition, which is the first definition of the fourth part of the *Ethics*—the part dealing with the servitude of man, that is, with man's irrational aspect—subtly dismisses the need for religion. We no longer need it, for there is no profit in it, no use in it for the philosopher or for his enterprise.

III

Luzzatto pinpoints the core of Spinoza's antireligious philosophy. He notes, "The preservation of one's own body and [the regard for] one's own profit, that is the whole of [Spinoza's] teaching." For Spinoza says that "the endeavor after self preservation is the primary and only foundation of virtue."[29] And later he states that "the primary and sole foundation of virtue or of the rational conduct of life is to seek one's own profit."[30] Luzzatto does not cite Spinoza's strongest statement on this issue: "To act absolutely in conformity with virtue is, in us, nothing but acting, living, and preserving our being (these three things have the same meaning) as our reason directs, from the ground of seeking our own profit."[31]

Luzzatto justly states that for Spinoza "thought is the whole of man." One must, of course, keep in mind the identity of "man" with the highest or "best man." Luzzatto further properly notes that for Spinoza, and one may say, for philosophy in general (at least up to Spinoza's time), the *affectus*, emotion or passion, is more akin to vice than to virtue. But Luzzatto is mistaken when he claims that Spinoza is oblivious of emotion and thinks that emotion is not a natural part of man. On the contrary, not only is Spinoza not oblivious of the affections, and not only does he devote to them two of the five parts of the *Ethics* (132 out of 259 propositions); he is actually the first philosopher to assert *in extenso* the natural right of emotion. Nevertheless, Luzzatto is not far from the truth: for Spinoza, the emotional or bestial part of man is the inferior part and should be subdued, at least by the man

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[29] "Conatus sese conservandi primum et unicum virtutis est fundamentum" (*Ethics*, 4, prop. 22, cor.).

[30] "Primim et unicum virtutis, seu recte, vivendi rationis, fundamentum est suum utile quaerere" (*Ethics*, 5, prop. 41, dem.).

[31] Ex virtute absolute agere nihil aliud in nobis est, quam ex dictu rationis agere, vivere, suum esse conservare (haec tria idem significant) ex fundamento proprium utile quaerendi" (*Ethics*, 4, prop. 24).

of reason, who is Spinoza's main concern. As theology's spokesman, Luzzatto cannot countenance this position, as I have pointed out.

In his writings on Maimonides, in spite of his radical opposition to and severe criticism of Maimonides, Luzzatto is faithful to the text.[32] In his critique of Spinoza, on the other hand, Luzzatto often misquotes, quotes out of context, or misrepresents Spinoza's position. This may not be by design, as is clear from the following quotation: "Whoever has properly understood that everything follows from the necessity of the divine nature, and comes to pass according to the eternal laws and rules of nature, will in truth discover nothing which is worthy of hatred, laughter, or contempt…"[33] Luzzatto claims that were Spinoza decent, "an honest speaker," he would end this sentence, "nor would he find anything worthy of love, praise, or admiration [*aut amore, laude, admiratione, dignum sit*]." And, continues Luzzatto, whoever does not live according to reason, inasmuch as he is a human being, truly loves good deeds and their doers, and hates evil and injustice and their doers. A man who subdues his nature, neither loving nor hating, is no longer a human being. But Luzzatto disregards the end of the sentence of the scholium where Spinoza continues: "[Whoever has properly understood, etc.] will so far as human virtue is able, endeavor *to do well*, as we say, and to *rejoice*." And he further ignores Spinoza's remark two sentences later on, concluding the scholium: "But this I say expressly of the man who lives according to guidance of reason. For he who is moved neither by reason nor pity to be of any service to others is properly called inhuman; for he seems to be unlike a man."

Is there need to mention the emphasis Spinoza places on the (intellectual) love of God, or on the life of joy and enjoyment? In truth, Luzzatto simply fails to express what he feels: he understands somehow that Spinoza totally gainsays hatred as well as sorrow,[34] and acclaims love and joy[35]—in proper measure. And here we come upon a cardinal instance of the polarity of philosophy, for which Spinoza serves (at least in this case) as a spokesman, and of theology or religion, which is so consistently represented by Luzzatto. We remember that

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[32] See Chapter 10: On the Interpretation of Maimonides: the Cases of Samuel David Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am, esp. pp. 132–37.

[33] "Qui recte novit, omnia ex naturae divinae necessitate sequi et secundum aeternas naturae leges et regulas fieri, is sane nihil reperiet, quod odio, risu, aut contemptu dignum sit" (*Ethics*, 4, prop. 50. schol.).

[34] *Ethics*, 4, props. 41, 45.

[35] *Ethics*, 4, props. 41 and 45, schol. See prop 35. Cf. Cicero, *De Amicitia* 5.

the prototype of the philosopher, Plato's Socrates, laughed on several occasions, but never wept; whereas Jesus, as related in the New Testament, weeps but does not laugh.[36] One is not surprised to find, then, that the single occurrence of the word "philosopher" in the *Ethics* is in connection with joy (*gaudium*).[37]

Philosophy, which represents reason, is optimistic by its very nature. Optimism (which may be symbolized by laughter) is the view that this world, even if not the best of all possible worlds, may be transformed into the best of all possible worlds; or, in other words, that those evil things that exist in the best of all possible worlds may be neutralized by knowledge. Reason may not only comprehend what is; it can also correct it. Philosophy is by nature antitragic, as Nietzsche has so convincingly demonstrated in *The Birth of Tragedy*.[38] The common denominator of religion, myth, and tragedy is clear: all three assert the omnipotence of God or fate and the impotence of man. The anguish of impotence reveals itself in tears.[39]

In claiming that Spinoza (representing philosophy) was anerotic, Luzzatto was preceded, perhaps more skillfully, by Aristophanes. According to Aristophanes, the philosopher is anerotic and amusic; in other words, he hates the beautiful.[40] Aristophanes was rebutted by

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[36] See also *Ethics*, 4, prop. 42; "Joy is never excessive. Sorrow, however, is always bad."

[37] *Ethics*, 3, prop. 57, schol.

[38] See Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1961), p. 7. Cf. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, chap. 15: "Socrates is the prototype of the theoretical optimist…."

[39] Cf. Francis Bacon, *Wisdom of the Ancients*, fable 11, Bacon's retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus's failure brought on melancholy, "an affection not suitable to philosophy." "The impotence of man" does not preclude the possibility of personal salvation. If it did, religion would be intolerable. But "grace" and the active intellect are not synonymous. To both the classical philosophers and to the moderns man is "potent" in ways that no religion would sanction; according to the pre-moderns, man is able to unite with the active intellect and thus become divine. The moderns make man the equal of God in shaping and reshaping nature itself. The emphasis on the independence of man and his potentially "divine" status is peculiar to philosophy in all its manifestations. It is a religious heresy. In every religion, man is essentially dependent, a weak (albeit potentially "good") child of an omnipotent, omniscient Father.

[40] See Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, p. 313. Cf. F. M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium," in *The Unwritten Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 69. Cf. M. Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* ed. W. Kluback and J. T. Wilde (London: Vision Press, 1962), pp. 22–23: "Gefühle, auch die schönsten, gehören nicht in die Philsophie" ["Feelings, no matter how beautiful, have no part in philosophy."—ed.]

Plato: the Philosopher is the erotic man *par excellence*.[41] Unfortunately, I cannot give this subject a proper treatment in this article.[42]

At any rate, Luzzatto keenly observes that political or social philosophy on the one hand, and metaphysics on the other, are inextricably intertwined. Luzzatto further notes that "looking at things solely through the power of thought" and the discovery of nature made the philosopher (Spinoza) deny the existence of a creator. If necessity is a determinant, there is no room for a god, for whom the world is as "clay in the hand of the potter, by his will made longer, by his will shorter."[43] Nor would the philosopher's god have desire or will at all.[44] This god would not, of course, intervene in the affairs of this world. One can see that Luzzatto's claim that Spinoza is antireligious and an atheist in the traditional sense of the word is not without foundation. Of course, Spinoza is more vulnerable on this point than the classical philosophers. He belongs to modernity, which has done away with teleology. Luzzatto quotes Spinoza: "Nature has set no end before herself, and all final causes are nothing but human fictions."[45]

Luzzatto is aware that the most likely criticism of his reading of Spinoza would be based on the central position of "God" in Spinoza's

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[41] Socrates understands nothing but the erotic things (*Symposium* 177d7). Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's "Symposium"* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. xxxvii, 11, and *passim*. Cf. also Rosen, "The Role of Eros in Plato's *Republic*," *Review of Metaphysics* 18 (March, 1965): 452–75, esp. 453, 475.

[42] For a different juxtaposition see the section "The Birth of Tragedy," chap. 2, in Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. One can of course argue that Nietzsche's Socrates is a creature of his early, most vehement anti-Socratic period and that, at any rate, Socrates is not Nietzsche's idea of a philosopher. But the ascription of optimism to philosophy does not rely on Nietzsche's testimony alone. It was a well-known ancient philosopher who first called attention to fear's being a constituent element of religion, and fear is certainly more akin to tragedy and pessimism than to optimism (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b27, 1452b1, 1453b12). Is not philosophy (no less than comedy) the attempt to "ascend from fearful doubt to joy and certitude," as Dante observed in his letter to Can Grande della Scala?

[43] [This expression is taken from a poem traditionally recited in the evening service on Yom Kippur.—ed.]

[44] See for example, Spinoza's *Epistle* 54 (to Hugo Boxel) (Bruder ed., *Epistle* 58, p. 311). Cf. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. 16, note 28 (Bruder ed., p. 216): "quam quia in Dei potestate ita sunt, ut lutum in potestate figuli, qui ex eadem facit vasa, aliud ad decus, aliud ad dedecus, et *non propterea quod praemoniti sunt*" ["So far as things are such with regard to the power of God, like clay in the power of the potter, who makes vessels in the same way, whether honorable or dishonorable, and not because they are forewarned."—ed.].

[45] "Natura finem nullum sibi praefixum habet, et omnes causae finales nihil, nisi humana sunt figmenta" (*Ethics*, 1, appendix [Bruder ed., p. 218]).

philosophy. His reply: "Indeed he, Spinoza, does constantly carry the name of God on his lips, but in his heart there is no God!" Further, he remarks on "Spinoza's audacity [*ḥutzpa*], who makes himself appear as a servant and worshipper of God, whereas the deep intention of his words is to communicate that there is no God in the world, no creator and created, and the world and what is in it was and will be always as it is."[46] This audacity is unsurpassed: to honor God in the open and to deny his existence in secret.[47]

Luzzatto could have further buttressed his argument. Neither one of the two mainstays of religion, *humilitas* and *poenitentia*,[48] are held to be virtues by Spinoza.[49] But at least in one respect, in his contempt for the many, Spinoza is beholden to the classical philosophers, for whom he has no use. To the extent that there is any place for religion, it is on account of the ignorance of the multitude and its intellectual decrepitude—as long as it has not been improved, for indeed, *terret vulgus nisi metuat*.[50]

Luzzatto's famous article in HaMagid (1859) ends with the following vehement anti-Spinoza verse:

ואנחנו בדרכי חסד ורחמים נאחוזה
ובשם אלהינו נדגול ונעלוזה
ולא ידבק בידינו מאומה מלימודי שפינזה.

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[46] *Meḥqere Ha-Yahadut*, p. 221. Cf. S. H. Bergmann, "We and Spinoza's God," in *Hogim u-Ma'aminim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1959), p. 76: "There is an unfathomable distance between Spinoza's God and the God of religion." Cf. also H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company-Meridian Books, 1958), 1: 177: "Spinoza's 'God' is merely an appeasive term for the most comprehensive principle of the universe," and "Spinoza's God is not the one of traditional theology." See also *Ethics*, 1, prop. 31, where intellect and will are attributed to *natura naturata* ["passive nature"—ed.], not *natura naturans* ["active nature"—ed.]: "intellectus actu…et voluntas…ad naturam naturam, non vero ad naturantum referri debent" ["The intellect in function…as will…should be referred to passive nature and not to active nature," Elwes trans.—ed.].

[47] The philosopher does not attack religion openly. Cf. Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, chap. 17: "Whenever a man talks loudly against religion, always suspect…" "Not attacking openly" and "accepting" are not identical. For Spinoza, religion (and dogmatic theology) were, if anything, far more akin to superstition than to philosophy. See Shlomo Pines, "Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Maimonides and Kant," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 20 (1968): 37.

[48] ["Humility" and "penance"—ed.]

[49] *Ethics*, 4, props. 53, 54.

[50] ["The crowd plays the tyrant when it is not in fear," Elwes translation.—ed.] *Ethics*, 4, prop. 54, schol.

As for us, we shall stick to good grace and compassion,
In our Lord we'll rejoice in our very own fashion,
Not a speck of Spinoza will cling to our ration.[51]

Luzzatto was not altogether unjustified in his anti-Spinoza fulminations, for it was his view that Spinoza was not only a-Jewish, but was the most amoral philosopher of all time.

[51] Spinoza would not have been surprised by Luzzatto's attack, for the Jews "despise" philosophy (*Theologico-Policital Treatise*, 11, end [Elwes trans., p. 164]). That said, one should not fall into the common error of believing Spinoza any less critical of Christianity than he is of Judaism. His accommodation to Christianity is not more than Paul's being a "Greek with the Greeks." (Cf. 1 *Corinthians* 9: 19–23: "To those under the law I became as one under the law… that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law… that I might win those outside the law.") See Shlomo Pines, "Spinoza's *Tractatus*," pp. 16ff., esp. pp. 21ff. See also Leo Strauss, "How to Study Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Il.: The Free Press, 1952), p. 190. Bayle (*Dictionnaire*, 13: 419) finds it of course "une chose assez curieuse… il professa ouvertement l'Evangile" ["a very curious thing… he openly professes the Gospel"—ed.]. It is curious because, according to Bayle, Spinoza was the "grand ennemi de la dissimulation: il declara librement ses doutes et sa croyance" ["great enemy of concealment: he freely stated his doubts and his beliefs"—ed.] (p. 416). Perhaps compared to Bayle, but apparently not always.

CHAPTER TEN

ON THE INTERPRETATION OF MAIMONIDES: THE CASES OF SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO AND AHAD HA'AM

Article[1]

I

The controversy surrounding Maimonides' writings, whether "legal" or "philosophic," originated in Maimonides' own lifetime. His many books, treatises and compilations had hardly appeared before they were roundly attacked throughout Jewry. Common to all attacks on Maimonides was the realization by *shlumey emuney yisrael*—the faithful of Israel[2]—who read Maimonides' writings with great care, that he was propounding unorthodox theories and hinting at views which could hardly be harmonized with tradition. Although for a time Maimonides' foes were sufficiently powerful to bring about a public burning of his writings, ultimately his position was restored: the orthodox consider him the most important legal and religious authority after Moses, while others regard him as the most important philosopher of Jewish origin.

How did it happen that Maimonides' position became stronger as time went on? There are two main reasons for this. The first is his total mastery of any subject to which he turned his mind. "There was none like unto Moses" and Maimonides' opponents failed if only because their slingshots were inadequate against Maimonides' stature. Secondly, the centrality of Maimonides within the Jewish tradition may be attributed to his own foresight. His literary craft successfully parried all attacks against him: any citation from his writings which

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[1] [Originally published in *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1977): 39–47.—ed.]

[2] See for example the epistle of Judah b. Joseph Alfachar the physician to David Kimchi in *Iggerot Hamoreh* (Epistles concerning *The Guide*), ed. David Ottensosser (Fürth: Zürndorfer und Sommer, 1846), p. 12. Cf. also S. L. Rappoport, *Iggerot Shir* (Pt. IV), ed. Eisig Gräber (Przemysl: E. Gräber, 1886), pp. 117, 254.

would prove, *prima facie*, that he upheld any untraditional view, can be offset by many more citations to the contrary.[3]

Maimonides foresaw this theologico-political battle, and he prepared the ground so that his future supporters would be better equipped, and would eventually triumph over those who were of the opinion that "would it be that this book [*The Guide of the Perplexed*] never came into being, that it were never translated and never read."[4] For the most part, neither his supporters nor his detractors were aware of his intentions.[5] The former believed, as a rule, that they were defending a "Great of Israel," one of a long line in a tradition of exegetes and codifiers; Maimonides' sometime strange assertions were seen by them as insignificant or as unwitting errors. In any case they called attention to the fact that the odd views, mentioned from time to time in his writings, which were contrary to the religious Law, were offset by the far more numerous instances of traditional statements found in Maimonides. As to his opponents, they held to the view that Maimonides' intention was to disestablish the Law, to destroy the religion of Israel. Since it was clear to them that Maimonides was a philosopher, for whom the search for truth and for "demonstrative conclusions" is primary, they concluded wrongly that whenever a philosopher turns to the things of religion, his intention must be to "uproot the trees of the orchard."

His foes were subtler than most of his supporters.[6] They saw clearly that Maimonides' allegiance was not that of the run of the mill doctor of the Law. But they misunderstood the position of the philosophers, who, at least until the sixteenth century, considered religion to be

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[3] See for example the epistle of Aaron b. Meshulam to Meir Abulafia in Meir Abulafia, *Kitab al-Rasail*, ed. Y. Brill (Paris: 1871), p. 35. Cf. also S. L. Rappoport, "Zikkaron laʾaḥaronim," *Hakarmel* (New Series) 4 (1879): letter 3 (sent to S. D. Luzzatto from Lvov, 1831), p. 490 (*asim resen lemo fi* etc.).

[4] See p. 17 of the epistle of Judah Alfachar cited in n. 2. See also the epistle of Meir b. Todros Halevi of Toledo to Nachmanides (*Iggerot Hamoreh*, p. 26): "The praise of God on its tongue and life and death in its mouth. Sometime to the left, and sometime to the right…then I understood that there was deceit in it."

[5] See Samuel Ibn Tibbon, *Maʾamar Yiqqavu Hamayim*, ed. Moredcai Leib Bisseliches (Pressburg: Anton Schmid, 1837), p. 175.

[6] Excluding philosophers. An interesting exception is also Shir, S. L. Rappoport, see notes 1, 2, 9 and 18. Cf. also *Yeshurun* 3, ed. J. J. Kobak (Lemberg: 1857), p. 44: "And how he [Maimonides] interpreted the Rabbis' discussions [in the *Talmud*] so as to bring them into line with his own views, etc." (Rappoport is here quoting Raphael Kirchheim).

necessary in the political, if not in the theoretical domain. The position of the philosophers was clearly expressed by Averroes:[7]

> In general, [the philosophers] hold that the [religious] constitutions are necessary political arts, whose principles are based on reason and the law [*shar*ʿ; also inspiration], especially in regard to what is common to all constitutions… they hold that there is no need to oppose these general principles, whether by positive or negative assertions, for example [the question] of whether we should worship God or not or even a greater [question]: does He exist or not?… And in general, since the [various] religions lead to wisdom by a common route, [the philosophers] view them as obligatory; for philosophy only leads to the happiness of the one [or: few] who is [or: are] intelligent, and it is his role to study both wisdom and the commandments of the Law with the aim of teaching the many in a general way.

This is, then, the tendency of an important philosopher who was a contemporary of Maimonides and, *mutatis mutandis*, of Maimonides himself. To be sure, we are referring here to Maimonides' philosophy of religion (not identical in every respect with that of Averroes), that is to say, to his political philosophy; we are not discussing his views of philosophy proper, that is, metaphysics. There can be little doubt that though Maimonides had a dual aim, and that the welfare of the Israelite religion or nation was dear to him, his political philosophy was but "the silver ornament covering the golden apple"; it was the outer covering of his First Philosophy.

The defenses with which Maimonides surrounded his teachings proved sufficient, and withstood the repeated onslaughts of his opponents. Maimonides became, sooner than one might have thought, the *Halakhic* (religious-legal) authority *par excellence*. As to his philosophic treatise, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, it continued to be viewed suspiciously by the rabbis. It was never accepted by the Jews.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the evaluation of Maimonides was radically transformed. The post-Kantian era, influenced apparently by the new *Religionsphilosophie*,[8] evolved a new interpretation of Maimonides. He was now presumed to have tried to bridge philosophy and the Law, to "harmonize" reason and faith, to show that both

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[7] Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* [*Incoherence of the Incoherence*], ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, Dhakhāʾir al-ʿarab 38 (Cairo: Dar al-Maʿārif, 1965), pp. 866 ff. [A. L. Motzkin trans.—ed.].

[8] See for example Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke* (Berlin: 1804) I, 1, pp. 12 ff.

science and religion can cohabit. The gulf between tradition and the search for truth may be bridged, or at any rate befogged. Until that time it was thought that one could choose to become a philosopher and so determine the role of religion according to philosophic criteria,[9] or to be a theologian and define the role of philosophy according to theological ones, thus transforming philosophy into at best[10] an *ancilla* of theology. The transformation within philosophy, which began with the advent of modernity in the sixteenth century, came to a head two centuries later. As a result of this transformation, and the upheavals of the late eighteenth century which were caused by it, a new teaching was promulgated, and the dual teaching of philosophy became extinct. No more theory for the select and praxis (religious or other) for the many. Henceforth there would be ideology—praxis would be distilled and elevated, while philosophy would degenerate (and rightly so) to the same level. There would no longer be any difference between them.[11]

If philosophy was now stripped of its double aim, there would no longer be any need for esoterics and exoterics, for that special way of communication which had served philosophy for over two millennia and whose purpose was to transmit simultaneously two messages, two teachings, to two different audiences: to potential philosophers, on the one hand, "chapter headings" in the search for the true science and the true way of life, and on the other to "those who walk in the darkness," for whom it would be necessary to transmit a systematic teaching, a fixed codex for daily living, which would permit the continued existence and well being of the political body.

Within one generation this peculiar transmutation of modernity succeeded in covering over everything that preceded it. The fact that not long before people used to think or act (write) differently, was no longer even a dim recollection.

This development had unfortunate consequences in the history of philosophy. During the next century and a half most philosophic

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[9] And sometimes, of course, to assert that religion has no function at all in an enlightened state, a view that has become more accepted since Machiavelli and Bacon.

[10] Or at worst. Philosophy apparently prospered more where it was persecuted or even totally banned than in those places where it was turned into a "system" or was officially sanctioned.

[11] One might reflect upon the possibility that the death of esotericism (somewhat after 1789) foreshadowed the development that culminated in the "death of God" about a century later.

inquiry (and in particular the interpretation of earlier philosophy) was barren; "historians of philosophy," especially in Germany (and as a result of the German primacy in philosophy also in other countries) tended to view earlier philosophers as similar in style—if not always in substance—to the philosophers of their own time.

The interpretation of Jewish philosophy followed the same route. If the dual teaching is defunct, then the philosopher's thought and speech are identical.[12] If a philosopher, therefore, continually protests his adherence to orthodoxy, one can hardly doubt his intentions. If we find him making, from time to time, surprising—if not shocking—statements, we should not be unsettled. These are undoubtedly due to carelessness, or perhaps to the philosopher's inattentiveness to what he writes. Interpreters of this sort would stick to their views even if the philosopher were to preface his book with many introductions, in which he would beg the reader to pay close attention to any contradiction in his writings. They would cling to their views even were the philosopher to declare repeatedly that some truths must be concealed. This approach would force them to conclude that the philosopher must be a mystic, or be referring to some strange personal experiences or else hinting at his own special future role. These last considerations lie perhaps in the domain of another discipline—possibly the "psychology of philosophy," and are at any rate outside rational discussion of philosophy and its history.

The first studies to take up these problems in recent times were those of Leo Strauss, among them "Maimunis Lehre von der Prophetie und

[12] Any point of view which asserts otherwise became in time "immoral." Maimonides, who maintained the dual teaching, disagreed: what is more immoral than to force one of feeble vision to try and "look far," that is, try to grasp the intelligibles, or to "feed meat to babies"? See *The Guide* I, 32, 33. There is nothing more immoral than "taʿlīm al-jumhūr bi-ṭuruq al-naẓar al-ḥaqīqiyya wa-ʾakhdhuhum bi-taṣawwur māhiyyāt al-ʾumūr ʿalā mā hiyya ʿalayhi"—teaching the multitude in the true theoretical methods and [making them] start to grasp the essences of things as they really are. Compare S. L. Rappoport about Abraham Ibn Ezra in his letter to Luzzatto, *Iggerot Shir* I, ed. E. Gräber (Przemysl: 1885), p. 22: "…it is not that he lacked honesty or love for truth.… from time immemorial sages would make a distinction between what they propound in public or to individuals whom they know. And so he who writes books (who is like one who preaches to thousands)…will speak [in one book] by way of allusion and in another book a little more explicitly. If you do not believe me, take a look at Maimonides in his book *The Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide*…and this is the case in almost all the books of the great authors." Cf. *Phaedrus* 275d.

ihre Quellen"[13] (1933), "Quelques remarques sur la science politique de Maimonide et de Fārābī"[14] (1936), "Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis"[15] (1937),—and especially "The Literary Character of *The Guide of the Perplexed*."[16]

Strauss heeded the cautionary strictures of the medieval philosophers, especially of Maimonides, and only hinted at some of their views, teachings and philosophic speculations. His own style recalls the style which, according to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, was used by the Turkish philosopher Al-Farabi.[17] This may be why Strauss' own studies did not immediately transform the interpretation of Maimonides. His studies were received with unease—sometimes outright hostility[18]—by the philosophic and scholarly community. They were more often almost totally disregarded.

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[13] *Le Monde Oriental* 27: 99–139. Reprinted in *Philosopie und Gesetz: Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und seiner Vorläufer* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1935). [English translation by Eve Adler: "The Philosophic Foundation of the Law: Maimonides's Doctrine of Prophecy and its Sources" in L. Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and his Predecessors*, trans. E. Adler (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995).—ed.]

[14] *Revue des Etudes Juives* 100: 1–37. [English translation by R. Bartlett: "Some Remarks on the Political Science of Maimonides and Farabi," *Interpretation* 18 (1990): 3–30.—ed.]

[15] *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 87: 93–105. [English translation by G. Bartlett and S. Minkov: "The Place of the Doctrine of Providence According to Maimonides," *The Review of Metaphysics* 57 (2004): 537–49.—ed.]

[16] *Essays on Maimonides*, ed. S. W. Baron (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 37–91. Reprinted in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952).

[17] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *The Very Elegant Speech on the Dignity of Man* (Annapolis: St. John's College, 1952), p. 17. See A. L. Motzkin, "ha Heʿara el derekh ha-hatslaḥa le-al-Fārābī" ["A Remark about the Way to Happiness"—ed.]. *Iyyun* 23 (1973): 113.

[18] See Julius Guttmann, *Hafilasofya shel hayahadut* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1953), p. 394, n. 476b. See also J. Guttmann, *Filsosofya shel hadat o filsosofia shel haḥoq*? (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1975), vol. v, pt. 9. Other studies of Strauss devoted to Jewish philosophy one may mention are: "On Abravanel's Philosophical Tendency and Political Teaching," in *Isaac Abravanel*, ed. J. B. Trend and H. Loewe (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), pp. 93–129; "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 13, pp. 47–96. (Reprinted in *Persecution*, see above n. 16); "Maimonides' Statement on Political Science," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 22 (1953): 115–130 (Repr. In L. Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?* [Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959]); Introduction, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. xi–lvi. (Repr. in L. Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* [New York: Basic Books, 1968]); "On the plan of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965) (The first seventeen paragraphs of the previous study); "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge," in *Studies*

Shlomo Pines arrived independently at a similar approach to medieval philosophy, although his own way of writing was, for a number of reasons, different.[19] To understand properly Strauss' art of writing one might well turn to the *muqaddima* (introduction) of the *Guide* itself.[20] At any rate, the most significant contribution to the interpretation of Maimonides in our time is the translation of Pines (with an introductory essay by Strauss) of the *Guide*.

Now both those who adhere to this method of interpretation and those who oppose it refer to it as a method which has been recently rediscovered. To be sure its proponents are aware of something which has escaped others, namely that throughout the Middle Ages—and thereafter—everyone in and around philosophy knew that for Maimonides (and for Philosophy in general)[21] philosophic writings have a double purpose: "disseminating the truth to the superior one," and the regulation of the affairs of state. But neither the former nor the latter ever mention that even during the last one hundred and fifty years there were serious readers of Maimonides who continued to read him as he was read during his own lifetime and during the centuries that followed.

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in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 269–283. On Strauss' interpretation of Maimonides see S. Pines, "On Leo Strauss" (in Hebrew), *Molad* 7 (1976): 455–457, [English translation by A. L. Motzkin in *The Independent Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1985): 101–3.—ed.]

[19] See especially "Notes sur la doctrine de la prophetie et la rehabilitation de la matière dans le Kuzari," *Mélanges de philosophie et de la littérature juives* 1 (1957): 253–260; "Quelques réflexions sur Maimonide en guise de preface," in Maimonides, *Le livre de la connaissance*, trans. V. Nikiprowetzky and A. Zaoui (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1961), pp. 1–19; "The Philosophic Sources of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," in Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) pp. lvi–cxxxiv.; "Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Maimonides and Kant," in *Studies in Philosophy, Scripta Hierosolymitana* 20 (1968): 3–54; and also his studies devoted to Abu 'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, especially: "Études sur Awḥad al-Zamân Abu'l Barakât al-Baghdâdî," *Revue des études juives* 103 (1938): 3–64 and volume 104 (1938): 1–33; *Nouvelles Études sur Awḥad al-Zamân Abu-l-Barakât Al-Baghdâdî*, Mémoires de la Société des Études Juives 1 (Paris: Librairie Durlacher, 1955); "Studies in Abu'l Barakāt al-Baghdâdî's Poetics and Metaphysics," in *Studies in Philosophy, Scripta Hierosolymitana* 6 (1960): 120–198.

[20] Al-sabab al-khāmis li-'asbāb al-tanāquḍ aw al-taḍād al-mawjūd fī kitāb…aw fī ta'līf (the fifth cause among the causes of contradictions or contraries found in a book…or in a treatise).

[21] See *The Guide*, waṣiyyat hādhihi al-maqāla (exhortation [on the proper reading] of their treatise [*i.e. The Guide*]). Cf. S. L. Rappoport in *Kerem Ḥemed* 7 (1843): 93–94, about the dilemma of one who has discovered unpopular truths.

II

In this study I should like to mention two of these. One of them considered himself an enemy of Maimonides and of his way, the other an admirer. The first is Samuel David Luzzatto,[22] the second Ahad Ha'am.[23] Both read Maimonides without reference to the scholarly literature of the nineteenth century. Ahad Ha'am did not belong to the academic community; Luzzatto's studies of Maimonides preceded most of this literature.

Luzzatto understood Maimonides' main intention in his "rearrangement" of the Oral Law, of the religion of Israel and its strictures. Maimonides, explains Luzzatto, wanted to suppress those beliefs and those actions within dogmatic theology which are incompatible with natural theology, that is to say with (first) philosophy. Maimonides wanted to do it with two ends in mind. One is the establishment and perpetuation of philosophy, and the other the well-being or perfection of society. Maimonides' first intention is, of course, extra-religious, and for Luzzatto it holds no interest. As for the second, says Luzzatto, "what fault does Maimonides find in the faith of our men of old? [God's] Corporeality, feasting on Leviathan [in paradise], [holy] names and amulets, and such things. How do these beliefs contradict the well-being of society?"[24]

Luzzatto observes the gulf separating Maimonides from dogmatic theology.[25] It is this discovery which prompts Luzzatto's vigorous critique of Maimonides. The one who is sincere in his [belief in] God (says Luzzatto) believes that it is practice, not study, which is primary [*lō hammidrāsh hū hā'iqqār 'elā hamma'āseh*] (*Aboth* 1: 17). But according to

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[22] Born in 1800 in Trieste (then Austria), died in Padua in 1866.

[23] The pen-name of Asher Ginzburg. Born near Kiev in 1856, died in Tel Aviv in 1927.

[24] See his letter to J. H. Schorr, printed in *Otsar Neḥmad* 4 (1864): 116 (reprinted in *Peninim*). This letter is also reprinted in Luzzatto's *Meḥqere Hayahadut* [Studies in Judaism] (Warsaw: Hatsefira, 1913), p. 243. Luzzatto believes that the well-being of society would be best assured by the dissemination and encouragement of the sentiment of pity: "pity alone would suffice to make man choose the good and despise the evil," whereas "reason and understanding are of no use whatsoever for man's benefit and happiness." See his second introduction to *Yesode hatorah* [Elements of the Law] in *Meḥqere Hayahadut* p. vii; p. 16. Cf. his "Neged Spinoza" (*Ibid*., I, pt. B, bk. D) p. 211; (reprinted in *Otsar Neḥmad* 2 [Vienna: J. Knopfelmacher, 1857]: 203, as a letter to L. Effratti). Cf. Chapter 9: Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion.

[25] Cf. Leo Strauss, "Yaḥase hagomlin beyn hateologia lafilosofia" [The mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy], *Iyyun* 5 (1954): 110 ff.

the philosopher (III, ch. 27) man's primary and ultimate perfection is to engage in intellectual activity [*sheyihyeh ādam māskīl befoʿal*] to know as much as is humanly possible.[26] The philosophic dictum *par excellence* is then, that thought, not action, is primary.

For Luzzatto, too, the multitude is no better than a "beast of the fields,"[27] but he faults Maimonides because, whereas the sages were wont to "lead the beast, which is the multitude, in whatever path seemed to them useful taking time and place into consideration," Maimonides "fixed [their strictures] as firm as nails which could no longer be removed."[28]

Luzzatto concentrates on two interconnected themes in Maimonides, his psychology and his teaching about resurrection. I will cite Luzzatto directly.

> I cannot contain myself [from speaking against] one belief which Maimonides took from Aristotle and his commentators, and which has harmed our people in many ways. That is his belief that the essence of the soul is in being merely potential, whereas that which is separate after death is the mover *in actu* (*Guide* I, 70). [What remains is] that knowledge which has comprehended the creator inasmuch as its power allowed, and has comprehended the *separata* (*Hilkhot Teshuva*, ch. 8). In other words, immortality is only possible for one who has studied Metaphysics, and has gained true knowledge of the creator and the separate intellects. Without this knowledge a man dies and perishes as any beast, just as Vivago explained in his book *Derekh Emuna* 59, 4: "the reward for a true belief is that belief itself, and it is the same with a false belief, for evil perishes and does not continue to exist. The same holds true for unbelievers, who adhere to false beliefs. They do not continue to exist. They perish absolutely.[29]

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[26] See his letter to J. H. Schorr, *ibid*. Also in *Otsar Neḥmad* 4 (1864): 117.

[27] Cf. Al-Farabi. *Falsafat Aflatun* in Alfarabius, *De Platonis Philosophia*, ed. F. Rosenthal et R. Waltzer, Plato Arabus vol. 2, Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi (London: The Warburg Insittude, 1943), p. 18 (Arabic text), p. 13 (Latin text): fa-innah al-farq bayn an yakūn insān fiʿluh fiʿl al-samak wa-bayn ʿan yakūn samaka khilqatuh khilqat ʾinsān. ["Thus there is no difference between a man who acts like a fish, and a fish with a shape like that of a man" (Muhsin Mahdi trans., reading *khilqatuhā* for *khilqatu*, in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* [Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969 (revised 2002—ed.), p. 64).]

[28] See his letter to Isaac Samuel Reggio in *Kerem Ḥemed* 3 (ed. S. L. Goldenberg, Prague, 1838): 66, and reprinted in *Peninim*. Reprinted also in "Ketivat ha-Mishna ve-ha-Rambam" in *Meḥqere Hayahadut*, pp. 164 ff.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 165 ff. (*Kerem Ḥemed* 3 (1838): 67 ff).

Luzzatto points out that Maimonides explicitly state in the *Guide* III, 27, that the perfection of the soul which consists in its gaining true opinions, is the only way to immortality. Maimonides, in his *Commentary on the Mishna* (*Qama* 4, 3) wrote:

> Do not be amazed at this, nor should you find it difficult, just as you should not trouble yourself because animals are slaughtered, in spite of the fact that they have not sinned. For whoever does not possess perfect human virtues is not truly a man. The end of his existence is for the sake of [the true] man.

Luzzatto perceives that what Maimonides says is tantamount to asserting that whoever does not possess true knowledge is not a man, and that we are therefore not "commanded" to love him.[30] It is Maimonides' false notion of the essence of the soul which led him, despite his wisdom, to transform the rabbis' contingent decisions into absolute fiats. Luzzatto criticized Maimonides' psychology on several grounds: it causes religious intolerance, which according to Luzzatto was absent in Judaism prior to Maimonides. It was also a cause, historically, for anti-Semitism. But Maimonides' psychology had even worse consequences, for Maimonides corrupted Judaism in two ways. The first, says Luzzatto, is Maimonides' denial of resurrection. According to Maimonides resurrection is only for the righteous, the wise, and not for the evil, for those who err. Nor is there resurrection of body and soul. Maimonides limits resurrection to the soul.[31] Many of the contemporaries of Maimonides were quick to understand, according to Luzzatto, that what Maimonides says denies the possibility of resurrection. Indeed, Maimonides himself says so in his *Epistle on Resurrection*. Meir Halevi (in his epistle, found in *Iggrot Harambam*), as well as Shem Tov b. Shem Tov (*Sefer Haemunot*, 6) were among the first to point this out. Now in his *Epistle on Resurrection* Maimonides says that whoever suspects his theory of resurrection would be brought to account for it. Can Maimonides "put out the eyes of the innocent people," [*i.e.*, can Maimonides successfully deceive], asks Luzzatto?[32] The proper answer

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[30] Cf. Leo Strauss, "On the Minos," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1968), p. 75: "With what right do we then say of a low-class human being that he is nevertheless a human being?"

[31] Luzzatto, *ibid.*, p. 166. (*Kerem Hemed* 3, p. 68).

[32] Compare Luzzatto in his "Neged Spinoza" [Anti Spinoza], p. 205 beginning with the words *harey kan ḥutspa kefula* [here we have a two-fold insolence]; (reprinted from *Otsar Neḥmad* 2 [1857]: letter to L. Effratti, p. 205). See Chapter 9: Spinoza and

to Maimonides would be as follows: we know you admit that there is a resurrection, but your resurrection is that of Aristotle and his commentators, not that of our fathers. Yours is for the soul, ours for body and soul. Yours for the good, the wise; ours for those who are good and for those who are evil, for the wise and for the ignorant. How can you deny the tremendous difference between your belief and ours? Suppose you say that the difference is insignificant. Does it matter whether resurrection is for body and soul or for soul alone? The difference is significant, it is, in fact, enormous. For according to you there is no accounting after death, for an evil man would be destroyed as a beast. How then can he be held accountable for his actions if nothing of him remains after death? Furthermore, even the resurrection which you promise to the righteous and the wise is not our resurrection,[33] for yours consists in the conjunction of the soul and the intelligible, who is the creator,[34] and in the identity of the soul and of the creator. Now even if this phantasy were possible, it would in no way resemble the reward which we look forward to. The soul, in its union with God, ceases to exist as a separate entity. The righteous man ceases to exist as an individual. He will no longer remember his own deeds, nor take pleasure in his reward, for he becomes a part of the godhead, and his individuality perishes. Now we who are pure of heart, unskilled in the

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Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion. Spinoza did not take care as much as Maimonides did to conceal his views, and yet Spinoza's true position is usually misunderstood. The classic texts on the art of interpretation are to be found in Bayle. See for example *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* s. v. Persius, Rem. (K).

We are hardly astonished, then , to find Bayle's following comments on Maimonides: "Le rabbin Maimonides me parâit trop delicat, lors qu'il rejette toutes les cinq preuves de l'unité de Dieu employées par les philosophes de la secte des *Parlans* [*i.e.*, the mutakallimūn], et lorsqu'il loue celui d'entere eux qui, se trouvant embarrassé de la faiblesse de ces preuves, avait dit qu'on ne connaissait l'unité de Dieu, ou qu'on ne pouvait la prouver, que par la révélation soutenue de la tradition" ["Rabbi Maimonides appears to me to be overly picky when he rejects all five proofs of the unity of God used by the philosophers of the mutakallimūn sect and when he praises the mutakallim who, embarrassed about the weakness of those proofs, said that we do not know the unity of God or that we can only prove it by the revelation upheld by tradition"]. And further down: "On pourrait montrer que ce ne sont que des chicanes…" ["We could easily show that this is an empty disputation.…"] (*Dictionnaire*, vol. xv, p. 306f. [art. *Éclaircissement sur les Manichéens*]; cf. his article on Spinoza, vol. xiii, p. 444 Rem. (N). men. V. On Bayle see the recent commendable study by Zephyra Porat," The art of deception: the rhetoric of concealed writing in Pierre Bayle" (in Hebrew), *Iyyun* 24 (1974): 183–206. (Reprinted in Z. Porat, *Prometeus beyn hakanibalim* [Prometheus Among the Cannibals] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976) pp. 60–81).

[33] Compare the words of Simmias to Socrates, and Socrates' answer, *Phaedo* 64b–c.

[34] *The Guide of the Perplexed* I, 68.

philosopher's chicaneries and machinations, received from you your thirteen principles which you have commanded us to believe in, and we attached ourselves to them for centuries. We did not penetrate your thinking, we did not perceive the snake wrapped around your heel. Did you not say in your commentary to *Pereq Ḥeleq* that whoever believes that he understood you even after reading you ten times, God knows that he is only deluding himself? Is it not clear that you are concealing a deep secret? We, who are innocent and pure at heart, did not attempt to discern that secret. Only much later we noticed that when you reached the thirteenth principle you said obscurely, "We have already explained resurrection." Only then were our eyes opened and we understood that when you said "We have already explained resurrection," you meant that you have already explained that resurrection consists in the survival of the soul by becoming identical with the intelligible, in the soul uniting with God. It became clear to us that we do not believe in your resurrection, nor you in the resurrection in which we and our fathers have believed. After God opened our eyes to perceive your secrets, we saw that even in your *Epistle on Resurrection* you hinted at its denial. You said there that resurrection is a miracle, and toward the end of the *Epistle* you said that a miracle can not endure, and that [Moses'] stick which was turned into a snake would have to become a stick again. According to you, therefore, even if the dead would be resurrected, they would not live long, but would soon die—for resurrection is a miracle, and a miracle cannot endure. We understood as well that when you said that the world to come and resurrection (which in your view consists in the survival of the soul through its union with God) are the rewards of the righteous, you showed us the "shadows of mountains as people." Indeed for you, and your friends and masters the philosophers, it is not the righteous whose soul survives, but only those who intellect. You yourself said in the *Guide* III, 27 that ultimate felicity consists neither in actions nor in [moral] virtues, but in intellectual [virtues]. You further said that the ultimate felicity is without doubt of the highest dignity, and is the only cause of eternal life. So it becomes clear, then, that the intellecting philosopher can steal, murder and rape and still secure for himself the world to come, not by deserving it [on account of faith and good deeds] but by knowing the truth. How different is your world to come from our world to come!

There ends the speech of Luzzatto in which he exposes Maimonides. Luzzatto calls our attention to the fact that in the interpretation

of Maimonides only those of sharp mind and keen eyesight can succeed. I am aware, says Luzzatto, that since most of what Maimonides says about this subject (and similar subjects) is well masked, since Maimonides speaks in riddles so that the multitude will not understand his words, one will always be able to interpret Maimonides in a way altogether foreign to him.[35] Upon whom can one rely in that obstacle course? In Luzzatto's words:

> Upon whom can we rely if not upon the commentators of the *Guide* who were versed in the philosophy of Maimonides' period and spent their days in trying to fathom his secrets? Let us turn to the commentaries of Efodi and Shem Tov on I, 41 and 70. We shall find that they support my views. Abravanel in his commentary . . . to I, 1 says as follows: "Thus we learn that the Master believes that the soul is in a state of potency, which jibes with the opinion of Alexander [of Aphrodisias];" and Abravanel on I, 41: "here the Master teaches that his view on the essence of the human soul is identical with that of Alexander; he believes it to be merely in a state of potency to receive the intelligibles. It does not survive after death."

Luzzatto goes on and quotes Abravanel's commentary on *Genesis* 1:26. Says Abravanel:

> This is the opinion of the Master, and I am in complete disagreement with it. His opinion is based on the view that the human soul is in a state of potency, it comes into being and perishes. That is the opinion of Alexander, as the Master made clear in several passages of his book [*The Guide*].

After these testimonies, says Luzzatto, need I say any more?[36]

III

Ahad Ha'am wrote his essay *Shilṭon hasekhel* [The Rule of Reason] in 1905,[37] two generations after the appearance of Luzzatto's writing on Maimonides. He relates that he was attracted to Maimonides at

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[35] See Luzzatto's letter to Judah Wahrmann, printed in *Kerem Ḥemed* 4 (1839): 291, reprinted in *Peninim*. Reprinted in *Meḥqere Hayahadut* as part 3 of "The Writing of the Mishna and Maimonides," p. 183.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 184. (*Kerem Ḥemed* 4 [1839]: 292).

[37] Printed in *Hashiloaḥ* 15, pp. 85–90. Reprinted in *Kol kitve Aḥad Ha'am* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1954), pp. 354 ff.

an early age,[38] He described himself as a rationalist, and his sympathy lay with the English philosophers, Bacon, Hobbes and Locke. German philosophy, and even more so the German "science of religion" was not his taste.[39] In his simple straightforward style, Ahad Ha'am presents the position of Maimonides:[40]

> To *compromise* between philosophic truth and religious truth, as many have done before him—[Maimonides] could not. Every compromise means a *concession from both sides*, but anyone who believes, as Maimonides did, that the search for truth by the *demonstrative method* is the end of man and his only way to eternal felicity, cannot surrender the least iota of that truth for another truth, lesser in dignity, coming by *way of tradition*. He was compelled to adopt one course: *to subjugate religion absolutely to the demands of philosophy*, that is to say, to interpret the Law in such a way that will harmonize completely with philosophic truth and will fulfill in every way whatever role allotted it by philosophy.

Further Ahad Ha'am continues: "What is 'divine religion?'…Metaphysics for the many…its role is merely to reform society—that is, the many—to the extent required for the sake of the perfect man. And so religion is not superior to reason, but inferior to it."[41]

Religion cannot bring man to perfection, nor can it bring him happiness. That only philosophy can do. Tradition, religious tradition, cannot. The aim of religion is the well-being of the state, and the well-being of the state is necessary for the existence, development and freedom of the perfect man; it is necessary in order to create the conditions making possible the existence of the "man in act." For Maimonides, then, *Religio ancilla philsophiae est*. Religion is an imitation of philosophy, metaphysics for the millions. As Ahad Ha'am says, (p. 361): Reason is the supreme judge. Religion must be totally subordinated to it.

For Ahad Ha'am, just as for Luzzatto, there is no better guide to the *Guide* than the early commentators on Maimonides. He quotes Shem Tov's commentary on the *Guide* III, 51:[42] This chapter was not written

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[38] See "Pirqe zikhronot" in *ibid*., p. 493.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 495.

[40] "Shilṭon hasekhel," *ibid*., p. 361 The italics are in the original. Cf. S. Pines, "Translator's Introduction," in Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. xciii and *passim*. (Hebrew translation in S. Pines, *Beyn maḥshevet yisrael lemaḥshevet ha'amim* [Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1977], p. 136).

[41] Cf. Maimonides, *Introduction to Tractate Zera'im*, "Reason, which gives false testimony is more creditable than the eye which sees its indications."

[42] "Shilṭon hasekhel," *ibid*., pp. 362 ff.

by the Master. If he did write it, it should be concealed, or better yet—burned. Adds Ahad Ha'am: these innocents did not understand that "this chapter" cannot be concealed or burned unless one does the same to all "chapters" included in the *Guide*, chapters which necessarily led Maimonides to the position expressed in the final sections of the work.

Before Maimonides (*e.g.*, for Saadia) both reason and philosophy are but necessary evils. Maimonides ridicules "philosophers" of this sort (I, 71; Pines' translation, p. 178): they did not conform in their premises to the appearance of that which exists, but considered how being ought to be in order that it should furnish a proof for the correctness of a particular opinion.

Ahad Ha'am himself was motivated by national sentiments. Despite his astute observation that Maimonides "subordinated religion to philosophy" because of rational considerations, Ahad Ha'am had to attribute to Maimonides historical and national motives. And so according to Ahad Ha'am, even Maimonides' assertion that "man's ultimate perfection is devoid of deeds or [moral] virtues and consists solely in intellectual [virtues]" (III, 27) which, as usual with him, assigns to philosophy a higher status than to religion, is motivated by his wish to provide encouragement to those Jews in Islamic countries who were compelled by circumstances to transgress the commandments of their religion.

And yet, Ahad Ha'am did not believe that one can find an historical development in the teaching of Maimonides. He had no antiquarian interest in the chronology of the writings of Maimonides—an occupation that had for too long taken the place of pertinent study of classical philosophy. Ahad Ha'am had the following to say to anyone who might argue that contradictions in Maimonides are the result of the historical development of this thoughts:

> From an early age, when he had first left his study, his method [or: system] was already perfected in every detail, and from that time on he hardly changed it to the end of his life. In the Introduction to his first book, his *Commentary on the Mishna*, we can already discern all the principles of his teaching, which endured to the final section of his last book (*The Guide* III, 51).

Ahad Ha'am understood that although the *Guide* and the *Mishneh Torah* were intended for different audiences, one man wrote them, and he had one end in mind. The *Mishneh Torah*, too, was written from a philosophic viewpoint:

> The most "secular" views, those which are most contrary to the traditional concepts of religion took the innocent form, in this book, of religious "commandments." Since they were phrased in the language of the *Mishna* and used the normal idiom of ancient religious texts, the people did not see where all of this was leading, and absorbed these new concepts with hardly a murmur…in the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides reformed religion, taking into consideration its social role, that is, the needs of the *vulgar majority*. He had yet to reform religion from the point of view of *society as such, i.e.*, taking into consideration the requirements of the *select minority*.[43]

In other words, the needs of the many require giving philosophy a religious dress, whereas the needs of the few require the uncovering of philosophic truth from underneath the religious dress. What then was the intention of Maimonides in *The Guide of the Perplexed*? From what danger did he wish to save those who went astray? "The awful danger" says Ahad Ha'am, was that the perplexed would not reach their ultimate perfection if they would doubt the truth of reason, which is contrary to the truth of religion. Follow only reason, demands Maimonides from the perplexed, and interpret religion in such a way that it agrees with reason. Reason is the end of man, and faith is its handmaiden. Ahad Ha'am does not hesitate to say that if Maimonides had written *The Guide of the Perplexed* before he wrote the *Mishneh Torah*, he would undoubtedly have been declared a heretic.[44] Even the critics of Maimonides paid attention only to details, asserts Ahad Ha'am. They noted his denial of resurrection, of hell, of paradise. They did not see that Maimonides dethroned Faith as such and enthroned Reason in its stead.

Ahad Ha'am has a bone to pick with Luzzatto. He asserts that Luzzatto is superficial in indicting Maimonides on the ground that his "belief about the essence of the soul" caused the Jewish people to become "enslaved" to reason, and that he established what we have to believe by law, whereas, according to Luzzatto, previous to Maimonides every man could believe as he saw fit (*Kerem Ḥemed* III, 67–70). We need only remember Maimonides' opponents, to realize the nature of this liberty. But Luzzatto was apparently unaware, says Ahad Ha'am, that the sole authority for Maimonides is human reason.[45] The

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 365. Cf. also S. L. Rappoport, n. 6 above.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 366.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 367. Cf. also p. 368, n. 7.

liberation of the mind from subjugation to external authority—that is the supreme achievement of Maimonides.

Ahad Ha'am was able to understand Maimonides with such ease, that as far as he was concerned Maimonides explicitly denies immortality. Since Maimonides denies resurrection very subtly, Ahad Ha'am does not credit Luzzatto's claim that Maimonides denies resurrection as well as immortality. That Maimonides chose not to argue this point *in extenso* is attributed by Ahad Ha'am to Maimonides' national sentiment.

IV

Neither Luzzatto nor Ahad Ha'am perceived Maimonides' teaching *in toto*. In all fairness, one must say they were not interested. Luzzatto was concerned with the effect of the teaching of Maimonides (whether in *The Guide* or in the *Mishneh Torah*) on religion, *i.e.*, with Maimonides' exoterics. Ahad Ha'am was moved by a national ideology (of the liberal *fin de siècle* variety), and that, too, limited his desire to delve more deeply into Maimonides. The wonder is—or perhaps it is no wonder—that both approached Maimonides without preconceptions. They read the texts before them not through the fog of modern scholarly research, and thus saw without difficulty where Maimonides stood.[46]

[46] How necessary is the antidote of Luzzatto and Ahad Ha'am becomes apparent upon reading Julius Guttmann, "Die religiösen Motive in der Philosophie des Maimonides," in *Entewicklungsstufen der jüdischen Relgion* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1927) pp. 61–90. Reprinted in *Dat umada'* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1955). See for example pp. 92–93 and the following assertions: "Maimonides [brings back] in every detail the personalism of the Biblical God," and "Maimonides requires providence."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HARRY A. WOLFSON AS INTERPRETER OF MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

Article[1]

During the last half century of his life, between 1929 and 1974, Harry Austryn Wolfson was regarded, especially in the United States, as the most important scholar in the field of medieval Jewish studies, and specifically in the area of medieval Jewish theology and philosophy. This reputation rested on a number of important books and a great number of shorter studies. All of them demonstrated Wolfson's vast erudition, his mastery of many languages and his acquaintance with diverse sources, whether written by the great thinkers or by their epigones. When Wolfson embarked on his sixty-six year career at Harvard, it was taken for granted that for adequate scholarship in medieval Judaica one must know not only the extensive body of writings of medieval Jews but also of their Arabic contemporaries and of their Greek and Roman predecessors. For Wolfson, it meant immersing himself in the works not only of Crescas, Maimonides, and Halevi (written mostly in Arabic), but also in the writings of Avicenna, al-Ghazzāli and Averroes; of Aristotle, Plotinus and Thomas Aquinas; of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius and Simplicius. Three names must be mentioned separately: Philo, Spinoza, and Plato. Philo and Spinoza were deleted from this list because they were regarded by Wolfson as the Alpha and Omega of medieval philosophy and theology. Philosophy and theology are mentioned together, because Wolfson did not think that they were essentially distinguishable from one another: both treat of the "large questions" of man, God and universe, and

[1] [Originally published in *Interpretation*, 9 (1981): 137–140, as a review of Harry A. Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973 and 1977), *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), and *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).—ed.]

both seek a sort of "spirituality," although this last point or theme was only partly developed by Wolfson. Philo was all-important because it was he, asserted Wolfson, who brought about this marriage, stormy as it was to become, between philosophy and theology or between reason and faith, a relationship which Wolfson saw as the central axis around which medieval man's "intellectual" life revolved. Spinoza was all-important, for he was seen as the wrecker of this marriage and thus was the first modern man, although Wolfson as a historian was at least equally impressed by Spinoza's indebtedness to his predecessors and by the continuity which he thought he could demonstrate existed from Philo to Spinoza—the latter being the last, though heretical, representative of what Wolfson like to call "Philonic philosophy."

The third name missing from the list of philosophers reproduced above is that of Plato. It is missing not because Plato was not mentioned by Wolfson, although his book on the *Philosophy of the Kalam* does not cite Plato even once, and this despite the fact that the *mutakallimūn*, and especially the *mu'tazila*, clearly evince the influence of certain neoplatonists. Moreover, the *mutakallimūn* have been shown to have made use of "Platonic doctrines" (culled mostly from Hellenistic dogmatic literature), possibly as a counterweight to the teachings of the more or less Aristotelian *falāsifa*. One could maintain that Plato is mentioned relatively little by Wolfson (only somewhat more often than, say, Origen) because medieval philosophers, Arab, Jewish or Latin, cite Plato far less than they cite Aristotle. Still it seems to me that this is not a sufficient explanation for the infrequent appearance of Plato in Wolfson's extensive corpus, and I believe this relative absence of Plato in Wolfson goes a long way toward explaining Wolfson's interpretation of medieval philosophy.

Wolfson's forte was a comparative study of a concept or doctrine as it appears in the works of several philosophers, sometimes, two or three Jewish philosophers, but as often as not in a set of Greek, Arab, Jewish and Latin philosophers. Wolfson's ultimate purpose was to show that these doctrines formed part of a "system," a coherent and all-embracing teaching of each philosopher taken separately. But Wolfson also constantly endeavored to establish his unified field theory, that is, his conviction that medieval philosophy—"from Philo to Spinoza"—formed one grand system, all of whose fundamental characteristics may be culled from Philo's writings. Now, whether or not such a "system" or even "systems" are indeed found in the various Greek, Arabic, and Jewish philosophers, Plato erected an almost insurmountable barrier

against anyone who would attempt to unearth a systematic teaching beneath the argument and the action of his dialogues. To be sure, such attempts have been made time and again, but Wolfson knew intuitively that Plato, who presented philosophy as a search and a way of life more than as a body of doctrine, would not yield the appropriate materials for the kind of doctrinal research Wolfson engaged in. The scholastics preferred Aristotle to Plato for much the same reason, and Wolfson was nothing if not a grand scholastic, to the manner born. Aristotle's sobriety was far more to his taste than Plato's Socratic irony. His studies centered on epistemology, ontology and theology, and the distinction between natural and revealed theology was of little consequence to him. Theoretical philosophy unmitigated by political or practical philosophy does tend to obscure that distinction, as does viewing philosophy as a science rather than a way of life. Wolfson was intrigued neither by political philosophy nor by ethics nor by the two logical arts which are also political arts: poetics and rhetoric.

Wolfson's earlier books have endured. His edition and interpretation of Crescas, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*, single-handedly raised Crescas to the status of the second most important medieval Jewish philosopher, and clearly demonstrated his originality and philosophic significance, after he had long been eclipsed by his far more popular disciple, Albo. His study of Spinoza, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, still contains much useful information. And of course his book on Philo will surely remain the standard work on that enigmatic figure. It is certainly to be regretted that Wolfson completed only the first volume of his projected larger work on the *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*.

Professors Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams, both of whom had studied under Wolfson for many years, have earned our gratitude for having persuaded Harvard University Press to publish fifty-five of Wolfson's studies comprising over 1250 pages in two thick volumes. These studies range over six decades, beginning with Wolfson's paper, "Maimonides and Halevi, A Study in Typical Jewish Attitudes toward Greek Philosophy in the Middle Ages," published in 1912 when he was 25, to his paper, "Answers to Criticism of My Discussion of the Ineffability of God," published in the last year of his life, 1974, when he was 87. The volumes contain such well known studies as "The Plurality of Immovable Movers in Aristotle, Averroes and St. Thomas," "Avicenna, Algazali and Averroes on Divine Attributes," "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," "The Amphibolous Terms in Aristotle, Arabic Philosophy and Maimonides," "The

Double Faith Theory in Saadia, Averroes and St. Thomas," "Halevi and Maimonides on Design, Chance and Necessity," "Crescas on the Problem of Divine Attributes"—a short book in itself, and many other studies on the problem of divine attributes (which he once told me he thought to be the central and most rewarding area of study in medieval Jewish philosophy, and Kaufmann's *Geschichte der Attributenlehre* to be the most fundamental work in medieval philosophy) in Albinus, Plotinus, Maimonides, Gersonides and St. Thomas. And there are more than forty other studies of his. One may take issue with some of them, but they all make worthwhile reading and study.

Wolfson's two Kalam books should be taken together, and indeed *Repercussions*, published five years after his death, may be seen as an appendix to his much larger work on the Kalam, a study on which he worked intermittently for decades. The Kalam, a name given to a number of schools of Islamic dogmatic theology, was for a number of reasons vehemently attacked by Maimonides, who believed it to be precisely the kind of pseudo-philosophical polemics destructive both to the true philosophic enterprise and to the well-being of the religious community. The most important work on the Kalam previous to Wolfson's book was Shlomo Pines' *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomlehre* (Berlin, 1936), an epoch-making book (whose translation into English was published in 1997).[2] Wolfson takes issue with Pines' contention that the Kalam owes much to Indian thought. Indian thought, however, was outside Wolfson's purview, and indeed his argument against this understanding of the Kalam is not very convincing. But there is no doubt that the Kalam owes more to Christian apologetics, and here Wolfson's discussion is far more complete. Wolfson treats extensively the Kalam's theories of attributes, creation, atomism, causality and predestination and free will. In *Repercussions*, Wolfson deals with much the same problems, but of course in the context of Jewish philosophy, although Maimonides' discussion of the Kalam occupies Wolfson no less in the Kalam book.

Students of medieval Jewish philosophy are indebted to Harvard University Press for the meticulous care it bestowed on these thought provoking and very useful volumes written by one of the most erudite historians and influential teachers of our time.

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[2] [*Studies in Islamic Atomism*, ed. Tzvi Langermann (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1997).—ed.]

CHAPTER TWELVE

ON THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

Article[1]

In considering Shlomo Pines' paper, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge according to Al-Farabi, ibn Bajja, and Maimonides,"[2] the words of Sir Joshua Reynolds in *The Idler* come to mind: It is not safe to question any opinion of so great a writer, and so profound a thinker, as undoubtedly Bacon was. Yet question Bacon he did, and reluctant as we are to "question Pines," we must do the same.

Pines' motives in this paper may at first glance seem to be to argue for Maimonides who is a skeptic vis-à-vis "the philosophers." A less cursory reading shows this to be incorrect. Pines attempts to demonstrate that Maimonides—as well as Al-Farabi, and to a lesser extent Maimonides' master (once removed) ibn Bajja—was a far greater skeptic and agnostic than has heretofore been stated or perhaps ever believed. Maimonides' vicious attack on the *Kalām* must be seen in this light. There is nothing more harmful, nothing more destructive of the truth than a hybrid "philosophical theology." According to Pines, Maimonides did his best to cast doubt on any teaching regarding the separate intellects in order to de-theologize religion. Maimonides was, according to Pines, a true agnostic, and his primary purpose was to teach that theology is useless, since it does not lead to any certainty, and natural theology goes down the drain together with the bathwater of dogmatic or sectarian theology. Since the "afterlife" is impossible, only this life, the life within the community, the "political" life, is possible. Maimonides' religion is political, from beginning to end.

By itself, this last statement is not new. What is new, however, is Pines' argument that on the one hand Maimonides thought paganism less obstructive to the truth than any of the monotheistic religions (see

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[1] [This previously unpublished critique of Motzkin's friend, Shlomo Pines, was found among Motzkin's files.—ed.]

[2] [*Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Twersky, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), vol. i, pp. 82–109.—ed.]

esp. Appendix), and that Maimonides, following his rejection of the certainty of conjunction also downgraded the contemplative life and enthroned the practical life in its stead.

As to Pines' statements about paganism, they are persuasive as far as they go, but they are incidental to the main thrust of the essay. What follows is a critical analysis of the central issue raised and argued in Pines' paper.

Pines' main conclusion, resulting from his re-reading of the published works of these philosophers and from his reading of a hitherto little known manuscript of ibn Bajja, is that both Al-Farabi and Maimonides viewed the life of practice, the political life, as superior to the theoretical way-of-life, the *vita contemplativa*. Pines bases this new interpretation of Al-Farabi and of Maimonides primarily on his contention that both philosophers held metaphysics to be in the final analysis impossible. Since conjunction is a myth, knowledge of God and the Angels, the separate intellects, is a fantasy as well. And since knowledge of the fundamental *intelligibilia* is human fiction, since what Aristotle called wisdom proves to be sham, the only possible knowledge is practical knowledge, and the proof of practical as distinguished from theoretical knowledge is in its application. The end of knowledge is practice or action, and since the end or ultimate purpose for the sake of which everything else exists is action, the active life is willy-nilly superior to the theoretical way of life.

This startling assertion is based on a number of readings and interpretations. Due to its fundamental importance, it deserves to be closely examined. In his first citation from ibn Bajja's manuscript dealing with Al-Farabi's lost *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Bodley's Pococke 206), Pines reproduces ibn Bajja's rejection of the apparently common view that Al-Farabi denied "the afterlife" and that Al-Farabi stated that "there is no happiness except political happiness." Now Pines himself is careful to note the difficulties inherent in ascribing this position to Al-Farabi. In note 9, Pines calls attention to Averroes' *Grand Commentary on the De Anima*, in which Averroes reports that in the *Commentary on the Ethics* itself Al-Farabi affirmed that man's final end was *kamāl naẓarī, perfectio speculativa*. Pines notes that Al-Farabi may have adopted two contradictory positions, and that this inconsistency is borne out by ibn Bajja's report on Al-Farabi's *Commentary*. Pines does not make clear why he prefers one of Al-Farabi's contradictory positions over the other. Indeed, Pines has noted more than once that inconsistency is not in every case either the mark of a fool or the result

of a shift in position. What then are we to make of the fact that in his notes to his paper Pines hedges, if not contradicts, a number of points he makes in the body of the article? In note 18, Pines cites Al-Farabi's *Taḥṣīl al-Saʿāda* (*The Attainment of Happiness*), in which the function of practical reason is "*occasionally made to appear as almost* as important as that of theoretical reason" (italics added). Now, if practical reason is *sometimes almost* as important, then theoretical reason is *always primary*. The same tendency of Al-Farabi is found even in his *Mabādiʾ ʾArāʾ ʾAhl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (*The Principles of the Opinions of the Virtuous State*), Al-Farabi's theologico-political work *par excellence*. In note 20, Pines cites Al-Farabi's assertion in this work that the superior man is he in whom the active intellect resides. If the active intellect resides in some men, are conjunction and metaphysics (or natural theology) impossible? Did Maimonides really reject conjunction altogether? In the *Guide* I, 1, we find the following, and Pines cites this paragraph almost in full in note 64: "It was because of this something, that very strange thing (*maʿna gharīb jiddan*) found in man, I mean because of the divine intellect (*al-ʿaql al-ʾilāhī*) conjoined (*al-muttaṣil*) with man, that it is said of the latter that he is *in the image of God and in his likeness*…" (Cf. *The Guide* III, 51, note and 52, *inter alia*).[3] So conjunction is not rejected out of hand by Maimonides. Pines goes on to say that Maimonides *possibly* (italics added) used *ʾittiṣāl*, conjunction, in a sense found in Avicenna's *De Anima*, a sense which does not imply total union; rather, it may be applied to man's intellecting one intelligible. Pines does not let us know, however, his reasons for believing that Maimonides uses *ʾittiṣāl* in an Avicennian sense.

It is true that Maimonides says that Aristotle's metaphysics is not demonstrable (*The Guide* II, 3). In the same place however, Maimonides asserts that the existence of the separate intellects, the foundation-stone of metaphysics, is "less open to doubt than all other views, as Alexander of Aphrodisias says in his book called *The Principles of the Whole*." To describe something as "less open to doubt than the other view" does not seem to merit the pejorative sense that Pines attributes to it by referring to these conceptions and propositions as "merely probable" (p. 94), and in any case does not transform metaphysics into a private religion of the philosophers—unless philosophy and all religions are equally probable.

[3] [In Pines's translation of *The Guide*.—ed.]

At any rate, Pines' remarks in note 68 should be mentioned here. Pines calls attention to the fact that several remarks in *The Guide* "may engender the suspicion—which is invalidated by other passages of that work—that the God of Maimonides has an intimate connection with the cosmos, that in fact he may be conceived if we use Spinozistic terms, as an idea whose *ideatum* is the world." Pines is no doubt referring to *The Guide* III, 32,[4] but of course that is also the central argument of I, 69, namely, that God *is* in fact the "idea whose *ideatum* is the world."[5] It is indeed in contradiction to much of Maimonides' negative theology, and this point has not yet been resolved. Having established that Aristotle's metaphysics is "merely" plausible, Pines concludes that thus there is no point in setting forth intellection as man's ultimate aim. This conclusion is not warranted.

Shem Tov, Crescas and Efodi all interpret *maṭar yasīr* (little rain), *i.e.*, Maimonides' interpretation (*Guide* III, 9) of a verse from the Song of Deborah (*Judges* 5:4), as implying that on the day of the Sinaitic revelation there was little rain, *i.e.*, some exceptional people were given true understanding.[6] As Maimonides says himself: "The clean and permanent light that emanates from Him lights every darkness," *i.e.*, no veil is strong enough to withstand this light, and matter, though indeed a great deterrence, cannot in the final analysis prevent intellection of any *intellectum*, imbedded in matter or free, *i.e.*, separate from it.

"Moses" does indeed enjoy a special position in Judaism:[7] and deservedly so, whether from a Jewish or a philosophical point of view. Al-Farabi, Maimonides' foremost master according to his own words, asserts that the original lawgiver is simultaneously a philosopher, a prophet and a religious leader or *imam*.[8] The lawgiver, *wādiʿ al-nawāmīs*, (νομοθετής), is directly informed by God (or Nature), at least in the sense that there is no convention that interprets (or veils) God for (or from) him. He faces God directly. Every future member of the community endowed by The Lawgiver with his specific law must either

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[4] See Chapter 9: Spinoza and Luzzatto: Philosophy and Religion, p. 115, n. 13.

[5] Cf. also Efodi on I, 6: [*Ha-Shem*]…*hū ṣūrat ha-nimṣāōt kullam*: ["[God] is the form of all beings."—ed.]

[6] Cf. *Guide* II, 12 and Kaspi's interpretation in *Maskiyot Keseph*: "Indeed the intellect…," and compare Narbonni *ad loc.*: "And the land was illuminated by his honor."—Narboni interprets it to mean that what was intellected potentially became intellected *in actu*.

[7] Cf. also *Guide* III, 18, 21.

[8] [See Ch. 1, p. 13, n. 17 above.—ed.]

be aided by the Law or else has to free himself of the Law, at least in thought. It is in this way that asserting the specially exalted position of Moses, who spoke to God "face to face," seems perfectly reasonable. But if Moses is able to achieve union, then at least one human being is able to do so. And no Jew—that goes for Maimonides too—ever considered Moses to be anything but a human being.

Now there is reason to believe that Al-Farabi uses "after-life," or rather "the other world," in two different ways, temporal and ontological. When Al-Farabi rejects happiness which is not of "this world," he is rejecting the temporal "other world," "the world to come." That "other world" which is constant, and is constantly "with us," is never denied by Al-Farabi. Al-Farabi's most important work (if we believe Maimonides),[9] *The Principles of Beings*, also known as *The Political Regimes*, a work on which Pines is silent in this paper, furnishes ample evidence for this assertion.

It seems to me that Al-Farabi's comments on political happiness should be understood in the same light. According to classical political philosophy the best life, *i.e.*, the contemplative or theoretical life, is only attainable in the context of the *polis*. It is only the *polis* which supplies the conditions for the appearance and continued existence of philosophy. It is in this way that we can say that, uncomfortable or tense as their relation may essentially be, philosophy is always of the *polis*, always political, and thus true felicity or happiness, which is the end or possibly the corollary of the theoretical life, is also always "of the *polis*," is also always "political." The highest way of life is civic-minded primarily in the sense that it is always mindful of the city. It is in this sense that we may speak of political happiness being the only happiness possible. Thus when Al-Farabi denies the "after-life," what he criticizes as "old wives' tales" are stories of paradise and its rewards for the pious, stories spread by the various functionaries of religion, which Al-Farabi, in contradistinction to Spinoza, did not deem it prudent to destroy.[10]

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[9] [Cf. Maimonides' letter to Ibn Tibbon in A. Marx, "Texts by and about Maimonides", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 25 (1953): 378–80: "You should always follow this rule: in studying logic, deal only with what was written by the wise Abu Nasr al-Farabi, for all that he wrote, and particularly his work *Mabadi al-Mawjudat* [The Principles of Beings], is a pure meal…"—ed.]

[10] [According to Ibn Bājja (*Rasā'il Falsafiyya*, ed. J. al-ʿAlawī [Beirut-Casablanca: Dār al-Thaqāfa—Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribīya, 1983], pp. 197–202) and Ibn Ṭufayl (Ḥay Ibn Yaqẓān, trans. L. Goodman [New York: Twayne, 1972], p. 100), this is Al-Farabi's

When discussing the "after-life," I think it is helpful to remember Socrates' words to Simmias in the *Phaedo* (64 b–c). When Socrates points out that the philosopher "wishes to die," Simmias is under the impression that Socrates is referring to death in the conventional sense of the word, and proceeds to ridicule Socrates on this account. Before quickly changing the subject, Socrates does make one point palpably clear: he has in mind an altogether different kind of death. Remembering Socrates is useful in another way as well. It reminds us that rejection of metaphysics in a most radical way, the assertion that all one can truly be certain of is that one is in the final analysis ignorant, does not imply that the life of politics is superior to the life of reason. Socrates' critique or rejection of the political life was in fact a necessary, not a paradoxical, corollary of his rejection or critique of metaphysics, of the discourse which is sometimes believed to provide us with perfect knowledge of the answers to the fundamental questions about the whole.

Al-Farabi's philosophical politics does enjoin participation of the philosopher qua philosopher in public affairs. Here Al-Farabi echoes Plato's philosophical politics, which obligates the philosopher, who has the true knowledge of the affairs of the city, to participate in the affairs of the city—in the right circumstances—not for the sake of the city, but for the sake of philosophy, *i.e.*, for the sake of what is best in man. This is a crucial difference. Neither Plato nor Al-Farabi nor Maimonides subsumes philosophy under politics, as Bernard of Clairvaux or Machiavelli or Kant have done. On the contrary, the politics of Plato and of his followers is the handmaiden or guardian god of their philosophy. Even their "perfect cities in speech" are the silver adornments (*maskiōt-keseph*) which surround and protect their apples of gold (*tapūḥei-zāhāb*).[11]

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position in his lost *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. For a recent account of what is known of this commentary, see J. Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's commentary on* Ecclesiastes: *the Book of the Soul of Man* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).—ed.]

[11] See *The Guide*, Introduction.

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