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MAIMONIDES

PAPER READ BEFORE THE PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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BY

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MAIMONIDES.

BEFORE entering upon the presentation of my theme, I beg you to have indulgence with the amateur manner in which I shall deal with it. I am not trained sufficiently in speculative matters, and I feel that, when I accepted the honoring invitation to lecture before this learned society, I assumed a responsibility beyond the measure of my strength. But the name of Maimonides is dear to me, and my love for this master-mind emboldens me to attempt to speak in his behalf, especially in view of the fact that he is referred to mostly only incidentally, and that his philosophy is rarely a special topic. I flatter myself, therefore, that my tentative description will not be taken amiss. I bespeak for my subject the interest which it deserves, and for myself your kind and lenient judgment.

It is my intention to sketch in as terse a manner as I can a few of the most striking features of the philosophy of Maimonides. I

am sure I need not premise that it is not possible to report, respecting any of the mediæval philosophers, a system in the strict sense of the word. They are more or less discursive, and the most of them are committed to the advocacy of some special matter, and hence their speculation is clogged and unwieldy. Maimonides is hampered by the foible of his age. You cannot read a page of the "More Nebuchim" without feeling a regret at the spectacle of this Prometheus in Jewish literature bound to the rock of dogmatism.

In a rough estimate, we may class him amongst philosophers of religion. He means to show that a reconciliation between religion and philosophy is possible. But the Bible is to him still an oracle, which ought in all cases to yield the right response. Be it remarked here, however, that Maimonides is more susceptible to suggestions coming from textual criticism than, perhaps, the majority of Spanish-Jewish writers, with the exceptions of the Kimchi's and more especially of Abraham ibn Esra. Maimonides does not hesitate to abandon the traditional version of the Bible when it comes into conflict with what is proved to be otherwise incontrovertible. It was a dictum of his that reason must be the test of faith; nothing that contradicts reason can be an object of belief, or can form a part of valid religion.

We have here an anticipation by six centuries of the "Kritik der reinen Vernunft." He candidly confessed that he would willingly have rejected the biblical account of creation if Aristotle had succeeded in proving conclusively the eternity of matter. In this sense he has frequently recourse to a kind of exegesis which is extremely interesting, and which would form no unimportant datum in a history of the efforts toward rational interpretation of the Bible. His advice to novices in dialectic studies is: never to be deceived by the literalness of the biblical text. For it is evident, he says, that there has been made popular a certain mode of divine portraiture (called technically anthromorphism and anthropopathism) which, on the face of it, is nothing short of blasphemy. (This is not to be charged to the authors of the Bible so much as to the want of critical discernment in the readers.)

This part of Jewish philosophy is really foreign to the subject we have in hand, and I will therefore pass it over. Our attention is to be turned not to what was the position of Maimonides regarding the Bible. He was a leader in mediæval Jewish exegetics and hermeneutics, but we wished simply to show in retrospect how Maimonides stands related in this matter to his predecessors. The matter is incidental merely to the special question

which Maimonides had set himself to determine: How is Judaism related to metaphysics? The exposition of biblical doctrine was merely the point of departure. None of the Jewish philosophers had had the courage to seize upon the matter with decision. Maimonides was the first one to put the issue plainly and distinctly, and I may add, to his credit, in contrast with the scholiasts, who never thought it serious enough to consider it at all. It is true that, among Jewish thinkers, Saadja had, centuries before Maimonides, treated of faith and reason; but more as to the contrast between these than to demonstrate a reconciliation of them. Saadja had, in fact, done ample service when he subjected the dogmas of Judaism, current and accepted in his day, to a searching scrutiny and to the test of logic. Philo already had sought the alliance of the Greek schools of thought, that they might help to corroborate revealed religion; and that it might become evident that the Mosaic dispensation was in keeping with what was the speculative fashion of his day. But these previous essays were radically different from the purpose of Maimonides. His concern it was to dispose of the hostility which it was alleged obtained essentially between Mosaism *per se* and the cosmic philosophy of the Arabs. It was a more troublesome matter than all these former ones

to reconcile revealed religion with the fundamentals of a discipline which was bold enough to call itself a philosophy of the universe. The opponents had become quite formidable. There were no greater astronomers than the Orientals, and no other study is likely to induce sooner the apprehension of system vast and grand than the science of the heavenly bodies. In the face of this, to abide by a dogmatic self-assertion for a few disjointed subtleties would certainly have been futile.

Besides, the philosophy of Aristotle had become naturalized on Arabic ground. Jews had translated his works, and had opened them up to the thinking world of Arabia, and, in this roundabout way, finally to Christianity. Greek philosophy had experienced a singular resuscitation. When the Occidental world had long ceased to study, Arabia teemed not only with faithful translations of Aristotle, but with scholarly dissertations and annotations; even later on the Christian world was stolidly content with mangled citations from these eastern sources. It may be maintained for the Jews that for this spread of philosophic study they did the largest part. It is well known that, in a large number of Moslem universities of Spain, they occupied presidential positions and professors' chairs, and that the aid of Jewish savants was sought for

the schools which the Church felt called upon —in rivalry with these seats of learning— to establish for its vindication and fostering. Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas are to be considered disciples of Jews, strange though it may seem. Dr. Jost has made out a clear case of the debt which Albertus Magnus owes to Maimonides, and Emile Saisset, the eminent professor of Catholic dialectics, goes so far in his admission of the dependence of Thomas Aquinas upon the same Maimonides that he states: "The *More Nebuchim* is the forerunner of the *Summa* of Aquinas." Even in England the revival and re-enforcement of scientific study were drawn from Jewish sources. Friar Bacon is a pupil of a Jewish Rabbi, and among the earliest professors at Oxford were Jewish teachers of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. I need not refer with any additional emphasis to the fact that during the Middle Ages, nearly all, if not all, the body physicians to Kings, Emperors, popes and potentates were Jews, amongst them our Moses Maimonides. I mention it beside the other less gratifying fact that this distinction was bought by the Jews at a heavy price. The prominence of the Jewish practitioners and teachers aggravated the ill-will of the populace, and it was made an occasion for much vindictiveness.

The many-sided intellectual ambition of the Jews helped to preserve for Europe Aristotle, the master of philosophy. It was a service, for the want of which, it may be, the discipline of the schools would have been useless. The version of Church doctrine received by it the admirable consistence and severe uniformity—attributes for which the history of the Catholic Church stands pre-eminent. Aristotle is the backbone of the scholiasts. Though Plato had been an earlier favorite of Christianity, it was felt later on that the new faith needed no more mere poetic exhilaration. To that Platonism, in its pure phase, and Neo-platonism, much more recondite, amounted. The idealism of Plato, as well as the fantastic vagaries of Philonic logos-dreamery, could never, it was felt soon after the consolidation of the separate churches, serve as a material subvention. The Church, in that stage of its life, needed a substructure of absolutism. A late attempt to foist Hegelianism upon Christianity has proved that the time has gone by when idealism can bear upon Christian apologetics. Hegelianism had to go, just as Platonism had to yield to Aristotelianism.

It must be remembered that Maimonides did not fail in sufficient insight in this matter. The paramount concern of his mind was, that by the philosophy of the absolute to deter-

mine that the unity and continuity, not merely popular but fundamental, between the biblical and the post-biblical phases of Judaism could be established. He knew that *that* could be consummated only by a method of constraining logical evidence. Aristotelianism had been classical before the time of Maimonides; but he was the first to see utility in the current authority, and most especially the first to undertake the proof of the identity between *natural* religion and philosophy. I say natural religion, though I do not wish to intimate that Maimonides used the term in the modern sense. But he eliminates priestly accretion so much from Mosaism, pure and simple, that we are justified in saying that he must have conceived a generic kind of religion, or a simple primitive faith. In all his references to traditional forms and practices, he shifts, too persistently not to be intentional, from a philosophic to the theologic position. I put in evidence for this twofold meaning of religion in Maimonides the order and sequence of the subjects as they follow one another in the "More Nebuchim." Abarbanel, the masterly commentator and expounder of the "More," has established that most clearly. The breaking up of the concept of religion into original and traditional constituents, was novel; it naturally encountered opposition. Jehuda Halevi contravened it

in his now famous "Cusari." Judaism, this poet-philosopher maintained, has had its fit exposition wholly neither by biblical authorities alone, nor by the light which the peripatetic school could throw upon these. It has had its exemplification and its only faithful portraiture in history. We are bound to acknowledge that by this recognition of the significance of history as incontrovertible testimony, Jehuda Halevi is on the true path. But upon the question which was at issue, of coordinating revealed religion and derivative religion, this has no bearing. He simply turned his back upon dialectics peremptorily.

I cite the case of the "Cusari," because it presents another instance of the fact how seductive idealism is. The "Cusari" is thoroughly Platonic, though modified by the additional feature, not congenital with Platonism, that it pleads for the significance of history. The poetic attitude gave occasion and prestige to Kabbalistic mysticism. Mysticism is the most unfortunate of all phases in the history of thought. This tide of the Kabbala, which threatened to engulf rationalism amongst the Jews, was stemmed by Maimonides. Immediately after his death, however, I regret to report, this creation of diseased minds celebrated its orgies in a grim "dance to death" of all rational endeavor.

I wish to mention here by way of parenthesis another of the Platonists in Judaism, one, whose name, for a long time a mystery, has been restored by the learned M. Munk, the librarian of the National Library and member of the French Academy. It is Avicebron, whom also Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas quote with deference, as we found them quoting Maimonides. His work is the "Fons Vitæ," and his real name Salomo ibn Gebirol, the poet. We have no occasion here to refer to this interesting work more explicitly

In attending to the reasons which Maimonides proposed for a friendly intimacy between philosophy and religion, we must remember that the consideration of this subject will bring us into quaint matters. These because of their peculiar idiom may seem trivial. But it is just that this phase of Maimonidian thought be described in its own terminology. It lacks precision and Kantian vigor; but it has served as a vehicle in Jewish philosophy for more than seven centuries and is current in it to-day.

The cosmology of that time was built upon the doctrine of Emanation. One sphere gave life to another sphere, and the graduation of these, one into the other, made up a chain of ascending dignity in spiritual personality. Each sphere was ensouled. We cannot easily think ourselves into this peculiar account of

universal life. Copernicus, Keppler, Newton, and Laplace have happily made it strange for us. Maimonides thought there were concentric circles of spherical layers around the earth, one superimposed upon the other,—water, air, fire. The moon was another one of these spheres. Above it those of Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the planets. Lastly, a fictitious sphere, which revolves daily and drags all other spheres by sympathy. We would suppose that this is simply a mechanical explanation of terrestrial and astral phenomena. But in this astronomy the spheres are alive. Each is separately an emanation from each preceding one, and the rotation of each and of all is continuous and eternal; and since they are interdependent and interact, and their rotation is well defined and has a definite aim, each of them, because of its distinctive purpose and movement, gives evidence of a resident intelligence. These separate intelligences are in essence different one from the other. The diversity of phenomena and the mutuality of their relationship are thus accounted for by mythologic and, indeed, light metaphysics. But it is still true that modern philosophy and science have not been able to clinch the matter more firmly.

Maimonides had to some extent emanci-pated himself from this Mohammedan cos-

mogony. He was constrained, however, to start from it, if he would hope to meet objections of another kind. The first chapter of Genesis and the first of Ezekiel had long been "mysteries of the Law," the esoterism of the Bible. Jewish thinkers had imported into them matters at once foreign and contradictory to the basal facts of Judaism. Kabbalistic literature from beginning to end is a tediously extravagant play with these two passages of the Bible.

Maimonides protested against such perversion and abuse of the fair name of biblical authors. He would have nothing to do with allegories and types and angelology. He admitted that the literal aspect of the passages was inadequate and, considering their reputedly eminent source, ludicrously inexact. He saw the necessity of some sort of helpful comment. He could under no circumstances suppose that the materialistic description of the Divine Being could be meant seriously. Some apology would have to be made for them.

In the first place, he emphasized, as very proper and wise, the Talmudic maxim that the Thora employs such diction as is likely to be most communicative. Hence not much more is to be made of instances in which the Bible speaks of the eye of God, of the hand of God, of the anger of God, and the like, than can be

made out of any rhetorical phraseology which is employed only to convey an abstract thought. If any significance does attach to such convenient terms, it lies most probably not in each singly, but in the fact that certain figurative appellations, with reference to God, used invariably under similar circumstances, show that there is a method in the use of them. To subject such regularly and persistently applied tropes to some scrutiny is legitimate work, and by it we might arrive at a well-established system of biblical interpretation. To such investigation Maimonides devoted the first part of the "More," and this may be regarded as very humble prolegomena for a philosophy of language.

Here then is the first opportunity in which we can see the stand he took, from the side of profane philosophy, regarding the widely distributed cosmogony and the much-cherished fostering of mysticism, which the first had engendered. The theory that the universe is a chain of spherical agency, is an importation into Judaism from foreign sources. Maasse Bereshith and Maasse Merkabah were reduced and eliminated by the logic of hermeneutics to popular phrases which have no other significance than to serve to make things more easily intelligible. Thus rational Judaism got easily rid of a very unwelcome intruder.

The four categories of Aristotle provided the constructive part of the "More." I will state it in this way: Every object, according to Aristotle, is composite, being a bundle of matter, form, efficient cause, and final cause. Upon efficient cause Maimonides based the cosmological proof of the existence of a God. All phenomena, when traced even to the most distant regression, are reducible to a primal efficient cause. The contrast between "matter" and "form" furnishes another proof of the existence of God. The *πρώτη ὕλη* (the original matter) logically presupposes a *πρῶτον κινοῦν* (an original force). This latter is isolated, and to it no movement can be communicated. This "Essence," the First Form, then, is God.

The ontological proof, unlike the more recent modification of it, is based upon the fact that the world is, as Aristotle would say, wholly a flood of potentialities into actualization. This transition from latent condition into real state must proceed through some supreme agent. This is all in strict obedience to Aristotelian authority. Maimonides adopted additionally the following corroborative proofs.

The unity of God is an absolute one. If there existed two divine beings this absoluteness would be logically impossible. On the

one hand, they would have in common the fact of divinity; on the other hand, there would have to be some reason why we should discriminate one from the other. To be what they are they would have to be both common and special, which of course excludes *ultimate* condition. Again, it cannot be supposed that two respectively exclusive deities voluntarily divided authority between them, for wherein shall the compromise lie? In a division of labor? Is not the fact of such an arrangement an evidence of inferiority, since their absoluteness would be hampered? At any rate the yielding up of authority and power must have some ground (for nothing can be ungrounded, even in a God), and if there is a reason for it, then evidently the reason is an extraneous constraint; and this makes absoluteness absurd.

I should like to be more detailed in the demonstration which Maimonides gives of the existence of a God; as I should like also to refer, more than by a passing notice, to the care recommended by him regarding the pre-eminently Jewish notion that God is *one*. The philosophical aspect of God's essence must not be confounded with a numerical commonplace. Unity is referable to God only in the sense that in Him no such coincidence of form and matter takes place as is attributable, according

to peripateticism, to transitory phenomena. God is *one*, as the absolute essence.

But we must hurry on. In the philosophy of Maimonides, perhaps more so than elsewhere in Jewish literature, the relationship between God and the world is conceived to be intimate. God is the *form* of the world; without His direction we could not conceive how the world is continuous. He is not simply a *deus ex machina*, who has once performed His service of creation and is thence dismissed for eternal indolence. Since God is "form," every origination of a terrestrial phenomenon springs out of the bosom of His infinite opulence. Regarding this point Spinoza has been charged with discipleship of Maimonides, which Prof. Caird, in his "Life of Spinoza," takes pains to disprove. But there is no necessity to claim more than that Maimonides is in this, as nearly everywhere, on the ground of Aristotelianism. Maimonides' God is the sublimation of one of too contradictory terms, which stand forever in the world in irreconcilable opposition. Spinoza's *Pan* is *one* substance, out of which matter, as its cognate, flows as water flows out of the spring.

By the establishment of an ever-present God (and an ever-active one) Maimonides has redeemed the Bible and Jewish theology (perhaps *all* theology) of a very formidable charge.

I proceed to state it tersely. It is a common practice to speak of God as the Creator; but the nature of His present whereabouts and occupation is not made out. Granted that "in the beginning" He "created heaven and earth," where has He kept himself ever since, seeing that the providential plan is getting along so well in His absence?

Maimonides answers it thus: God is not only the "form," but also the "final cause" of the world. In other words, He is not only the occasion that brought the world into being, but also their purpose. This teleological turn is admirable, and it is vital. God did not make things as they are simply in the capacity of a mechanic, but as an artist, fitting the material to its proper use in the economy of things. This is a weighty word for optimism, that wisdom is resident in the world, and that the world is preparing a glorious *mise en scène* of the best.

In this sense, I mean my assertion that Maimonides has brought God and nature into immediate and intimate relation, and has given ample consolation for the disparaging events of accident, in an abiding conviction that the cosmos is normal and moral.

I wish now to pass to the consideration of another theme of Maimonidian speculation. We have so far considered God and nature.

Two other topics are still left to be presented. The first is, what relation is there between man and nature; and the second, what relation subsists between God and man? The question, what position man has in the cosmos, was not indigenous to mediæval thought. The identity of the physical basis in all organic beings was recognized; but a *generic* kinship of man and animal, on the ground of soul-life, was inconceivable to the school of Maimonides, for the reason that the notion "organism" was not known to them. Organism is not simply a body which is ensouled, but a body which possesses co-ordinated functions. It is true they supposed the universe inspirited, but in a mythological sense, or at least in a restricted sense, something like the occasionalism of Guelinx. To the conception of a possible fundamental identity in the two aspects of being (material and spiritual), none of the Jewish thinkers, as none of the others, had attained. Within the compass of physical life man was scarcely more significant than any other instance of atomic aggregate. The eminence of the human species lay rather in another direction; the soul of man was pre-eminent among all other instances of life.

Within the psychology of the individual there were (*a*) a vegetative soul; (*b*) a sensational soul; (*c*) an imaginative soul; (*d*) an ap-

petitive soul; (*e*) a rational soul. Similarly there was the soul of the mineral, of the vegetable, of the animal, world. The definition of soul as preferred by Maimonides is: "The form" of a thing is its soul. We can guess what the soul of man would be.

And still we must not allow the impression to gain upon us that Maimonides did not posit any thing with reference to the intrinsic dignity of man. It is possible for man alone, he says, to grow in strength of mental vision so that he can come into communion with the absolute. There is a gradation in the mental experiences of man. At first his intellect is simply *hylic*. The essence of things is hid from him, and the potentialities are undiscovered because they are hidden under a heap of materialities. He knows phenomena only as separate and individual things. His second stage is a growth. Here the mind seizes upon abstracts. In the highest status of mentality, finally, the mind reverts upon itself through the intermediate stage of perception and conception. Intellectual susceptibilities, potentialities in the things, apperception by the mind,—these three are wedded by Maimonides into congenite unity.

The second question, how is God related to man? and *vice versa*, brings us into the presence of the subject of morals, and, as a very vital part, of the question of free will.

Maimonides has treated the subject of free will very definitely. He posits the following: Man has been endowed with complete freedom to choose the good or the evil; he alone of all creatures discriminates between these by his reason, though the transition from a mental attitude toward these ethical alternatives does not entail that the corresponding act and conduct must follow. Allow me to insert here the remark that Maimonides emphasized the total separation of cognition by the mind from the enlistment of the mind for conduct, in opposition to the Dschabarites, a Mohammedan sect. This sect had won dangerous prestige, and since it was a fatalistic school, Maimonides desired to stem its ingratiating influence. Before Maimonides it had been becoming less offensive to believe that, inasmuch as God is omnipotent, man could not, in any way, assert himself. Volition was stigmatized by the blighting frown of these fatalists.

"Do not think," he says, "as some much misguided people do, that God foreordains immediately at the inception of a man's life what he shall be, whether righteous or wicked; nay, every man becomes what he himself determines to be. One is compassionate, the other hard-hearted; one is miserly, the other liberal, according to his own predilection. There is no constraint. According to a dictate from

within, man chooses the way he will go. In the sphere of moral selection the law of causality does not obtain as it does in nature, as if the will of a man were simply the effect of some cause to which he is implicitly subject. The will of a man is primarily the source of all his actions."

"And," he continues, "it is true an objection might naturally obtrude itself upon our attention. If the human will is sovereign, in what sense shall we comprehend the equally valid truth that God is all-powerful? Does not, by the allowance to man of such self-mastery, the divine omnipotence suffer much disdain, nay, does it not become logically impossible?"

This is his answer: "The freedom of the human will is itself a determination on the part of God when he created man, just as is the natural law, according to which, for instance, light, gaseous bodies rise and heavy-stuff particles sink. God has prescribed to every thing its specific character. The distinctive character of the human being in this sense is his free will" (or as we would put it perhaps more adequately, it is the mode, the law of his being).

There is a second objection possible against the conjunction of personal free will with divine absoluteness. It might be justly construed that free will, as it acts arbitrarily and

occasionally, is inconsistent with and clashes with divine omniscience. God fore-knows, if in the sense of absoluteness he knows at all. When, therefore, God knows events and doings, it is tantamount, in divine logic, to their being at the very moment objective realities. How then can there obtain any alternatives for man to choose from, if as soon as God has fixed it, man is confined to what He has determined?

To this objection Maimonides replies rather apodictically. The entire matter need not trouble us. For the relation, as alleged, is impossible. God is absolute, and of a positive essence, like the absolute, we can say nothing. God's essence and God's cognition are not, as in the economy of human mentality, antecedent and consequent, as if it were brain and sensuous impressions carried to the brain. In God unity admits of no discreteness. We know nothing of how God knows, nor can we, in the strict sense, say at all that God knows. For in our terminology knowing presupposes faculty for perception, conception, abstraction, and naming. All these are phases of mind-activity, where mind is distinct from and simply the tool of a spiritual personality. But in the divine person mind is not a subordinate instrumentality, for the absolute has no such division of labor in its make-up. We are, therefore, unable to declare any thing as to God's omniscience, and

we cannot say that human freedom is in anv way affected by the absolute essence of God.

In this way Maimonides disposes of the difficulties, which are in the way of an harmonization of the seeming opposites of free will and divine fore-knowledge. But this matter brings us close to another question not quite so perplexing and insurmountable.

Whence comes responsibility? If freedom is an endowment, what is its exact nature? and what is its source? Freedom and liberty are synonyms in the popular vocabulary, but the distinction between them is very marked when they are employed with some nicety. Freedom is inalienable; liberty is a privilege. Freedom is an ethical condition; liberty a civil grant. Freedom is a positive and lasting property; liberty an immunity from incidental obligation. Unlike liberty, freedom is an habitual state of soul. In this normal, original, and continuous state there must be a personal administration, an unconditional dictate, so that the aim of the individual and the destiny of the race are served best. This is the basis of ethics. The consideration of it is eminently a question of ethical philosophy. With Maimonides it is closely related to theology on the one side, and, as we shall see, with science on the other.

There is no question to the solution of which

the philosopher ought to bring his acumen to bear more directly than upon the question of the origin, the character, the content of the notion of right. I submit the proposition that our mental discipline, the insight we have got into history, the profound method of comparison of which we make use in all branches of archæology, language, mythology, and religion, and finally the analysis of psychology, will bring a supreme benefit. For they will make more practicable a science of ethics. We make shift practically with amateur morals. From the aspect of scientific study we are content with reassuring ourselves that our maxims, customs, and habits do not run counter to our critical sense, and that they have the authority of history and the consensus of our cotemporaries. The faults common to divergent theological systems of morals can be subsumed under the one radical one: they all beg the question; none is in alliance with the only reliable method of comparison, which, though as yet in its infancy, will turn out to be the most fertile and efficient. And let me add, there can be no well substantiated classification of moral precepts, except on the basis of psychology. And by that I do not mean merely a graduation of psychological phenomena, the abstract study of soul-experiences. I have in mind a treatment of the history of ethics, so

that its manifold, divergent, and conflicting facts will yield something besides a classification of moral maxims. The history of culture will show that there is a basal unity in the logic, the psychology, and the morals of every epoch and that these are mutually dependent one upon the other. There is no such thing possible as common-sense contradicting itself anywhere.

But let us return to the consideration of what were the principles of Maimonides regarding ethics. He shares with many others the opinion that the ethics of the people are in keeping with their experiences. Morals are to him not much more than regulations. These regulations are for the most part deductions. Here is the way he arrives at a fundamental criterion of what is virtue: The extremes of human volition, he says, are not the measure by which rectitude can be ascertained. The ancients recommended the mean; neither too great an enthusiasm nor too heavy an indifference. Just as the pendulum settles in its proper place after oscillating to both sides, so moral qualities are compromises between the swayings of the passions. Experience and the discipline which comes from experience, and what is still better self-discipline, these bring habits in their train and lay the foundation for moral self-sufficiency.

"In the matter of motives," says he, "the selection of which is relegated to the individual, there is no difference between religion and philosophy. The restrictive influence of religion is not a pre-determinate, nor is it positive; it is simply corrective." I strip the quaint language of Maimonides and render it in modern phraseology as approximately as I can. The nature of religion is predominantly of a restraining force; it is prescriptive and originative only with reference to the details of worship. The stimulating or rather the originative elements of conscious purpose come to the surface rarely in a system of religion which is tinged catechismically. Maimonides insists on a conception of ethics, which shall not be confined to a *remedial* purpose. It shall, he says, never be an apology for either self-indulgence on the one hand, or, on the other, for a super-refined notion of self-negation or abnegation. I suspect Maimonides here of a sly dig at the ascetic schools of the Christianity of his day, and at Mutazilite transcendentalism, which taught the fiction of the sensuous kind of compensation, notoriously Mohammedan. Asceticism, he says, is a revulsion from the extreme of luxurious sensuality, justly abhorred, the more since it is cloaked under a dissimulating religiousness. Transcendentalists, already in the day of Maimonides, as they do even in our day, made

virtue a contemplative, a speculative attitude. The agent is to do the virtuous act for virtue's sake. If it were allowed to lay open the mechanism of such philosophic virtuousness, it would be tantamount to a yearning after an ideal, to a sort of poetry. This ideal of pure morality is not an inner force, but an externality, which allures because of its fascination. Maimonides insists on it that the source of the pure act lies within the man and that the analysis of motives will prove it. Moral force is resident within the agent, and is not dependent upon an alluring fiction outside of him. A man is morally good in proportion to the personal contribution he has made in the effort. There is a combat between self-consciousness and organism—or as Maimonides puts it, an opposition obtains between man and sin. But the virtuous man is such only if his consciousness has had something to do with the selection of the act. Still this struggle between the mental factors and the physical factors of the organism is not a hostile opposition, but a parting off and a balancing. And this affects mainly only the non-essential matters, such as, for instance, ceremonialism and the proprieties are. They are an "After-moral," artificial and subventional, in contrast with spontaneity, original and basal.

It may not be apparent how in this Maimoni-

des follows Aristotle. But in the principle of the Mean, as the desideratum of moral integrity, Maimonides agrees with more philosophers than the Greek. Even in the most recent phase of ethical philosophy, the subsumption of ethical rules has not gotten farther than crowding them under the experiential maxim of the golden mean. But Maimonides regarded the compromise of selfishness and love, the two contradictory states of morals, as representing more an *art* of ethics than a *science* of ethics. On this account he felt the need of a farther analysis of motives. If there are actually various psychological factors in the determination of a motive, it cannot be supposed that these are mental phenomena in a melée with passions, but kindred facts of mind. Why I should rather do this than that, is not determined by my personal authority over against physical demands, but because I contrast by an intuitive logic two unequal, though similar motives. Thus Maimonides maintains his position among the idealists, and has swept the charge of theology from him. I am anxious to put this clearly, for this position of Maimonides as to ethics has been endorsed by all later Jewish philosophers. I mention as the most significant Bachja ibn Pakuda,—whose "Choboth Haleboboth" carries this principle of the mental—I should say

spiritual—character of moral motives as far as it can be carried legitimately, viz., to constrain as unessential, though from the legislative point of view they may be serviceable and even occasionally necessary, the abandonment of many injunctions and prohibitions which have the endorsement of tradition, but are not entailed by the fundamental principle of pure morals.

Maimonides gave direction to Jewish philosophy far beyond the immediate compass of Mosaism. He had furnished criteria for later phases of Jewish thought.

In the subject we have in hand just now, I will allow myself to add that it is a conventional view, which has gone into literature to a regrettable extent, that Judaism has continued in its teachings regarding ethics in a monotonous way ever since its inception. In one respect I will not deny it, namely as to specific regulations and practices. But as to the aspect of ethics as a whole there has been no modification. From Moses to Moses Maimonides, and from this Moses to Moses Mendelssohn, all matters pertaining to religion, as well as to morals, were referred to psychology in the last instance. An abidance in this attitude I do not consider a want of growth; for I believe that beyond the psychological key there is no better. The eventful history of the Jews has

not affected nor modified the original meaning of person and of relationship. It may have entailed and forced upon the Jews a deleterious depression of the emotions. And in so far as sentiments react upon the person and complicate the original disposition, we may be able to notice certain evidences of what bigotry did cause; and this may account for the legalism of Moses and for the casuistry of the Rabbis. But the conception of morals in the abstract and philosophic sense was always that they were essentially intuitive.

I said above that Judaism maintained continuously an original psychological conception of person and relationship. I repeat it now, because I wish to advert to the next subject, which, in the philosophy of Maimonides, naturally follows from a scientific view of morals. I mean the state. Maimonides maintains that as soon as we shall be able to give a precise account of morals in the individual, we shall have come nearest to the disposal of the question how sociality originates. Man, he says, is by nature gregarious (*πολίτικον ζῶον*, Adom M'dini b'teva). He is referred to his fellows by the demands of his person. I add, by your indulgence, that this need of fellowship from the organic side of the individual carries in germ every other element for a scientific apology for the state. Nature here hints only,

and the history of the race brings forth the patent fact that spiritual communion is necessary. But I must continue. Man is naturally social, and he is dependent upon various and mutually differing relationships with fellows to make his life possible, even in the elementary matters. I find in this a suggestion of the economic principle of division of labor, though I scarcely wish to claim that Maimonides knew of political economy as a science. The political condition of his time admitted of no such notion. Politics and statecraft and the arts of governing were relegated to some few privileged ones, and the thought of sociology was exceedingly remote. Not even this had dawned upon them, that irresponsible royalty might be subjected to criticism. But Maimonides recognized the interdependence of man upon men, and the diversity of characters as a necessary condition for the moral status of the individual.

But it must not be supposed that the mutuality of men makes impossible the distinction of some one or some few, above the mass of mediocres. Leadership is not a voluntary assumption on the part of one person nor an enforced yielding up on the part of the people. Sovereignty and genial guidance are essential, not institutional. As much as the individual needs society, so society needs the individual.

If society were simply an aggregate of single men, it would fail to respond to the demands of humanity. The highest human powers are in the service to secure the consistence and unity of society. This is a view of hero-worship upon the evidence of history of which I know no other defender except Emerson. Geniuses are not lent for á time. Those who lead the humanities of the ages are not out of time and place. They are natural products and natural causes. Even though we cannot lay our fingers upon the pulse of their creative powers, they are logically necessary. Society and history, the experiences, the shocks, the amenities, the monotonies, the exaltations, the thousand-fold agencies and patiences of men, have their centre and polarity in genius and talent. No theory of the history of culture is adequate unless it has room for what is currently termed exceptional because obtrusive. No history of culture is scientific unless it shows that the birth, career, and death, failure and success of leaders, is as normal a phenomenon and as traceable to social ultimates as the large movements themselves. This is more than a mere forecast on the part of Maimonides, for though he is undeniably prejudiced in favor of Mosaism, it is a very thoroughgoing view of his. We are so occupied with the worth of our heroes as magnificent persons, that we

forget that even such magnitudes might be subservient,—subservient to a profound plan in which they are only tools. No history of civilization has yet been written except in a discursive manner. Epochs and occurrences in the life of peoples and leaders are treated as if they were so many plants which have vegetated in turn. Of a graduation of historic facts, how one occurrence plays into the other, shades off one into the other, each a requisite antecedent and a necessary consequent, all history without a break, continuous from first to last, from now as far as the certainty of law will carry us,—on that method no one has yet constructed the true philosophy of history. It redounds to the credit of Moses Maimonides, that, despite the shortcomings of his time as to scientific introspection, despite the absence of any historic sense in his day, he still has a presentiment that there obtains ordered arrangement of human affairs in their large scope, and that this has an equally fit place for the people and for genius. The genius is the prophet. Law, *i. e.*, administration, is not accessory, but a divine institution. Legislation, however, in the narrow sense of police authority, though it is justly vested with executive power, still, in the presence of the supreme facts of human nature, is an impertinence which is tolerated because it is useful. Law, Maimon-

ides contends, as the groundwork of society, is only another expression of society's own mode of being. I submit this as the teaching of the Jewish Hugo Grotius: It is the right of those who constitute the social compact to protect themselves against individual violence, inasmuch as such violence evidences a flagrant perversion of the social instinct, and the malevolent agent cannot be in a sound condition. He lacks one of the attributes of humanity.

The state is supreme in authority, not only because it encompasses all the members of the community, but also because it is an efficient agent in the curriculum of their moral discipline. The order of importance in the three departments of civic interests is: first, the state, and consequently the special form of government; second, economics *per se*; third, the spiritual matters, for these are what they are only in direct proportion and analogy with the other two. Both national prosperity and national intelligence are dependent for their resources and opportunities upon the character of government and paternal guardianship of the fostering state.

We see that Maimonides is indebted for the positive character of his philosophy to his opposition to the Mohammedan school of fatalism. But he could not avoid falling himself

into the snare of a more polished fatalism. There is no clearer case of fatalism than the scientific. Still it is only such by an extension of the meaning of the word fatalism. There is a fatalism of prefiguration, and there is another fatalism, which has nothing to do with providential ukases. The activity or experience of every thing in nature is within the lines which the mode of the thing prescribes. This is fatalism as little as is the logical constraint of the term square, the sides of which must always be equal and shorter than the diagonal. Nothing can make the sides equal to the diagonal No amount of disdain can make this second kind of scientific definiteness kindred to Oriental fatalism. Maimonides must have been aware of this distinction; and in the matter of morals and of polity it is evident that he was. There must be, he says, a reciprocity between people and legislators on the ground of the natural law.

I ought now to offer some slight exposition of the doctrine of prophecy for which Maimonides is distinguished in Jewish literature. But the subject is properly theological and is so treated at length in the "More"; and I believe it is on this account irrelevant in a discussion of his philosophy in general. I may say that the prophet is described by Maimonides as a supremely endowed human being,

whose delicate sensitiveness is a fact of his constitution, economic condition, and consequent exhilaration or depression. Prophetic genius is one of a class. But Maimonides reserves for himself this limitation, that the genial endowment in itself is a mystery. How far soever we carry the analysis, and however we feel the pulse of that splendid life, we cannot fix upon the element which makes it different from all others. The prophet may be simply a rational person, but what gives him the faculty of exhaustive insight and foresight, it must be admitted, is simply an act of the will of God.

In a general review of the philosophy of Maimonides it will be pardoned, I hope, if matters dear to the student of the "More" have had insufficient attention. I will content myself, in conclusion, to state that the Jewish adage: "From Moses unto Moses there has been none like Moses," applied to Maimonides most worthily. He holds an honored supremacy in Jewish philosophy.

It is to be noted, however, that in the history of thought a period of rationalism has generally been followed by a relapse into mysticism, and that no single large movement of liberalization and renaissance has been exempt from this reversion. It was so in the case of Maimonides. His successors were the Rabbanites and Kabbalists. These endeavored

with all the malice of their bigotry to stigmatize the "More." The grave of Maimonides was disgraced. He was excommunicated even in death, and a few years after his death his work, denounced by fanatics, was burned in the market-place at Paris and Toulouse as dangerous and heretical. The Inquisition, with its prompt and most chivalric persuasion, suppressed the study of all Jewish philosophy. But all this could not avail. The pseudographs and forgeries of the "Kabbala," of the "Sohar," etc., met with deserved obloquy, while the "More" has grown in respect and reverence.

I cannot speak of his other works, such as his work on logic ("Higgayan"), his codex ("Yad Hachazakah"), which is the foundation of all later elaborations of Jewish law. The composition of the latter work would in itself have been sufficient to secure to him enduring fame in the history of Judaism. But I have refrained from speaking of these for the reason that they are foreign to a consideration of his philosophy.

Maimonides may be designated as the Aristotle of Judaism. So Grätz calls him. Jewish thought is exceptional in the history of religions, because it appropriates and domesticates the world's thinking. Of this we have a striking instance in the manner in which Maimonides

readily imported Aristotelianism into Jewish philosophy. The universal presence of God and the plasticity of the human soul, the kinship of all life, the conviction that everywhere is the throb of life and of thought,—these are the teaching of the Jew of Spain, of the Jew to-day, and of the best in the world, and as in the eleventh century so also in the more promising nineteenth.

THE END.

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