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THE GOD OF REASON AND THE GOD OF THE IMAGINATION  
IN THE THEOLOGY OF MAIMONIDES

by

Theodore G. Falcon

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## DIGEST

Through the pages of the Guide of the Perplexed, Maimonides, the Jewish philosopher of the twelfth-century, puts forth the nature of the God of reason. His intention is to address those who have become perplexed by the disparity between philosophy and the literal words of Scripture. At the same time, Maimonides conceals his true teaching from the unperplexed, and it is only through an awareness of his method of concealment that one can grasp his philosophy. Although there are some who maintain that one cannot discern what Maimonides believed, Maimonides' intention was not to conceal his meaning from the educated, and within the Guide he establishes criteria for resolving the inconsistencies and contradictions.

Maimonides establishes the attributes of the God of reason with great detail. This God is incorporeal, a unity, and the First Cause of all that is. His incorporeality and unity demand the rejection of both essential and accidental attributes. God contains neither quality nor relation to any other being. We can know Him only through His actions and through the application of negative attributes.

The attributes of the God of reason become criteria for the discernment of Maimonides' true statements on other aspects of his religious philosophy. A consideration of his views on providence, God's omniscience, prophecy, and creation

leads one to note the coherent development of this conception of God. God's knowledge, essentially different from man's, does not change the nature of the possible. Both providence and prophecy are natural phenomena which require the development of man's natural faculties. Although God is the Creator, He directly created only the First Intelligence.

The God of the imagination, attacked by Maimonides, represents the Pharisaic Jewish belief structure. Through concealment, he attempts to hide the essential differences between his religion and theirs. The religion of the God is, for Maimonides, the true Judaism.

Do not imagine that these most difficult problems can be thoroughly understood by any of us. This is not the case. At times the truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Nature and habit then draw a veil over our perception, and we return to a darkness almost as dense as before. We are like those who, though beholding frequent flashes of lightning, still find themselves in the thickest darkness of the night.

From Maimonides' Introduction to the  
Guide of the Perplexed.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM OF METHOD

If we are to fathom the religious views of Maimonides in the Moreh Nebukhim it is necessary to have an understanding of the general method through which he approaches the various topics of his philosophy of religion. A perennial problem regarding method in the Moreh has been that of concealment, whether Maimonides is hiding any beliefs of importance to which he subscribes in secret. This gives rise to the corollary problem of what Maimonides has to gain from such concealment. The methodological problem of concealment is ultimately related to the general problem of Moreh scholarship: can we know anything at all of the true meaning of the Moreh? It is by beginning with a consideration of Maimonides' method vis-a-vis secrets and concealment that we can hope to discover the essential philosophy which he held.

There is ample reason for the proposition that there is concealment in the Moreh. The following points Maimonides makes in the Moreh clearly indicate this. Maimonides says his purpose is to reveal the true meaning of the figurative language in both the Pentateuch and the prophetic literature. In this way he seeks to relieve the perplexity of those who through reason and philosophic study have become disturbed by the literal interpretations of those books.<sup>1</sup> Yet there is information which is to be presented only for such a

student who has become perplexed; it is not meant for the<sup>2</sup> multitude of men who could only become disturbed by it. Further, the truths of religion and natural science alike are not of a public nature; neither can be presented out-right.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, because a straight exposition of such matters cannot be given, responsibility is thrown onto the reader to discover organization within the apparent disorder of the Guide, and to thereby understand Maimonides' intent. Because the truths will be apparent at one time and concealed at the next, only the true student will be able to<sup>4</sup> grasp them, while they shall remain hidden from the masses. Such a method Maimonides takes from the Bible, which clothes truths in metaphor so that the uneducated will understand it in one way, while those educated will understand what is<sup>5</sup> really being said.

Close attention must be paid not only to such statements respecting method, but also statements by Maimonides giving the reader directions for the study of the Moreh. Maimonides tells the reader that the book was written with extreme care, that no doubts are left unexplained, that the book must be read with this in mind: "You must study thoroughly and read continually; for you will then find the solution of those important problems of religion, which are a source of anxiety to all intelligent men."<sup>6</sup> Maimonides further

cautions the reader that he may "understand my words to mean the exact opposite of what I intended to say."<sup>7</sup> But Maimonides still chose to address himself to the one intelligent perplexed man among ten thousand fools and extricate him from his embarrassment so that he may attain perfection and peace.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it must be possible for the careful reader to identify those passages where Maimonides purposely misleads to appease the multitudes of the unschooled.

While discussing the seven classifications of inconsistencies and contradictions which may be found in a literary work, Maimonides indicates two types which occur in the Guide.

The first cause of contradiction emerges from the method adopted in teaching certain things. A general notion of some difficult subject may be given first which is inexact. Later in the work a clearer treatment is presented and more fully developed in its right place.<sup>9</sup> This type of contradiction, then, will ultimately be resolved by the author. The reader has the responsibility of connecting the various sections of the Guide into a coherent system. The second cause of contradiction emerges from the content under consideration. Some metaphysical matters can only be partially disclosed while kept partially concealed. Such problems may be treated in different ways according to different contexts. "The author must endeavor, by concealing the fact as much as possible, to prevent the uneducated reader from perceiving

the contradiction."<sup>10</sup> The educated reader must perceive the contradiction and discover which is Maimonides' view.

Maimonides speaks, then, of communication on two levels: words can convey one meaning for the uneducated and transmit at the same time an entirely different meaning to the educated. For the former, much will appear as mere translation from the Hebrew text of the Bible; for the latter, the true differences will become apparent. "This is the utmost that can be done in treating this subject so as to be useful to all without fully explaining it."<sup>11</sup> There can be no doubt that Maimonides indicates explicitly that the Moreh contains concealed materials.

We can view the writings of Leo Strauss as paradigmatic of the school which attempts to delve into the format of the hidden teaching in the writings of Maimonides. Finding that Maimonides writes under an atmosphere of persecution, at a time when certain views could cause an author harm, Strauss relates his general notions about such literature to Maimonides. Persecution gives rise to a technique in writing by which the truth about all crucial things is "presented exclusively between the lines."<sup>12</sup> Since only thoughtful men are careful readers,<sup>13</sup> the writer can communicate his message to them, trusting that they are above the repressive atmosphere of persecution. Such a book would contain two teachings: "a popular teaching of an

edifying character, which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines.<sup>14</sup> Viewing the Guide as exemplary of such literature under conditions of persecution, Strauss maintains that: "Since the Guide contains an esoteric interpretation of an esoteric teaching, an adequate interpretation of the Guide would thus have to take the form of an esoteric interpretation of an esoteric interpretation of an esoteric teaching."<sup>15</sup> According to Strauss, it is not yet possible to clearly point out Maimonides' true beliefs. The atmosphere of persecution is still extant, it would seem.

Strauss finds that Maimonides conceals his truth not within parables but by using "conscious and intentional contradictions, hidden from the vulgar, between unparabolic and unenigmatic statements."<sup>16</sup> There is only one rule the reader can follow to discover what Maimonides means to convey as true:

Consequently, of two contradictory statements made by him, that statement which is most secret must have been considered by him to be true.... We may therefore establish the rule that of two contradictory statements in the Guide or in any other work of Maimonides that statement which occurs least frequently, or even which occurs only once, was considered by him to be true.<sup>17</sup>

Strauss divides the secret method of Maimonides into three classifications very much like Maimonides' own enumeration: first, that every word of the Guide is carefully chosen, and since few read with sufficient care to grasp the exact meaning of each, most will miss the secret teaching; second, that Maimonides deliberately contradicts himself, and if a man does so, he cannot be said to declare anything; and third, that the "chapter headings" of the secret teaching are scattered through the book. This accounts  
18  
for the general obscurity of the Guide.

Strauss then reveals what he considers to be the secret par excellence of the Guide. Maimonides expressly equates the core of philosophy, including natural science and divine science, with the highest secrets of the Law, i.e., with the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot. In so doing he identifies the subject matter of speculation with the subject matter of exegesis. Exegesis,  
19  
then, is Maimonides' substitute for natural science.

Strauss adds to his conception of the manner of concealment by references to the placement of the lexicographic and non-lexicographic chapters, a system of gematria, the parts of speech with which chapters are begun, and Maimonides' use  
20  
and placement of Aramaic or Hebrew expressions. Although Strauss never reveals what exactly is hidden in these ways,

or that Maimonides himself hints that these methods are at all efficacious, Strauss nevertheless mentions them.

Given Strauss' own terms, if his interpretation is an example of esoteric writing itself, we must seek his concealed and secret meanings. Attempting this, we could never be sure whether or not we have found them. And even if one could be sure, the hidden teachings of Maimonides may remain concealed. Instead of bringing us closer to the true content of the philosopher, it would appear that Strauss has removed us yet another step from such awareness.

Such an emphasis on the esoteric destroys scholarship; it denies the possibility of ever stating in a direct way that which Maimonides may have been saying. Further, it would be the opposite of Maimonides' own intention: it would be leading the perplexed into far greater perplexities. Maimonides states that his views are presented with some degree of courage to insure that the careful reader can grasp them.

...if I had omitted setting down something of that which has appeared to me as clear, so that that knowledge would perish when I perish, as is inevitable, I should have considered that conduct extremely cowardly with regard to you and everyone who is perplexed. It would have been, as it were, robbing one who deserves the truth of the truth...<sup>21</sup>

To hide the truth -- to conceal it beyond scholarly recognition -- would defeat Maimonides' stated purposes.

Besides Maimonides' desire for the Guide to convey his truths, there is another consideration which can lead the reader beyond certain inconsistencies in the Guide. There may be a difference between the statements of concealment in the Guide and the actual fact of such secrecy. For example, before speaking of the meaning of the visions voiced by the prophet Ezekiel, Maimonides again mentions his intention to conceal his meaning.<sup>22</sup> In the following seven chapters, however, it becomes clear that Ezekiel's words are explained by nothing other than the Neo-platonic system of cosmology, complete with both spheres and intelligences.<sup>23</sup> In such a case, we must ask: is there really anything hidden? What more could Maimonides have told us? How could he have stated a cosmological system more foreign to the literal understanding of the words of the Biblical text? The possibility exists, therefore, that Maimonides' reminders of concealment may at times be misleading in themselves. Such an overstatement of concealment could follow from three possible causes: first, that Maimonides sought to protect himself from attack by stating concealment where there is none, realizing that the superficial reader, who cannot miss the statements of concealment, will not accept what follows as simple truth; second, that Maimonides was carried away by his conception of a secret teaching and in fact overstated the pervasiveness of that secret; and, third, that Maimonides,

although attempting communication on a double level, at times failed to do so. Accepting Maimonides' own acknowledgment that he wrote the Guide with extreme care, the first possibility seems the most likely.

There is, indeed, sufficient cause for questioning the conclusions reached by Strauss, both with regard to the degree and nature of Maimonides' concealment, and with respect to the methods available of resolving certain contradictions in the text. Maimonides may give the reader far more conclusive criteria for resolving contradictions and thereby discovering his truth than Strauss does when he leads us to believe that only that which occurs least frequently in the Guide can possibly be true.

There is no doubt that Maimonides had to be careful in the manner in which he presented his thoughts, and that the methods adopted for his purposes do lead to difficulty in isolating clearly the elements of his philosophy of religion. Nevertheless, one can know what Maimonides' views are. Through the pages of the Moreh Nebukhim the common theology which is a product of the imagination of man is repudiated and a theology of reason is put forth. Since this God of reason lies at the very center of Maimonides' system, we may expect to find criteria for the understanding of the Guide implicit in this discussion. We must begin our consideration of Maimonides' philosophy with this question: Can we know the nature of the God of reason?

## CHAPTER TWO

THE GOD OF REASON

## I. IMAGINATION AND REASON

A pervasive theme in the Moreh involves the distinction between imagination and reason. Since reason, or intellect, is the only avenue to truth, and imagination the stumbling block, we must consider their natures. The criteria which Maimonides places on the nature of truth can be used as a philosophical key to the content of the Guide of the Perplexed.

"Man's distinction does not consist in the possession of imagination, and the action of imagination is not the same as the action of the intellect, but the reverse of it."<sup>1</sup> Maimonides defines the actions of the intellect as three in number. The intellect analyses the things perceived by the senses, it fulfills the functions of abstraction and generalization, and it classifies the attributes of things as either essential or non-essential. In contrast, the imagination merely represents things as they appear to man's senses, in their individuality and totality, either alone<sup>2</sup> or combined with several other things. What is crucial is that the imagination tells us nothing about what exists, or what is true. It yields no test for reality because it cannot make the abstraction which is necessary for such a proof.

However, many people do use their imagination as their

truth criterion,<sup>3</sup> even though it is not only useless to define what can exist, but also would often conclude that what in reality does exist does not.<sup>4</sup>

Maimonides therefore calls the imagination the "evil inclination," and determines that all human defects in speech or in character are "either the direct or the indirect work of imagination."<sup>5</sup> All man's passions and desires are the offspring of the imagination;<sup>6</sup> indeed, man's incorrect notions concerning the deity are to be ascribed to the workings of the imagination.<sup>7</sup> The source from which the imagination received these incorrect notions, however, is the literal reading of the text of the Bible.<sup>8</sup> Only if man employs his reason, his intellect, will he be able to discern in the Bible that which is said "allegorically, figuratively, or hyperbolically, and what is meant literally, exactly according to the original meaning of the words."<sup>9</sup> Although the imagination which misleads man is called an "angel,"<sup>10</sup> this is the angel called "Satan."<sup>11</sup>

Although imagination, part of the matter of man, is never totally perfectable, it reaches its highest state in prophecy. In prophecy man's rational faculty receives the emanation from the Active Intellect and then transmits it to the imaginative faculty. This is the highest state man's imaginative faculty can reach.<sup>12</sup> It represents the inversion of the usual functioning of that faculty.

Opposed to the imagination is the intellect, man's faculty of reason and rationality. Understanding this faculty

to be involved in the discernment of truth, Maimonides prefaces his chapters on the attributes of the God of reason with a discussion of how this decision on truth is accomplished.

## II THE NATURE OF TRUE BELIEF

There are two basic criteria which Maimonides establishes for the nature of what is believed to be true. The first is that belief:

...is only possible after the apprehension of a thing; it consists in the conviction that the thing apprehended has its existence beyond the mind (in reality) exactly as it is conceived in the mind.<sup>13</sup>

The second is that:

If in addition to this we are convinced that the thing cannot be different in any way from what we believe it to be, and that no reasonable argument can be found for the rejection of the belief or for the admission of any deviation from it, then the belief is true.<sup>14</sup>

The first criterion is that which Maimonides speaks of when he says that "faith" does not refer to that which is merely uttered with the lips, but to that which is at the same time apprehended along with the conviction that such apprehension is of the thing as it exists in reality.<sup>15</sup>

Maimonides makes a distinction between the type of sentence which conveys truth and the type which does not. This distinction can be understood to represent the difference between a proposition -- a sentence which has in it either a truth or a falsity -- and a sentence which is not either true or false, but which is merely uttered by the lips.

In Aristotle's words:

Yet every sentence is not a proposition; only such are propositions as have in them either truth or falsity. Thus a prayer is a sentence, but is neither true nor false.<sup>16</sup>

With respect to questions of belief, only propositions are admissible. That which is neither true nor false cannot tell us anything concerning reality.

Given the need for the proposition, it is necessary to know in what manner its truth or falsity can then be determined. Aristotle provides us with the basic foundations which Maimonides accepts. Truth can be known through demonstration, that is, a syllogism productive of scientific knowledge,<sup>17</sup> and induction, through which one arrives at the primary premises.<sup>18</sup> "Every belief," writes Aristotle,<sup>19</sup> "comes either through syllogism or from induction." Of the thinking states through which truth is grasped, scientific knowing and intuition are always true; opinion and calculation<sup>20</sup> admit of error.

Maimonides makes this same distinction between the type of knowing that is certain and that which allows the possibility of error. Proofs are possible only by demonstration. When such demonstration is not available in any area of thought,<sup>21</sup> argumentation is admissible. The criteria for correct argumentation of opinion is the second guide for truth mentioned above: if there is no better argument, and if one is convinced the belief cannot be different from what

it is thought to be, then the belief is established.

For Maimonides, then, every statement regarding God which is used to express our beliefs regarding His nature "must of necessity constitute a logical proposition the truth of which is to be tested by its correspondence to the reality of the nature of God."<sup>22</sup>

It is, therefore, with an injunction to renounce habits and desires, products of the imagination, and to follow one's reason alone, that Maimonides proceeds to discuss the God of reason.

### III PROOFS FOR THE GOD OF REASON

The proofs of God introduced in the Moreh are taken from the philosophers. Maimonides lays down the propositions which are philosophically proven and which form the bases of the proofs, including the proposition that the universe is eternal. This last proposition will be later argued against,<sup>23</sup> but Maimonides assumes its truth for the proofs of God. We will here summarize briefly the nature of these proofs.

The first proof follows from the propositions which maintain that no motion can take place without an agent producing it, and that the series of causes affecting any motion is not infinite. Thus we arrive by necessity at a First Cause. Through further propositions it is shown that this First Cause, the efficient cause of the motion of the sphere, is incorporeal and does not reside in a corporeal object.<sup>24</sup> It is indivisible and unchangeable. This is the case as long as the motion of the sphere is eternal.

The second proof follows from the proposition of Aristotle as Maimonides understood it to be the effect that if a thing is composed of two elements, one of which is known to exist by itself, then the other element likewise is found to exist separate of that compound. The proposition is then related to motion. We notice many objects which contain the properties of setting other things in motion and themselves being set in motion by others. We also see a thing which is moved, but does not move anything else. Therefore there must exist that which gives motion but itself does not receive it. Not being subject to motion, that thing would be indivisible, incorporeal, and independent of time; and this being is God.<sup>25</sup>

The third proof is also attributed to Aristotle. All that exists, this argument states, must be either permanent, transient, or partly permanent and partly transient. The possibility that all things in existence are permanent is obviously not true, for we know things end, and on the other hand, if all were supposed to be transient nothing would ever be in existence. Since things do exist, there must be an eternal being not subject to destruction, whose existence is real and not merely possible. This eternal being does not receive its existence from another, but is itself the Primal Cause.<sup>26</sup>

The fourth philosophical argument is much like the first, which was an argument from motion. The transition from potentiality into actuality is utilized in the same way that motion per se was in the first proof. There must be a First Cause which contains nothing potential. It cannot be corporeal but it must be spiritual, and it exists by its own essence. The incorporeal is also the one, and this is God.<sup>27</sup>

Even assuming the eternality of the universe, these proofs demonstrate the existence, unity, and incorporeality of a God who does not reside as a force in any corporeal object. Maimonides then introduces other proofs of the incorporeality and unity of God.

If there were two gods they would share a property and also have at least one property not in common. They could not have independent existence if made up of different elements. Since God has independent existence, God must be one.<sup>28</sup>

God can also be proved from the fact that the universe is a whole. Because a duality of rulers would contradict reality, a unity is arrived at that is the cause of the existence of the universe. It would make no difference whether one assumed the First Cause had produced the universe ex nihilo or whether the universe co-existed with the First Cause.<sup>29</sup>

Because every corporeal object is composed of matter and form, and requires an agent as cause, it cannot be a true unity. Since it has been proved that God possesses no duality. He must also be incorporeal.<sup>30</sup> This is the last of the proofs which Maimonides introduces before his own method of demonstrating the existence of the deity. Maimonides never raises any question concerning the validity of these proofs which he has presented.

We note that even when describing his own proof, one not unlike that of the philosophers, Maimonides says he will "ignore for the present" the question of creation or eternality.<sup>31</sup> Maimonides' argument is essentially that an efficient cause must exist for the production of anything that has not existed previously, and since one cannot have a regression ad infinitum, we arrive at the First Cause, the efficient cause of all that exists.<sup>32</sup> This efficient cause is one, it is incorporeal, and it is eternal. It is God.

Given the various proofs of God, it is necessary to examine the nature of the proven deity. The import of this study will be the examination of what can be predicated of the God of reason. Maimonides prefaces his discussion of attributes with a clear rejection of essential attributes with respect to God, for "the rejection of corporeality implies the rejection of essential attributes."<sup>33</sup>

#### IV THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE GOD OF REASON

There are two types of attributes, according to Maimonides: essential and accidental. The accidental attribute is that which is not contained in the essence of a thing, and therefore is an accident superadded to that essence. Essential attributes, on the other hand, denote the essence of the thing and as such are either mere tautology, e.g., "man is man" or else represent the "explanation of a name, as, e.g., 'man is a speaking animal.'" <sup>34</sup> By "explanation of a name" it is clear that Maimonides means what Aristotle calls "the statement of a thing's nature," <sup>35</sup> which is a real definition. What is predicated of a thing in a proposition, then, can be either accidental or essential to that thing.

Maimonides divides positive attributes into five categories: 1) Attributes which include all the essential properties of an object; 2) Attributes which include only part of them; 3) Attributes which denote nonessential properties, e.g., quality; 4) Attributes which express the relation of an object to something else, e.g., relation; and, 5) Attributes which refer to the action of an object, e.g., action. While there was probably no literary precedent for Maimonides' fivefold classification of attributes, <sup>36</sup> Maimonides seems to take Aristotle's tenfold classification of categories and make their application as predicables, or

as attributes.<sup>37</sup> Thus what Aristotle calls "essence" would be contained in the first two categories of Maimonides; quality, quantity, and passiveness are included in "quality" for Maimonides; relation, place, and time would fall under "relation," and position and action would make up "action."

The first type of attribute is that which describes an object by its definition. This is the explanation of a name, and contains the true essence of the object.<sup>38</sup> This category of attribute cannot be used with respect to God:

All agree that this kind of description cannot be given of God; for there are no previous causes to His existence, by which He could be defined; and on that account it is a well-known principle, received by all the philosophers who are precise in their statements, that no definition can be given of God.<sup>39</sup>

The second classification of the attributes is that which describes an object by part of its definition. This type of attribute is also inappropriate in reference to God, for if we speak of a portion of His essence we would be considering His essence to be a compound. Although we can speak of man as a "living being" or a "rational being," we can do so only because there is a connection of these two ideas. Both are properties of the essence of man. Since God is a unity, such attribution is inapplicable to Him.<sup>40</sup>

The third type of attribute describes an object by something different from its true essence. This description relates, therefore, to a quality, which, in its general sense, is an accident. Maimonides divides quality into four kinds: 1) A man is described by any of his intellectual or moral qualities or his dispositions. Thus a man might be a carpenter, in ill health, or one who avoids sin. 2) A thing is described by a physical quality it either possesses or does not possess; for example, a thing can be hard or soft. 3) A man is described by nonpermanent passive qualities or emotions, such as passionate, irritable, timid, and merciful. In like manner are objects described as colorful, hot, or cold. 4) A thing can be described from its qualities which result from quantity. We say of a thing that it is long, short, straight, or curved.

None of these types of attributes of quality are applicable to God.<sup>42</sup> God possesses no quantity to have that type of quality, He is not affected by external influences, so has no emotional qualities, He has no strength since He is not subject to physical conditions, and has no dispositions of soul since He is not an animate being.<sup>43</sup>

The fourth type of attribute is the description of a thing by its relation to another thing, either to time, to space, or to a different individual. This type of attribute does not imply plurality, for relations are not

The essence of a thing. Nevertheless, this attribute may still not be used with respect to God. There is certainly<sup>44</sup> no relation between God and either space or time. Since God has nothing in common with any other being, the attribute of relation is also impossible with respect to any other being.<sup>45</sup>

The fifth and last of Maimonides' classification of positive attributes is that of the description by actions, in terms of the actions the thing has performed. This type of attribute is separate from the essence of the object involved. Since it is possible for one agent to perform many actions without possessing different substantial elements, this is the most appropriate attribute to be employed in describing the Creator.<sup>46</sup> It does not violate what must be denied of God, that being that:

...nothing can be predicated of God that implies any of the following four things: corporeality, emotion of change, nonexistence, -- e.g., that something would be potential at one time and real at another -- and similarity with any of His creatures.<sup>47</sup>

Given Maimonides' discussion of what cannot be predicated of God, he finds it necessary to further comment on the words we do use in reference to the deity. There can be "in no way or sense, anything common to the attributes predicated of God, and those used in reference to ourselves;

they have only the same names, and nothing else is common to them."<sup>48</sup> Existence is, for man, an accident added to his essence. Since this cannot be the case for God, the term existence is totally different when applied to God and to man. God's existence does not imply something in addition to His essence.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, one must say that God exists without the attribute of existence. In the same manner, God lives without the attribute of life, has wisdom without that attribute,<sup>50</sup> and is a unity without the accident of unity. We can understand that when we say of God that He is one we are expressing only that "there is nothing similar to Him."<sup>51</sup>

Recognizing the great limitations on the use of affirmative attributes with respect to God, Maimonides develops what is really a sixth classification of attributes, which he terms the negative attributes. These negative attributes are, indeed, the true attributes of God. While positive attributes are inadequate, the negative formulation does not include any incorrect notions of any deficiency in reference to God.<sup>52</sup> Where the positive attributes necessarily describe a portion or a total of a thing's essence or accidents, the negative attributes only exclude what otherwise might not be excluded.<sup>53</sup> Only through this exclusion do they circumscribe the object described. For example, to say of God that He exists is only to say that His nonexistence is impossible.<sup>54</sup>

In like manner, "every time you establish by proof the negation of a thing in reference to God, you become more perfect, while with every additional positive assertion you follow your imagination and recede from the true knowledge of God."<sup>55</sup>

The notion of the negative attribute, of excluding from God that which would make Him less perfect, was already explicit in the writings of Plotinus.<sup>56</sup> Thus we find:

Besides, when we speak of the One it is not possible to indicate His nature without expressing its opposite ....The name "One" expresses no more than negation of the manifold.<sup>57</sup>

This is indeed the same sense in which Maimonides indicates the necessity to speak of God in terms of negative attributes. Ultimately, for Maimonides, true and total knowledge of God is impossible for man, for negations do not convey a true idea of that being to which they refer.<sup>58</sup> What they do permit, however, is the possibility of man striving toward that knowledge, and therefore toward God, and refraining from error. To truly know God's essence is not within the limits of human knowledge. To use words with respect to God which indicate such knowledge is not piety, but blasphemy.<sup>59</sup> Only the nonexistent God of the imagination can be the object of descriptions in terms of essential and accidental attributes. Maimonides realizes such attribution would only deprecate God's perfection. Nor does Maimonides consider it

an imperfection that God can only do the possible.<sup>60</sup> There can be no agent for what is by nature impossible, therefore this would not for him be a statement of God's finity.

The vast number of passages in the Bible which speak of God in corporeal terms are, for Maimonides, illustrative of the principle that "The Torah speaks according to the language of man."<sup>61</sup> Since the common man cannot conceive the existence of the God of reason, the Bible conveyed a belief in deity through anthropomorphic terms. Yet even in those passages in the Guide where the method is authoritative and exegetical rather than philosophical the God of reason receives the same description. There is no conflict for Maimonides between the God of the Bible, when that literature is properly understood, and the God of philosophical proofs.

It will be recalled that Strauss called the identification of exegesis with natural science the secret par excellence in the Guide. But if this is his secret of secrets, it is the weakest of secrets. Maimonides expressly states that natural science is the content of *דעת אלהים* and divine science, or cosmology, the content of *דעת אלהים*. It is not the case that exegesis is secretly a substitute for natural science; it is the case that the Bible presents the conclusions for which natural science provides the proofs: "...we must first learn the truths by tradition,

after this we must be taught how to prove them...."<sup>62</sup> It is Maimonides' contention that had not the Bible given knowledge concerning God through the medium of similies, man would have to seek such knowledge solely through the avenues of natural science. Such a method takes long preparation, and, "In such a case most people would die, without having known whether there was a God or not, much less that certain things must be asserted about Him, and other things denied as defects."<sup>63</sup> Within the exegetical portions of the Moreh we find the conclusions of the philosophic consideration of the attributes already spelled out.

God is incorporeal, His essence is a unity, and He possesses no attributes.<sup>64</sup> God is completely unchangeable, and there is no relation existing between Him and any other being.<sup>65</sup> Such statements, exegetically proven, are frequent in the Guide as well as in the Mishneh Torah.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, although the common person cannot know the proofs, or the full nature of the subject, they must all know what is central to the true notion of God:

...so must all be taught by simple authority that God is incorporeal; that there is no similarity in any way whatsoever between Him and His creatures; that His existence is not like the existence of His creatures, ...and that the difference between Him and His creatures is not merely quantitative, but absolute....Anything predicated of God is totally different from our attributes; no definition can comprehend both...<sup>67</sup>

Maimonides clearly demonstrates the relationship between the Bible and natural science: the Bible presents some conclusions which must be understood by all; natural science holds the proofs and further implications which are not open to the majority of the people.

Through the discussion of the attributes of God Maimonides has led the reader to an awareness of the God of reason. To say that it is untrue because it is not hidden would destroy Maimonides' philosophic assumptions. Yet there is an area beyond demonstrative proof, the area of Maimonides' religious opinions, which admits of far more possibilities of concealment. The ground-rules for the discernment of Maimonides' true message has, however, been established through the arguments on the basis of demonstration. Certain crucial criteria for the examination of further contradictions have appeared. The attributes of the God of reason set certain limits for what Maimonides can say concerning the deity. It is with these limits in mind that we turn to the further development of his philosophy of religion.

## Chapter Three

ASPECTS OF THE GOD OF REASON

The most certain type of knowledge for Maimonides is that obtained from a demonstrable proof. Where demonstration is not possible because of the nature of the subject matter, correct argumentation can establish the true opinion. Stylistically the difference between the two methods is explicit in the Moreh. Scientific knowledge, or demonstration, appears developed and stated with great clarity, as we have seen with respect to the attributes of God. The format of argumentation entails the description of various positions on any topic of religious philosophy which are then considered by Maimonides for the purpose of positing what he finds to be the correct view.

The areas of concern to us within the discussions of the God of correct opinion are providence, omniscience, prophecy, and creation. Since Maimonides spends a good deal of time on these subjects, and we shall consider his arguments and his positions on each.

Within the Guide, these discussions follow upon the determination of the attributes of the God of Reason. We will be following Maimonides' order of presentation, then, if we use those statements of attribution as a check on the statements of his opinions. Any contradictions should not prevent an understanding of his thought if we add these

criteria to those which Maimonides himself has given us in his statements concerning methodology.

### I. Maimonides on Providence

Maimonides introduces five theories concerning the nature of Divine Providence. He explains them all after which he introduces his own theory.

The first theory maintains that there is no providence at all for anything in the universe. Everything that exists owes its existence to accident and chance. There is no Being that rules, governs, or provides for them. This is the view of Epicurus which Aristotle had already disproved, and represents an atheistic point of view.<sup>1</sup> Maimonides does not consider any further attack on it necessary.

The second theory is that which Maimonides ascribes to Aristotle. Providence extends only to part of the universe, and it gives permanency and constancy to that which is permanent and constant in the universe. This view "results from his theory of the eternity of the universe,"<sup>2</sup> according to which some things are more permanent than others, therefore obtain greater degrees of providence than others. Providence is carried down through the spheres to the earth where the species gain immortality and constancy but not the individuals of those species. The individual beings, according to Aristotle have not been totally abandoned. That matter which has the faculty of growth is given properties that enable it

to exist for a certain time, to attract what is useful to it and repel what is useless. That which has further developed and has the faculty of sensation receives other properties for its preservation, namely, a faculty of moving toward that which is conducive to it, and away from that which is contrary to its well-being. In addition, each individual receives such properties which are required for the preservation of the species to which it belongs. That portion of matter which is further refined and endowed with the intellectual faculty possesses, through providence, a special property by which each individual, according to his ability and degree of intellect, is enabled to manage, calculate, and discover that which is conducive not only for his own temporary existence but also that which is conducive to the preservation of the species.

All other movements, however, made by the individual members of a species, are accidents, not under the rule of providence or management. There is, therefore, no difference between "the falling of a leaf or a stone and the death of the good and noble people in the ship (which sank in a storm); nor...between the destruction of a multitude of ants caused by an ox depositing on them his excrement and the death of worshippers killed by the fall of the house when its foundations gave way..."<sup>3</sup> Maimonides concludes:

In short, the opinion of Aristotle is this: everything is the result of management which is constant, which does not come to an end and does not change any of its properties, as, e.g., the heavenly beings, and everything which continues according to a certain rule, and deviates from it only rarely and exceptionally, as is the case in objects of Nature.<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle thus limits that which can attain providence, basing his views on his belief that nothing in the universe could be different from the way it now exists, and his concept of the eternality of the universe.

The third theory is the reverse of the second. The Ashariyah hold that everything that occurs does so only out of necessity. Providence rules over everything; there is total predestination. It follows that laws have of no meaning since man is totally predetermined. There is no final cause for the actions of God, yet all God's actions are by definition just.<sup>5</sup>

The fourth theory is that of the Mutazila. According to this view, providence extends over all things, yet man has freedom. Everything that occurs is for the good, since God's management extends over all. While not wishing to ascribe injustice to God, the Mutazila involve themselves with contradictions in their attempt to explain their experience of freedom of will.

Aristotle, according to Maimonides, was driven to his belief by that which appears to be the nature of things.<sup>6</sup>

Because the Ashariyah refused to ascribe ignorance of anything to God, they admitted certain absurdities.<sup>7</sup> The Mutazilites refused to say that God does what is unjust, so with their concept of providence they also admit absurdities.<sup>8</sup> A further contradiction is inherent in this last concept of providence, for while they believed that God knows everything, they also believed that man has freedom of will.<sup>9</sup>

The fifth theory Maimonides introduces is that of the Law. The two main articles of this view are that man is given freedom of will by the will of God, and wrong cannot be ascribed to God. All human affairs are managed with justice.<sup>10</sup> This view is not further elaborated upon.

Maimonides then states his own theory with respect to providence. He agrees with Aristotle with respect to everything but man. In the sublunary portion of the universe providence does extend to the individuals in the case of the species of mankind.<sup>11</sup> Providence is connected with the Divine intellectual influence, and those beings benefited by intellect come under the control of providence.<sup>12</sup> Thus Maimonides states:

...I do not ascribe to God ignorance of anything or any kind of weakness; I hold that Divine Providence is related and closely connected with the intellect....Those creatures, therefore, which receive part of that intellectual influence, will become subject to the action of Providence in the same proportion as they are acted upon by the Intellect.<sup>13</sup>

This theory, according to Maimonides, neither detracts nor exaggerates the workings of Divine providence as the others do. For to exaggerate it leads one to deny reason and sense perceptions, and to detract from the rule of providence disturbs the social order and destroys the moral and intellectual virtues of man.<sup>14</sup>

The distance between Maimonides' position and that of Aristotle narrows when Maimonides points out the true nature of the existence of species. They are merely ideas formed in our minds; the species is but the aggregate the mind constructs from the individual objects. Therefore, if providence extended to the species of mankind, the only manner in which it could do so is through individual intellects. Saying, then, that providence extends to the species of mankind and that it extends to individual intellects is, for Maimonides, the same thing.

Since the intellect can be developed to a greater or lesser degree in men, every person will have his share of divine providence according to his intellectual perfection.<sup>15</sup> Maimonides himself states this is in no way foreign to the philosophical teachings,<sup>16</sup> nor to the view of the Law when properly understood.<sup>17</sup>

But providence is only obtained through intellectual perfection. Only "he who knows God will find grace in His sight (obtain providence); not he who merely fasts and prays."<sup>18</sup> Prayer and the elements of worship can only serve

to free man's mind to concentrate more fully on the true<sup>19</sup>  
 knowledge of God that brings him under providence. True  
 worship, then, involves God as the object of knowledge, not<sup>20</sup>  
 as the object of petitions and prayers.

While an individual is under the protection of providence  
 through concentration on the true nature of the deity, it is<sup>21</sup>  
 impossible that evil should befall him. What, we must ask,  
 is the nature of this evil that man is protected from when  
 he obtains providence? That it is not what men usually call  
 evil is clearly stated in Maimonides' interpretation of the<sup>22</sup>  
Book of Job. Evils are caused by Satan,<sup>23</sup> who is identi-  
 fied with the imagination.<sup>24</sup> Health, wealth, and children<sup>25</sup>  
 are of importance only according to the imagination; in  
 reality, they are not truly significant. The only true good  
 is that of true intellectual awareness. Providence, then,  
 gives man the awareness of what is truly the good, which is  
 the possession of "such notions which lead to true meta-<sup>26</sup>  
 physical opinions as regards God." Job's acceptance of  
 his condition comes after a prophetic revelation of true  
 knowledge. He learns that what had befallen him was not to  
 be seen as substantial, and was beyond the eiges of  
 providence.

How, then, are we to understand Maimonides' statement  
 that:

It may be by mere chance that a ship goes down with all her contents,...or the roof of a house falls upon those within; but it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance; it is due to the Will of God...<sup>27</sup>

The only manner in which providence could have saved the men from the sinking of the ship or the falling of the roof would have been through the individual's intellectual awareness, through the laws of natural science. Such knowledge would have made them aware that such particular circumstances were unsafe and should have been avoided.

Providence is clearly, for Maimonides, a natural phenomenon. There is no deity who breaks into the natural order to save man from his common difficulties. Man will still suffer and die. There is only a providence which can be attained by man when his intellectual faculties are developed in the direction of true awareness of the deity.  
<sup>28</sup>  
 The divine actions are natural actions, to be gained through natural means. Although worship is not an avenue toward providence, it is retained to comfort the masses, just as the sacrificial system was retained in Biblical days lest the people be unable to make the sudden shift from idol worship to the awareness of the true God.  
<sup>20</sup>  
 God allowed the sacrificial system to continue not because it was efficacious in any way or sense, but in order not to confuse the people.  
<sup>30</sup>  
 The command in those days to discontinue the

mode of worship would have made the same impression:

...as a prophet would make at present if he called us to the service of God and told us in His name, that we should not pray to Him, not fast, not seek His help in time of trouble; that we should serve Him in thought, and not by any action.<sup>31</sup>

It is clear that Maimonides is the "prophet" of this passage, and that this is truly his own notion of prayer. This follows from the nature of providence according to Maimonides, and does not violate the attributes of the God of reason.

## II Maimonides on Omniscience

The problem with respect to God's knowledge is closely related to the problem of God's providence. The philosophers, working from the apparent absence of an observable order in human affairs, conclude that God must not know individuals.<sup>32</sup> But, maintains Maimonides, the evils of man originate either in himself or else out of the matter from which he is made,<sup>33</sup> and therefore such an argument is false from its suppositions. God's omniscience would not save man from these evils.

For Maimonides, the crucial concept is the perfect nature of God:

It is undoubtedly an innate idea that God must be perfect in every respect and cannot be deficient in anything. It is almost an innate idea that ignorance in anything is a deficiency, and that God can therefore not be ignorant of anything.<sup>34</sup>

If the lack of omniscience would detract from God's perfection,

Maimonides could not attribute it to God. If God could have no knowledge of earthly beings, He could not have created or caused to emanate from himself properties that bring about the actions of those beings, yet they were created.<sup>35</sup>

The very word "knowledge" means different things when applied to God and when applied to man.<sup>36</sup> There are five ways in which God's knowledge is different from man's: God's knowledge is a unity, yet it contains many different kinds of objects; God's knowledge can be applied to things not yet in existence, to their potential existence; God's knowledge comprehends the infinite; God's knowledge remains unchanged even though comprising knowledge of changing things; and, God's knowledge does not determine future events, even though it knows them. God's knowledge does not change the nature of the possible.<sup>37</sup> Although we know that God's knowledge is totally different from ours, because it is the same as His essence, we cannot know it further.<sup>38</sup> God's knowledge, in fact, does not come from the existing thing, but rather, the existing thing comes from Him.<sup>39</sup> Such knowledge is beyond human comprehension.

There is a great difference between the knowledge which the producer of a thing has of it and the knowledge that other people have of the same thing. The producer creates guided by his knowledge of the thing he creates. Such knowledge is not obtained through observation of the

thing after it is produced. Maimonides' illustration is that of a clockmaker who, while making the clock, is aware of the various movements that the clock makes, and will make.

However, he does not gain knowledge from watching the action of the clock once that action is going on. Knowledge gained by observation is a knowledge which is increased gradually until, at last, the whole is understood. If there were an infinite number of movements to the clock, the observer could never know them all. That knowledge would then be the producer's alone. Since God's knowledge is of this infinite kind, it possesses within it what man's knowledge cannot. God's eternal knowledge, or essence, has established things the way they are; it has made them partly purely spiritual, partly permanent as regards its individual members but material, and partly material and changeable as regards the individual members according to unchangeable laws. God's knowledge, therefore, contains all three categories, but does not derive that knowledge from observation. <sup>40</sup> It is this distinction that is central to Maimonides' understanding of God's omniscience. The fact that God's knowledge does not change the nature of the possible allows both man's freedom and God's omniscience.

God's omniscience, then, is based not on the world as it exists but on the world as it was created. The clockmaker

knows, we might say, the workings of the clock and its possibilities, as he makes it, yet this does not predetermine all elements which will occur to that clock when it actually exists. In like manner, God knows the universe, but the category of the possible still exists. The analogy brings Maimonides as close as he can come to a representation of God's knowledge.

His objection to the view of the philosophers that God does not know particulars springs from his rejection of attributing ignorance to the deity, and also from his conviction that the proof cannot be predicated on the nature of what already exists. His view can be seen as the realization of the negative attribute of the God of reason: God is not ignorant of anything. While ultimately, for Maimonides, God's knowledge does not change the nature of man's existence, God nevertheless knows the nature of man's existence.

### III Maimonides on Prophecy

Maimonides begins his discussion of prophecy by a consideration of the three major views on the subject, recognizing that there are as many views on this topic as there are on the problem of creation. With respect to both prophecy and creation, Maimonides only concerns himself with the views of those who believe in God.

The first possibility respecting prophecy is the view that "God selects any person he pleases, inspires him with the spirit of prophecy, and entrusts him with a mission."<sup>41</sup> The only restriction concerns the moral quality of the prophet in this view. He must be, at least to some extent, morally good. His wisdom or his stupidity are nonessential elements and do not effect his prophetic stature in any manner at all. Maimonides ascribes this view to ignorant people, and mentions that it is held even by some of his fellow Jews.<sup>42</sup>

The second view on prophecy is ascribed to the philosophers who hold that "prophecy is a certain faculty of man in a state of perfection, which can only be obtained by study."<sup>43</sup> In order to become a prophet, a man must attain perfection not only in his intellectual and moral faculties, but also, to that degree which is possible, the perfection of his imaginative faculty. Given this preparation, it is then impossible that this person will not receive the prophetic faculty.<sup>44</sup> Prophecy is a natural faculty of man, therefore at least some individual men must have it actualized.

The third view Maimonides ascribes to Scripture,<sup>45</sup> and speaks of it as one of the principles of the religion. It is exactly the same as the view of the philosophers with the exception of one point:

For we believe that, even if one has the capacity for prophecy, and has duly prepared himself, it may yet happen that he does not actually prophecy. It is in that case the will of God (that withholds from him the use of the faculty.).<sup>46</sup>

While, according to this view, the will of God is not necessary to give prophecy, it can withhold prophecy from an individual who otherwise would have attained it. Yet, as we shall point out, there is reason to question whether Maimonides really accepted this qualification of the view he ascribes to the philosophers.

There is disagreement among the commentators of the Moreh concerning Maimonides' true intent. Both Shem-tob and Efodi see Maimonides' statement concerning the possibility of the will of God withholding prophecy from one already prepared for it as a concession to public opinion. They suggest that this is a case of what Maimonides himself listed as the seventh cause of contradiction or inconsistency in a literary work.<sup>47</sup> They base their comments on the nature of Maimonides' own Scriptural support for the theory he lists<sup>48</sup> as that of the Law. Maimonides uses the story of Baruch as an example of prophecy being withheld by God from one otherwise prepared for it. But Maimonides himself contradicts this view of the Biblical story by saying that prophecy might have been "too great" a thing for Baruch which would<sup>49</sup> indicate that Baruch was not in fact qualified fully.

Maimonides' second proof is that prophecy was not received during exile, because of the will of God. However, he then contradicts that rationale by suggesting that the grief of the Jews at that time might have been responsible for their inability to prophecy.<sup>50</sup> These clues lead Shem-tob and Efodi to draw the conclusion that they do. Abrabanel, however, voices his objection to the views of these two commentators, and allows that Maimonides did indeed mean to substantiate the view concerning the possibility of the will of God withholding prophecy from an individual who was prepared. Against their view, he holds that Maimonides' examples are well-taken and valid.<sup>51</sup> Abrabanel goes on to argue, against Maimonides, that prophecy can indeed be a miracle bestowed by God upon a prophet who has not been previously prepared.<sup>52</sup> Given the position Abrabanel attempts to maintain, Shem-tob and Efodi seem more open to grasping what was Maimonides' intent.

Before examining Maimonides' view of prophecy more closely it is necessary to mention a crucial distinction that Maimonides makes. Although the prophets make statements, as Maimonides also does, that ascribe certain actions directly to God, this represents a use of language which is not meant to be taken literally. That everything has a cause which produced it, finally going back to the First Cause, is a

principle which Maimonides accepts clearly.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, then, all can be traced back to the will of God, for God is the First Cause. However, the prophets "omit sometimes the intermediate causes, and ascribe the production of an individual thing directly to God, saying that God has made it."<sup>54</sup>

Anything which is caused directly by nature, by desire, or by freewill can be said to have been commanded by God.<sup>55</sup>

Maimonides instructs the reader to apply this principle where it can apply according to the context.<sup>56</sup>

In reality, according to Maimonides, it is only through angels, which are the Intelligences, that God rules the world.<sup>57</sup>

In this, Maimonides is in full agreement with Aristotle as he understands him.<sup>58</sup>

Although at times prophecy, providence, and other actions are attributed directly to God, we are not to understand them as actions accomplished without the direct action of the various intelligences, or intermediaries.

Indeed, Maimonides states expressly that prophecy is "in truth and reality, an emanation sent forth by the Divine Being through the medium of the Active Intellect, in the first instance to man's rational faculty, and then to his imaginative faculty."<sup>59</sup> Considering the nature of prophecy in this manner, Maimonides mentions the necessary perfections to be mental, attained through training,

imaginative perfection, and moral perfection. A man who satisfies all these conditions "whilst his fully developed imagination is in action, influenced by the Active Intellect according to his training, -- such a person will undoubtedly perceive nothing but things very extraordinary and divine, and see nothing but God and His angels. His knowledge will only include that which is real knowledge..."<sup>60</sup> There is no mention made here of the possibility of the will of God withholding the faculty of prophecy. In such a case of contradiction, given not only the commentators' doubts but also the care with which Maimonides writes, it would seem that he did not, in fact, differ from what he ascribed as the theory of the philosophers. When speaking of prophecy in the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides also makes no mention of the particular working of the will of God out of accord with the natural phenomenon of prophetic attainment.<sup>61</sup>

All prophecy is attained through the perfected imaginative faculty with the exception of the prophecy of Moses. Every prophet except Moses received prophecy through an angel.<sup>62</sup> The angel which was not utilized by Moses was the imaginative faculty.<sup>63</sup> Maimonides refers the reader to his Mishneh Torah where the particular differences between Moses and the other prophets were spelled out.<sup>64</sup> It is there

explained that Moses received his prophecy while awake, and not in a dream or a vision, that he did not receive it from an angel, that he prophecies with no fear or awe, but rather clearly and without parable, and that Moses could prophecy at any time he wished, for his intellect was attached directly to that of the Active Intellect.<sup>65</sup> The case of Moses is unique, explaining the uniqueness of the Torah. Maimonides does not seem to consider it possible for another such prophet to emerge. Indeed, he indicates that the term "prophet" is used only in an equivocal sense when speaking of Moses and the other men called prophets.<sup>66</sup>

Given prophecy as a natural phenomenon, we must inquire as to the type of knowledge which the prophet attains in his prophecy. The prophet has no advantage over other people with respect to what can be arrived at by means of reasoning.<sup>67</sup> That knowledge to which the prophet attains is other than such notions available to all:

The true prophets undoubtedly conceive ideas that result from premisses which human reason could not comprehend by itself; thus they tell things which men could not tell by reason and ordinary imagination along; for (the action of the prophets' mental capacities is influenced by) the same agent that causes the perfection of the imaginative faculty.... This agent perfects the prophet's mind, and influences it in such a manner that he conceives ideas which are confirmed by reality, and are so clear to him as if he deduced them by means of syllogisms.<sup>68</sup>

The ideas are presented through the influence of the Active Intellect as through proven through syllogism, in other words, with the certainty of the syllogistic method. Such knowledge can only be intuition, and it is therefore necessary that the prophet possess a highly developed intuitive faculty.<sup>69</sup> Prophetic knowledge can, then, provide through intuition truths the nature of which prohibits their conception from scientific proof. For Aristotle, the primary premisses are of such a nature.<sup>70</sup> Maimonides seems to consider the question of creation of the universe also to belong to this type of truth.<sup>71</sup>

We mentioned earlier<sup>72</sup> that Maimonides referred to himself in the guise of a prophet. There is also an instance in the Moreh where he makes reference to the grasp of a particular truth in a prophetic manner. After viewing the Book of Job, he was able to realize the truth contained there only through something like prophetic revelation.<sup>73</sup>

Besides intellectual and moral and imaginative qualifications, the prophet must possess the quality of courage.<sup>74</sup> Maimonides indicates that courage was one of the qualities necessarily involved in his very writing of the Guide.<sup>75</sup> When Maimonides distinguishes between philosophers and prophets it is only in terms of the imaginative faculty.<sup>76</sup> Without truly reaching a high degree of prophecy, the

philosopher may be influenced by the Active Intellect to the degree that he becomes a teacher and an author.<sup>77</sup> A slightly greater degree of such influence would compel him to address others and teach them so they benefit through his own perfection.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, even if he injures himself, or puts himself in danger of such injury, he may be compelled to write the truth.<sup>79</sup> Such conditions closely parallel Maimonides' description of the second degree of prophecy:

A person feels as if something came upon him, and as if he had received a new power that encourages him to speak. He treats of science, or composes hymns, exhorts his fellow-men, discusses political and theological problems; all this he does while awake, and in the full possession of his senses.<sup>80</sup>

It is in this sense that we can view Maimonides himself under the category of the prophet. While certainly not equating himself with the higher degrees of the Biblical prophets, Maimonides nonetheless indicates that his presentation partakes of the character of the prophetic.

Prophecy, then, is a natural phenomenon which is necessarily predicated on the preparation of the prophet to attain it. The prophet is influenced through the Active Intellect which presents prophetic notions to his intellectual and imaginative faculties. It is in this manner that intuitive knowledge, beyond the possibility of scientific proof, can

be gained and ascertained. While Maimonides allows various contradictions to enter into his discussion, we have seen that he has given the tools with which the reader can resolve them. With respect to the attributes of the God of reason this theory of prophecy is coherently and consistently presented.

#### IV Maimonides on Creation

Limiting himself to those who believe in the existence of God, Maimonides mentions three theories concerning the problem of whether or not the universe is eternal. This problem seems to have been a major one for Maimonides, for we find at least eighteen chapters devoted exclusively to this theme and many others in which the problem plays a significant part. Indeed, Maimonides speaks at greater length concerning the problem of creatio ex nihilo than he does on any other specific topic of his religious philosophy.

The first theory Maimonides introduces is that of the Law of Moses. According to this view, all has been created by God out of nothing according to His will and desire. Since time itself is among the things created, one can say that God existed an infinity of time before creation only realizing that the word "time" is not to be taken in  
<sup>81</sup>  
its true sense. Time itself is only an accident of that  
<sup>82</sup>  
which exists. If one were to admit that time existed

before creation, this would necessitate the view that the universe is eternal.<sup>83</sup> Not only is this theory a fundamental principle of the Law of Moses, but it is next in importance<sup>84</sup> only to the principle of God's unity. It is stated that<sup>85</sup> it is "our duty" to oppose the theory of eternality: "All who follow the Law of Moses...assume that nothing is eternal except God, and that the theory of creatio ex nihilo includes<sup>86</sup> nothing that is impossible..."

The second theory Maimonides introduces is that of the philosophers, which he seems here to identify with that of Plato.<sup>87</sup> It is impossible, they assert, that God produced anything from nothing. To produce something without the prerequisite existence of matter is within the category of that which is impossible, just as it is impossible for God to change Himself into a body. This view does not imply a<sup>88</sup> limiting of God, since no agent can do the impossible. Therefore, the philosophers conclude that a certain substance has coexisted with God from eternity, and that neither existed without the other. However, this substance is not equal in rank to God, "for God is the cause of that existence, and the substance is in the same relation to God as clay is<sup>89</sup> to the potter..." Those who ascribe to this view also believe that the heavens are transcient; that they came into

existence, but not from nothing, and that although they may cease to exist, they cannot be reduced to nothing. The eternal substance from which they were made will remain. It can neither be created nor destroyed. Maimonides maintains that:

His opinion (i.e., that of Plato), however, does not agree with our belief; only superficial and careless persons wrongly assume that Plato has the same belief as we have. For whilst we hold that the heavens have been created from absolutely nothing, Plato believes that they have been formed out of something.<sup>90</sup>

One wonders why Maimonides found it necessary to identify his own view as separate from that he ascribes to Plato. Upon examination, however, one can find elements at least<sup>91</sup> which are common to both.

The third theory on the problem of creation Maimonides<sup>92</sup> ascribes to Aristotle and his followers. Like the second theory, Aristotle holds that a corporeal object cannot be produced without the use of a corporeal substance. He says, however, that the heavens are indestructible. The entire universe has always been the same and it will never be different. Time and motion are eternal, and so is the materia prima of the sublunar world. God produced the entire universe by His will, but not out of nothing. And it is

impossible that God's will should change, since it is the same as His essence, so the entire universe must be permanent, Nothing has or will change, even in the sublunar world. For the materia prima is eternal, and it merely combines successively with different forms.

Following the statement of these three opinions regarding the origin of the universe, Maimonides explains the proofs through which Aristotle establishes his theory of eternality. The first proof is from motion, for Aristotle views the motion of the spheres as eternal. The beginning of any motion must be motion in terms of causation, and if one adopts this truth, to avoid a regress ad infinitum, one must accept the theory that the motion of the spheres is eternal.<sup>93</sup> Time is, therefore, because related to motion, also eternal, and in this way Aristotle proves the eternality of the universe.<sup>94</sup>

The second argument is a proof that the first substance is eternal. Coming into existence is nothing but the action of receiving form. But the first substance is a formless one, and therefore could not have been caused by another substance. If the first substance is without beginning and end,<sup>95</sup> then the universe is eternal.

The third method of proof follows from the assumption that everything destructible had a beginning, and everything which had a beginning is destructible. But destruction is caused by opposite elements existing within the thing, and

since the spheres contain no opposite elements, their circular motion evidence of this fact, they will not end in destruction. Therefore, the spheres are eternal, and the<sup>96</sup> eternality of the universe follows from this.

The fourth proof follows from the fact that the actual<sup>97</sup> production of a thing is "preceded in time by its possibility." Aristotle derived the eternality of the circular motion of the spheres from this principle, and more recent Aristotelians derive from it a "forcible argument in favour of the Eternity<sup>98</sup> of the Universe." For when the universe did not exist, its existence could either be possible, necessary, or impossible. If it was impossible, it could never have come into existence. If it was necessary, then it had to be eternal. If it was merely possible, then there would have to be a substratum of that possibility. Something would have had to exist which would be endowed with that possibility. Maimonides mentions that some of the Mutakallemim attempted to refute this argument by stating that the possibility rests with the agent rather than with the production. Maimonides disagrees with their opinion on this matter and says that:

...this objection is of no force whatever; for there are two distinct possibilities, vis., for the thing produced has had the possibility of being produced before this actually took place; and the agent has had the possibility of producing it before he actually did so. There are, therefore, undoubtedly two possibilities -- that of the substance to receive a certain form, and that of the agent to perform a certain act.<sup>99</sup>

While Maimonides does not here attack this proof for the eternity of some aspect of the universe, we note that he shows that an attack on it by the Mutakallimin is not valid.

The fifth method of proof is one which Maimonides indicates as a weak proof. It states that God must have been a potential agent before an actual agent if He produced the universe from nothing, and since potentiality is impossible for God, the universe must have been eternal. "This argument is likewise a source of great doubts, and every intelligent person must examine it in order to refute it and to expose its weakness."<sup>100</sup> In terms of the fourth proof, this statement is extremely interesting. It is a repetition of the view there expressed by the Mutakallimin, which Maimonides rejected. The possibility which remains in the fourth proof is<sup>101</sup> that the substance was not ready to receive a certain form.

The sixth proof is predicated on the notion that an agent is either active or inactive depending upon favorable or unfavorable conditions. Since there can be no obstacles to God's will, and nothing that can change that will, God cannot be active at one time and inactive at another. He<sup>102</sup> is always active just as He is always in existence.

The seventh method states that the actions of God,<sup>103</sup> or nature, are perfect. This being the case, the existing universe must be perfect beyond improvement, and as the result

of God's unchangeable wisdom which is identical with His essence, it must be permanent. Objections to creation of this type would not be based upon the length of time the universe may have been in existence. If it is not eternal, compared to the infinite essence of God, creation would be the same as if it had begun just yesterday. All this is found highly improbable to those who defend the view of  
104  
the eternality of the universe.

The eighth argument ascribed to Aristotle is a concession to public opinion rather than to argumentation. The common conception, the common sense, of the people that the universe is eternal lends credence to that view.  
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Before turning to his refutation of Aristotle's views on the eternality of the universe, Maimonides makes the point that Aristotle himself considered his arguments fallable. He finds that Aristotle realized that he did not demonstrably prove the eternality of the universe, but rather only presented  
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apparent and plausible arguments. Had he been presenting certain proofs, he would have had no reason for disproving the older theories. Nor would he have resorted to an appeal to common sense. "For a truth, once established by proof, does neither gain force nor certainty by the consent of all  
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scholars, nor lose by general dissent." Furthermore,  
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Aristotle himself refers to his proofs as mere arguments.

Maimonides agrees with the view he finds in Aristotle that there is no foundation upon which to build the certain proof for eternality or for creation.<sup>109</sup> In the absence of the possibility of demonstrable proof, Maimonides states that he will show that the theory of creation is more acceptable than the theory of eternality, although both are open to<sup>110</sup> objections:

Since I am convinced of the correctness of my method, and consider either of the two theories -- viz., the Eternity of the Universe, and the Creation as admissible, I accept the latter on the authority of Prophecy, which can teach things beyond the reach of philosophical speculation.<sup>111</sup>

With respect to providence, omniscience, and prophecy, we have noted that Maimonides is in essential agreement with Aristotle. With respect to the problem of creation, however, Maimonides repeatedly states that this is the one matter on which they differ:

The whole difference between him and ourselves is this: he believes all these beings to be eternal, coexisting with the First Cause as its necessary effect; but we believe that they have had a beginning, that God created the Intelligences, and gave the spheres the capacity of seeking to become like them; that in creating the Intelligences and the spheres, He endowed them with their governing powers. In this point we differ from him.<sup>112</sup>

Since Maimonides states that creation is the "basis of our religion,"<sup>113</sup> and the "foundation of our faith,"<sup>114</sup> we must

seek to identify the point upon which Maimonides differs from Aristotle and to discern his own view of the creation principle.

The crucial distinction for Maimonides is that there is a difference between the nature of a thing when in existence and before it has come into existence. There is no similarity between the properties of a thing before the transition from potentiality to actuality and after that transition.<sup>115</sup>

Maimonides' analogy is excellent: a man, unaware of the nature of his development in the womb, would consider that development impossible judging from the actual existence he has, given the necessary conditions for that existence. To believe that he had been alive, yet unable to breath, eat, or drink, would be impossible. Yet that is indeed the truth of the matter.<sup>116</sup>

"It is therefore quite impossible to infer from the nature which a thing possesses after having passed through all stages of its development, what the condition of the thing has been in the moment when this process commenced; nor does the condition of a thing in this moment show what its previous condition has been."<sup>117</sup> It is this fact that the Aristotelians fail to take into consideration when they approach the matter of the eternality of the univers, for they found their arguments on the properties which the universe possesses when in actual

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existence and fully developed. Even though Maimonides concurs with the Aristotelian notions concerning the nature of that which is in existence, he does not consider those properties the same as those which the things possessed in the moment of their production. Therefore Aristotle's arguments could only have force against those who felt that the nature of what is now in existence proves creation from nothing, and not against the theory presented by Maimonides.

Maimonides then turns to the proofs of Aristotle and shows how they do not affect his own notions. Aristotle said that the materia prima is eternal and could not have been produced. Maimonides agrees to the extent that the production of the materia prima was different than the production of man from the ovum, but nevertheless finds that this materia prima was created by God out of nothing, and "since its creation it has its own properties, viz., that all things are produced of it and again reduced to it, when they cease to exist; that it does not exist without Form; and that it is the source of all genesis and destruction." 119

Since this material or substance has been created from nothing its production is not like that which is produced from it, nor is its destruction of the same type. Yet if God should desire, He could destroy it just as He created it. 120

Maimonides applies the same objection to both the proof

from the motion of the spheres and to the proof from the fact that potentiality precedes all actual genesis. Both these arguments are according to the nature of what exists.

Maimonides agrees with Aristotle concerning the lack of opposite elements in the spheres but maintains that they were created, although their production was totally different from that of any animal or plant.<sup>121</sup> The properties of things as they exist at the present time cannot give us any real clue as to what their properties were before their perfection. Maimonides is not concerned with the order of creation, since various orders could have been possible, but he maintains that he has shown at least the possibility that the universe was created.<sup>122</sup> The Aristotelians according to Maimonides, cannot derive support for eternality from the nature of the universe; they must resort to the notion "our mind has formed of God."<sup>123</sup>

Maimonides attacks the first method employed by the philosophers to prove the eternality of the universe in which they showed that creation would imply a transition from potentiality to actuality in the deity Himself.<sup>124</sup> This argument, he maintains, concerns only corporeal beings, and not incorporeal. The Active Intellect at times acts and at times does not, but since it is incorporeal one does not say that it passes from potentiality into actuality.<sup>125</sup> Of course, the reason for the Active Intellect's inaction is the

absence of substance sufficiently prepared for its forms, rather than any change within the Active Intellect itself. Maimonides seems to indicate that the analogy should not be taken this far, for one could not say with certainty why God acts at one time and not at another.<sup>126</sup> However, the analogy's main purpose was to show that an incorporeal agent does not pass from potentiality into actuality even though acting intermittently. Therefore if the Creator acts at one time and not at another, it is not due to any potentiality which is ascribed to Him.

The second method employed in proving the eternality of the universe was based on the theory that God's essence contains no wants, changes, and obstacles. Because it was seen that God's will could not change, and needn't overcome any obstacles, there could be no reason for God to wait to create the universe. It would have to be eternal.<sup>127</sup> It is possible, Maimonides argues, that the will might act at one time and not another even though totally free of any external pressures. The act simply would follow the will without obstacle. Against the objection that the presence or absence of that will would impute change in the essence of that being, Maimonides states that the essence of the will of a being is "simply the faculty of conceiving a desire at one time and

not conceiving it at another."<sup>128</sup> Just as he has shown that a being can act at one time and not at another without any change in that being,<sup>129</sup> the change of will also does not necessitate a change in essence. It must be understood, however, that the word "will" is used equivocally with respect to God and to man, for there is really no comparison between what "will" represents in one or in the other.<sup>130</sup> In this way this objection is refuted.

The third method which Maimonides attacks stated that God produces out of His wisdom, which, because it is His eternal essence, must produce that which is eternal.<sup>131</sup> But we cannot know the wisdom of God, which is His essence, and we can no more understand why He created when he did than we can understand why He created a certain number of spheres in the universe. Of such matters man is ignorant, and this is seen as the weakest argument of all for the eternality of the universe.<sup>132</sup> With this argument Maimonides considers that he has met the challenges of the proofs of the philosophers and shown that creation is, indeed, not an impossibility,<sup>133</sup> which was his purpose.

Maimonides further attacks Aristotle's notion of necessity in nature, and posits against it his own notion of design.<sup>134</sup> Maimonides' point is that the nature of the heavens indicates that design is a reality, and that necessity

alone could not have been responsible.<sup>135</sup> From the different motions of the spheres and the fixed positions of the stars in the spheres Maimonides finds the best proof for design in the universe.<sup>136</sup> Necessary existence by causality, the view held by Aristotle, is different from the creation by the desire and will of a Creator which is held by Maimonides.<sup>137</sup> For Maimonides, the notion of design applies only to things not yet in existence, "when there is still the possibility of their being in accordance with the design or not."<sup>138</sup> It is for this reason that the existence of design in the universe assumes great significance for him.

Viewing the universe as the result of natural necessity and not as the result of the design and will of God is not only out of harmony with the existing order of things, but it fails to provide for that order sufficient reason or argument.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, it implies great improbabilities.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, the theory of Aristotle is based upon the hypothesis that "the universe is the necessary result of causal relation, and that this hypothesis includes a certain amount of blasphemy."<sup>141</sup> What Maimonides seems to allude to here is the fact that Aristotle goes beyond what can be said concerning God. Limits are posited for the deity which needn't be. Perhaps, too much is said by Aristotle of a definite nature. Maimonides states this explicitly:

But what Aristotle says concerning things above the sphere of the moon is, with few exceptions, mere imagination and opinion; to a still greater extent this applies to his system of Intelligences, and to some of his metaphysical views; they include great improbabilities, (promote) ideas which all nations consider as evidently corrupt, and cause views to spread which cannot be proved.<sup>142</sup>

The theory of the eternality of the universe is more apt to corrupt one's understanding of God than is the theory of creation.<sup>143</sup> Maimonides counsels that one should not be led into the belief in the eternality of the universe except through demonstrative proof, which does not exist in nature.<sup>144</sup> Eternality has not been rejected because of the passages in Scripture which affirm creation, for it would be easier to interpret such verses to agree with eternality than it is to interpret, as one must, those passages which speak of the corporeality of God to signify pure incorporeality.<sup>145</sup> There are two major reasons, then, why Maimonides does not accept eternality. First, it was the fact that incorporeality was demonstrated by proof that led to the interpretation of the Bible to agree with it. Since there is no demonstrable proof for the eternality of the universe, there is not sufficient reason for rejecting the literal meaning of the words of the Bible, particularly when creation can be supported by "an<sup>146</sup> equally good argument." Secondly, the belief in incorporeality is not contrary to the words of any of the prophets. But

Aristotele's view of eternality would be opposed to principles of religion, such as miracles.<sup>147</sup> However, with respect to the view of Plato, the effect upon our religion is not as great:

If, however, we accepted the Eternity of the Universe in accordance with the second of the theories which we have expounded above, and assumed, with Plato, that the heavens are likewise transient, we should not be in opposition to the fundamental principles of our religion; this theory would not imply the rejection of miracles, but, on the contrary, would admit them as possible.<sup>148</sup>

Furthermore, the Scriptural text could easily have been interpreted to agree with Plato's theory. But there is no "use for this expedient, so long as the theory has not been proved."<sup>149</sup> Maimonides makes it clear that were the theory of Aristotle proven, the account of Scripture would have to be rejected, and one would be forced to other opinions.<sup>150</sup> All depends upon the question of demonstrable proof.

We must consider what Maimonides has accomplished through his consideration of the three theories of whether or not the universe is eternal. Maimonides has not proved any particular theory. What he has done is prove that either eternality or creation is possible. For the major difficulty with the positions of both Aristotle and Plato was that it attempted to prove creatio ex nihilo an impossibility. Maimonides did not set about to show that the creation is a

necessity, only that it is possible. His arguments against Aristotle's approach demonstrate this as his goal, and we find that he succeeds in providing the ground of possibility for the position which would maintain creation from nothing, for the position of the Law.

However, prefaced to the chapters we have considered, Maimonides speaks of the manner of creation. In this discussion he states: "We ignore for the present the question whether to assume the Eternity of the Universe, or the Creatio ex nihilo.<sup>151</sup> We do not intend to discuss the question here." We have already seen that at times Maimonides misleads with statements of concealment where none is present. This may be a case where he conceals by stating he is not really discussing the question at hand, whereas the discussion may bear directly upon the notion Maimonides holds concerning the creation of the universe. Since the subject matter gives evidence that this is indeed the case, we turn to a consideration of Maimonides' point of view before he specifically argues the question of eternality versus creation from nothing.

Maimonides concerns himself with the nature of the universe.<sup>152</sup> There are four spheres which exercise influence and are the cause of all beings on earth that come into existence.<sup>153</sup> These spheres have been continually in motion

ever since they received their spherical shape, since circular motion is the only kind that could be continuous. The four causes of the motion of the spheres are its essential elements, and include its spherical shape, its soul, its intellect, and the Intelligence which the sphere desires to imitate.<sup>154</sup> The sphere must have a soul in order to move freely, an intellect through which to form notions of that to which it desires to move, and there must exist that which corresponds to that notion, i.e., an Intellect.<sup>155</sup> The principle forces then derived directly from the spheres include the nature of minerals, the properties of plants,<sup>156</sup> animal faculties, and the intellect.

An examination of these forces shows that they have two functions, namely, to produce things and to perpetuate them; that is to say, to preserve the species perpetually, and the individuals in each species for a certain time. These are also the functions ascribed to Nature, which is said to be wise, to govern the Universe, to provide, as it were, by plan for the production of living beings, and to provide also for their preservation and perpetuation....It may be that by Nature the Divine Will is meant, which is the origin of these two kinds of faculties through the medium of the spheres.<sup>157</sup>

The whole creation consists, for Maimonides, of three parts, the pure intelligences or angels, the bodies of the spheres which are endowed with permanent forms, and the materia prima of which all transient earthly beings consist, those beings which are subject to constant change.<sup>158</sup> The ruling power

emanates from the Creator, and is then received by the intelligences in their order. From the intelligences part of the influence which they received is communicated to the spheres, which in turn transmit properties and forces to the beings of the transcendent world.<sup>159</sup> The creative act of God gives existence to the first intelligence, and endows it with the power of giving existence to the next. This process is continued until the lowest of the purely spiritual beings is created, the Active Intellect. After that the materia prima follows and a succession of genesis and destruction<sup>160</sup> is produced.

The influence which one part of creation exercises upon another develops from the conception of perfection:

A thing perfect in a certain way is either perfect only in itself, without being able to communicate that perfection to another being, or it is so perfect that it is capable of imparting perfection to another being.<sup>161</sup>

This notion is crucial for Maimonides. Since God is the perfect being, His perfection must be of the type which can communicate that perfection. This transmission of perfection, or the overflow of perfection, must be seen as a creative act.

Like Aristotle, as we have seen before, Maimonides accepts the notion that there must exist a First Cause, for infinite regression of causality is impossible. Given an incorporeal cause, the only reason for production at a certain point and not at another must have to do with the

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substance not having been sufficiently prepared. Maimonides, recognizing that the action of an incorporeal being is different than that of a corporeal being, and that the description of the action from incorporeality would be as impossible as the description of incorporeality itself, introduces an analogy. Those actions are termed "influence" or "emanation" on account of their likeness to a water spring: 163

In a similar manner (as a water spring) incorporeal beings, in receiving power and imparting it to others, are not limited to a particular side, distance, or time. They act continually; and whenever an object is sufficiently prepared, it receives the effect of that continuous action, called "influence" (or "emanation"). God being incorporeal, and everything being the work of Him as the efficient cause, we say that the Universe has been created by the Divine influence, and that all changes in the Universe emanate from Him. In the same sense we say that He caused wisdom to emanate from Him and to come upon the prophets. In all such cases, we merely wish to express that an incorporeal being, whose action we call "influence," has produced a certain effect.<sup>164</sup>

The idea that a being who is perfect will communicate that perfection to another and that this communication is a consequence of that perfection and is conveyed through an emanation or influence was already explicitly stated in the writings of Plotinus. 165

What we can conclude from this discussion is that Maimonides' true notion of the creation follows from this conception and not from the notions specifically referred to when he discusses the problem of creation under that

heading. Whereas in the discussions of providence and prophecy we discovered that Maimonides' true intent was to ascribe closely to the theory presented by Aristotle, this is not the case here. If anything, Maimonides is closer to Plato than to Aristotle, although he merely shows that the various views all possess the characteristic of possibility and none is necessarily true since demonstrable proof is lacking. Although Maimonides clears up many difficulties concerning the true nature of religious questions, we needn't assume that he felt himself thoroughly certain of everything. Indeed, he specifically makes reference to problems which<sup>166</sup> he himself was not totally able to work out. We can, however, be reasonably certain about Maimonides' notion of the nature of creation by influence and the order of that creation. That God directly does not create everything is specifically stated, though hidden in another place, as we have noted. Such a view would obviously run counter to the prevailing conception among Maimonides' co-religionists. For the masses, a belief in the creation preserves the institutions<sup>167</sup> of morality and society; for the philosopher, creation preserves the integrity of the Divine Being, and does not<sup>168</sup> fall into error by ascribing too much to that Being. Maimonides succeeds in preserving on a philosophical level the integrity of the attributes of the God of Reason.

## Chapter Four

THE GOD OF REASON AND THE GOD OF THE IMAGINATION

Through our discussion of the major elements of Maimonides' philosophy of religion we have discovered that although his own views are at times difficult to discover due to his methodology, it is possible to identify those views. What remains is to consider his conclusions by way of summary and then to identify the viewpoint he was writing against. In this way we can hope to realize why Maimonides constructed the Moreh as he did.

I The Elements of the God of Reason

Upon the basis of scientific demonstration Maimonides asserts certain things concerning the deity. Maimonides proves that God exists, that He is incorporeal, and that He is a unity. He is the First Cause of all that exists. However, because of God's nature, it is impossible to predicate certain things of Him. One cannot describe God's essence, nor even a part of it. Nor can one describe God in terms of any relation between Him and any other being. God cannot be described in terms of qualities, for qualities are non-essential elements, and as such, cannot be possessed by a Being without accidents. God can only be described according to His actions and through the use of what Maimonides terms the negative attributes. Even a description by actions,

however, must be considered with care, since there is no similarity between the way in which God acts and the manner in which man acts. The word "action" is to be seen as equivocal when used for God and for man. The use of negative attributes, statements on the basis of proof asserting that which God is not, while not truly defining the deity, nevertheless bring us closer to an understanding of His true nature.

God's providence is only related to man, according to Maimonides, through man's intellectual faculty. Excluding man, Maimonides is in agreement with the position of Aristotle. For Maimonides, in order for man to attain providence, which consists of true and real knowledge, intellectual preparation is required. This intellectual link between man and God is not, however, a direct one. Instead, man's preparation can enable him to attain providence from the Active Intellect, who rules the sublunar sphere. Providence does not protect man from common disasters nor from personal sufferings, but instead provides him with that knowledge through which he can rise above things of only imaginary concern. Providence is a natural process of the universe.

God's omniscience means that God is not ignorant of anything. However, God does not attain His knowledge of existing things from any kind of observation once they exist. Instead, God, as creator, knows the nature of what exists

since with that knowledge all was created. Since this knowledge comes before the actual existence of things, it does not change the nature of the possible. God's omniscience does not lead to predetermination for man. Nor, however, does man's freedom lead to the view that God is not omniscient. God's knowledge, which is His essence, cannot be totally understood by man, and yet of a certainty is essentially different from the nature of man's knowledge.

Prophecy, like providence, is a natural process of the universe. Through intellectual, moral, and imaginative perfection, man can attain that knowledge which is beyond the power of his reason alone. It is through the Active Intellect that this knowledge is grasped. With the exception of Moses, all prophets utilized their imaginative faculties to attain their prophetic knowledge.

Commenting on the nature of the creation, Maimonides points out that arguments against creatio ex nihilo cannot really prove it to be an impossibility for God. However, God directly created only the first intelligence, beginning the process which would, through intermediaries, lead finally to the establishment of the sublunar world of transient things.

There is a constant thread running through Maimonides' considerations of these elements of his philosophy of religion.

Although at times he uses language which seems to cover up the distinction, for him it is clear that God is not directly involved with man. Because relation is impossible for that incorporeal Being, providence, prophecy, and creation, would have to be considered in such a way as to negate relation. Maimonides emphasizes, therefore, the role of the Active Intellect in this sublunar world.

In all cases, Maimonides explains that the literal words of the Law and of the prophets must be interpreted so that the true secrets are revealed. Those secrets, the truths of the Bible, present the conclusions which natural science can then attempt to prove and to truly understand. Maimonides writes for those who have become perplexed when their philosophical knowledge has seemed in contradiction to the literal meaning of the Scriptures.

One cannot help but suspect that the position Maimonides sets himself against is that which would take the words of Scripture according to their literal sense. Those who could accept those words without perplexity would be those for whom Maimonides would conceal his message. If what would not upset them would be what appears to be a straight translation of the Biblical text,<sup>1</sup> which is the very thing Maimonides speaks against, then we can identify those who clearly hold the position Maimonides finds false. Theirs would be the God of the imagination. Realizing that

the nature of such a God would be other than that of the God of reason, we must examine the content of the belief structure of unperplexed Jews with this in mind.

## II The God of the Imagination Identified

The unperplexed Jews functioned within the structure of Pharisaic Judaism. Although the literature is not systematic, the basic notions can be recognized with some clarity. We shall concern ourselves with the generalities, for an in depth examination would not change those general notions substantially.

God generally in Pharisaic literature is exalted above man. Although without philosophic foundation, God is not seen within the rabbinic development as corporeal. However, attributes are ascribed to Him. Justice and mercy, for instance, are essential attributes, as Maimonides would<sup>2</sup> understand them, throughout the literature. There was no difficulty in asserting these as descriptions of God; the Pharisees would call God a unity, yet allow various essential<sup>3</sup> attributes to exist.

As far as describing God by His relation to man, again we find explicit reference in the Pharisaic religion. Both the nearness of God and the transcendence of God, with respect<sup>4</sup> to man, were conceived of. There is no doubt that God was viewed as definable through relation.

In the same way we discover that Phariseeism attributed qualities to God. Not only was God seen as powerful, but also as humble, gentle, and even meek.<sup>5</sup> God is personally concerned with the world, He possesses various moods which reflect that concern and feeling.<sup>6</sup>

The actions of God also fit into the religious scheme of the Pharisees, although this per se was not opposed by Maimonides. Unlike Maimonides, however, the term "action" expressed no equivocality for the rabbis when used of man and of God. The negative attributes do not appear in rabbinic literature in the manner in which Maimonides utilizes them for the simple reason that the Pharasaic rabbis were able to ascribe all types of positive attributes to the deity, as Maimonides was not.

The differences between Maimonides and the Pharisees become even more apparent in the areas of providence, omniscience, prophecy, and creation. Because these were areas of personal religious concern, the Pharisaic literature abounds with references to them, for their God was obviously of a personal nature.

Providence, for the rabbis, covers all things. It embraces not only the whole but every moment, every event, and every individual.<sup>7</sup> In His total providence, God is long suffering, and He tries to change man's ways so that He may

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 forgive him. The only thing not in itself covered by  
 providence is the fear of heaven, whether an individual will  
 be good or evil in his life. 9 The evil that providence will  
 protect man from is not the evil of incorrect opinion, but  
 substantial evil. God is the father of man, and as father  
 He protects his children. 10 The way to attain providence  
 is through prayer, and observance of the commandments. The  
 ultimate providential act is that of the afterlife, the  
 resurrection, of which all those who are through prayers and  
 commandments considered righteous will partake. God hears  
 and answers prayers, and prayer is one of the avenues available  
 to request the rescinding of a decree which God had made. 11

God's omniscience, for the Pharisees, meant that God  
 knows everything that exists, and knows it in an extremely  
 personal manner. God knows individual men completely. He  
 knows their fortunes and their character, their most secret  
 deeds, even their thoughts before they have taken shape in  
 their minds. 12 Since God is not limited even by that which  
 is impossible, the rabbis could let God know in the same  
 way in which they knew something, and yet still feel somehow  
 that man had freedom. Although this is not discussed  
 systematically, it would appear that God does indeed get his  
 knowledge from the existing thing as well as from the formation  
 of that thing. All that occurs in the universe is known by  
 God before, during, and after it occurs. The problem of human  
 freedom is treated far more homiletically than philosophically.

The God who will good for mankind enables man to know what that good is. Revelation is the greatest gift of the loving God.<sup>13</sup> The entire Scripture represented the word of God revealed to man. Because the Bible was revealed, the rabbis were intent upon resolving internal contradictions. They had no interest in resolving contradictions which would become apparent when the Bible would be opposed by philosophical concepts. The notion of prophecy was that God simply chose an individual to act as His spokesman.<sup>14</sup> God puts the holy spirit, the spirit of prophecy, into the mouths of the prophets.<sup>15</sup> Specific preparation by the prophet would not aid him, for prophecy is a miraculous event which only God controls.

The creation of the world was accomplished directly by God, and most rabbinic passages indicate that this creation was ex nihilo, although the question was not frequently raised.<sup>16</sup> God created directly and instantaneously, and everything in the created world is perfect. Indeed, the entire world was, for many Pharisees, conceived of as being created for man.<sup>17</sup>

In all areas of religious concern, the normative Jew at the time of Maimonides dealt with a personal God who cared for him. This care was exhibited not only in his own life, but also through God's miraculous revelation and creation. For the most part, God's actions were seen as direct, following from His definite relationship to man, and particularly to the Jews.

We have considered these areas without detail, for the obviousness of the Pharisaic contradiction to the faith of Maimonides is readily apparent. If the basic conception of the deity is so totally different, we can expect all else to differ. This is indeed the case, although it will add nothing more to our comparison were we to examine these areas in greater detail. The identity of the God of the imagination is clearly that of the God of the Pharisees, Maimonides' fellow Jews.

### III Conclusion

It has been said that the true nature of a religion is most clearly revealed by what men seek from God in it.<sup>18</sup> If we include in this the results of the critical activity which is involved in the establishment of the nature of God, we have a valid criterial for comparing religions. Maimonides' conceptions concerning the nature of God and what man may seek from Him are opposed to the conceptions of the Pharisees. They are not reconcilable. It is for this reason that we would conclude that Maimonides' religion was other than the religion of the Pharisaic Jews. The word "Jew" is used of both systems only equivocally. Indeed, Maimonides' religion is far from the religion of the common man.

Maimonides uses the image of a palace wherein a king lives to convey the various positions men hold in relation

to nearness to God. In his simile, the king is God, and although He cannot be completely reached, some men will be able to enter the palace. Those who have no religion, neither one based on tradition nor speculation, are not even in the same country as the palace. They are irrational human beings, little higher than the monkeys. Those who are in the country but stand with their backs to the palace possess religion, belief, and thought, but either through their own mistakes or false traditions received from others, they hold false doctrines. Because they can mislead others, they are even more dangerous than those who are among the lowest religious class.

The mass of religious people desire the palace, but have never seen it. They observe the religious commandments, but they are ignorant. There are some who are able to arrive at the palace only to remain on the outside, for they devote themselves only to the study of practical law, accept the principles of faith from tradition, and learn only the practical worship of God. They are untrained in the philosophical treatment of the Law, and do not attempt to establish the truth of their faith by proof.

Those who undertake to investigate the principles of their religion have come into the antechamber, and those who have succeeded in proving everything that can be proved, and have a true knowledge of God as far as that is possible,

have reached the true goal. They are in the palace in  
 19  
 which the king lives.

By definition Maimonides is among those who obtain entrance into the palace. The Pharisees, those who subscribe to the normative Pharisaic structure of belief, never enter the palace at all. Blindly, at best, they seek the entrance, but their prayers, observances, and beliefs from tradition prohibit their entrance into the presence of the king. For the king is the God of reason.

It is from the multitude of Jews that Maimonides attempts to conceal the true nature of his religious philosophy, although it is to the few philosophically oriented Jews that he seeks to address his true content. It was not out of any particular respect for the beliefs of the masses that Maimonides used concealment, nor even totally from the fear  
 20  
 of persecution. However, Maimonides felt that the common man's entire moral framework would dissolve were he to be confronted with the whole truth when unprepared. That Maimonides was not totally able to hide his true content from the Pharisaic Jews is indicated by much of the controversy which sprang up following publication of his texts. On the other hand, the inclusion of his Thirteen Principles from his commentary to the Mishnah into the traditional prayerbook speaks of some significant great degree of success in his endeavor.

Maimonides' attacks on Aristotle and other philosophical positions are not concealed within the text when the issue would not have bothered his community. However, the ground of his attack is the same. Whenever statements concerning the nature of God spring from the imagination they must be challenged. The pervading concern of Maimonides is to confront the God of the imagination with the God of reason.

There is concealment within the Moreh, and it may mislead not only the unperplexed, but also the scholar of Maimonides' works. We have attempted to show, however, that Maimonides gives us criteria with which to discern his true meaning, and that it is indeed his intention that his meaning be so discovered.

Maimonides is not concerned merely with putting forth elements of a religious philosophy. Against the tides of the religious masses of his time he asserts a different religion. To be sure, for him this was the true Judaism. We have no reason to believe that he would abdicate this title. Because it is the nature of Judaism to contain within it essentially different religious systems, we can place Maimonides well within the frame.

It was with courage and skill that Maimonides approached the religious problems of his day. Man still grapples with many of the same difficulties, and because this is so Maimonides'

response to his time can enlighten the perplexed of all times. In contributing even in a small way to the realization of the content of the Guide of the Perplexed, one lends power to the essence of the Jewish continuum.

## Footnotes

## Chapter One

1. Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, trans. M. Friedlander (New York, Hebrew Publishing Co., n.d.), pp. 6-7. Hereafter all references to Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed will be indicated by the initials of the Hebrew title, Moreh Nebukhim, thus: MN. If this translation is referred to the page number will be preceded by (f).
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Ibid., p. 8. See also MN, I, 33, (F) p. 115. Such teaching of those unprepared could lead them to reject the entire authority of the Bible.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 12. On the educational requirements see MN, I, 34, (F) pp. 120-121, and on the moral requirement see (F) p. 123.
6. Ibid., p. 20.
7. Ibid., p. 21.
8. Ibid., p. 22.
9. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
10. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
11. Ibid., III, p. 3.
12. Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing, (Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1952), p. 25.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 36.
15. Ibid., p. 56.
16. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
17. Ibid., p. 73.
18. Leo Strauss, "How to Begin to Study The Guide for the Perplexed," The Guide of the Perplexed, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. xv. Reference to this translation of the Moreh Nebukhim will be indicated by (P) preceding the page.



12. MN, II, 36, (F) p. 173.
13. MN, I, 50.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. Ibn Tibbon: p. 69a-b  
 חזק אתה הנשיא למדן כי  
 ההנאה אינה הנחה אלא  
 הענין והכח והעצם והכלל  
 והפרט והשליש והרביעי והחמש והששה והשבע והשמונה והתשעה והעשר והיא  
 היתה תמיד כאלו היא נמצאת בזה העולם הזה
16. Aristotle, De Interp. 4, 17a, 1-8. All references to Aristotle are from The Works of Aristotle, ed. W.D. Ross (12 vols., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1928).
17. Aristotle, Anal. Post. I, 2, 71b, 17-18, "What I now assert is that at all events we do know by demonstration. By demonstration I mean a syllogism productive of scientific knowledge, a syllogism, that is, the grasp of which is eo ipso such knowledge."
18. Ibid., II, 19, 100b, 4-13, "Thus it is clear that we must get to know the primary premisses by induction; for the method by which even sense-perception implants the universal is inductive. Now of the thinking states by which we grasp truth, some are unfailingly true, others admit of error -- opinion, for instance, and calculation, whereas scientific knowing and intuition are always true: further, no other kind of thought except intuition is more accurate than the scientific knowledge, whereas primary premisses are more knowable than demonstrations, and all scientific knowledge is discursive. From these considerations it follows that there will be no scientific knowledge of the primary premisses, and since except intuition nothing can be truer than scientific knowledge, will be intuition that apprehends the primary premisses -- a result which also follows from the fact that demonstration cannot be the originative source of demonstration, nor, consequently, scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge." Note this in connection with prophetic knowledge. See below, chapter 3.
19. Aristotle, Anal. Priora, II, 23, 68b, 13.
20. Aristotle, Anal. Post., loc. cit.
21. MN, I, 33, (F) p. 116. See also II, 25, (F) pp. 118-119.
22. Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Aristotelian Predicables and Maimonides' Division of Attributes," Essays and Studies in Memory of Linda R. Miller, ed. Israel Davidson (New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), p. 204.

23. MN, II, Introduction.
24. MN, II, 1, (F) p. 16.
25. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
26. Ibid., pp. 18-20.
27. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
28. Ibid., p. 22.
29. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
30. Ibid., p. 24.
31. MN, II, 12, (F) p. 57.
32. Ibid.
33. MN, I, 50, (F) p. 171, "If, however, you have a desire to rise to a higher state, viz., that of reflection, and truly to hold the conviction that God is One and possesses true unity, without admitting plurality or divisibility in any sense whatever, you must understand that God has no essential attribute in any form or in any sense whatever, and that the rejection of corporeality implies the rejection of essential attributes."
34. MN, I, 51, (F) p. 174.
35. Aristotle, Anal. Post. II, 10, 93b, 29. See Wolfson, loc. cit.
36. Wolfson, op. cit. p. 214.
37. Aristotle, Topics I, 9, 103b, 23-25.
38. MN, I, 52, (F) p. 178.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., (F) pp. 179-181.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 183.
46. Ibid., pp. 184-185. Compare Aristotle, De Mundo 6, 399b, 21.

47. MN, I, 55, (F) p. 200.
48. Ibid., 56, (F) p. 203.
49. Ibid., 57, (F) p. 204.
50. Ibid., p. 205.
51. Ibid., p. 207.
52. Ibid., 58, (F)pp. 207-208.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 209.
55. Ibid., 59, (F) p. 214.
56. Plotinus, Complete Works, trans. Kenneth S. Guthrie, (London, George Bell and Sons, 1918), III, 811.
57. Ibid., II, 584-585
58. MN, I, 59, (F) p. 215.
59. Ibid., p. 219.
60. MN, III, 15, (F) p. 59.
61. Talmud Babli, Baba Metsia, 31b. See MN, I, 26, (F) p. 89.
62. MN, III, 54, (F) p. 300.
63. MN, I, 34, (F) p. 121.
64. Ibid., 46, (F) pp. 158-159.
65. Ibid., 11, (F) pp. 58-59.
66. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, (Leipzig, 1862), I, 1.7 and I, 1.11.
67. MN, I, 35, (F) pp. 127-128.

### Chapter Three

1. MN, III, 17, (F) pp. 65-66.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 67-68.
4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
6. Ibid., p. 71.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
11. Ibid., p. 74.
12. Ibid., p. 75.
13. Ibid., p. 78.
14. Ibid., 18, p. 79.
15. Ibid., p. 81.
16. Ibid., p. 82.
17. Ibid., p. 81.
18. MN, I, 54, 79b: אלאו מרו עמון אצמא חן בענין, נורה ע' /  
ע' ש' ע' הבורא הוא אשר יצמא חן בענין, /  
ע' ויתבסס ע' .
19. MN, III, 54, (F) p. 282.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 51, (F) p. 290.
22. MN, III, pp. 22-23.
23. Ibid., 22, (P) p. 487.
24. Ibid., p. 489. The evil inclination has already been identified  
as the imagination.
25. Ibid., 23, (P) p. 493.
26. Ibid. (F) p. 302.
27. Ibid., 17, (F) pp. 74-75.
28. Ibid., 32, (P) p. 525.
29. Ibid., p. 526.

18. MN, I, 54, 79b: מורה ע' בענין חן אמצא חן  
ש' ש' יצא פה ופא אר ימצא חן בענין חן אמצא חן  
ש' צוק ויתפסע ע'.

19. MN, III, 54, (F) p. 282.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 51, (F) p. 290.
22. MN, III, pp. 22-23.
23. Ibid., 22, (P) p. 487.
24. Ibid., p. 489. The evil inclination has already been identified  
as the imagination.
25. Ibid., 23, (P) p. 493.
26. Ibid. (F) p. 302.
27. Ibid., 17, (F) pp. 74-75.
28. Ibid., 32, (P) p. 525.
29. Ibid., p. 526.

30. Ibid., (F) p. 150.
31. Ibid., p. 151.
32. Ibid., 16, (F) pp. 62-63.
33. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
34. Ibid., 19, (F) p. 82.
35. Ibid. "Emanate" is used to refer to the circumstances even if  
the universe is eternal.
36. MN, III, 20, (F) p. 90.
37. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
38. Ibid., p. 90.
39. Ibid., 21, (F) p. 92.
40. Ibid., p. 91. For the nature of the intellect in action, and of  
God's intellect eternally, see MN, I, 68, (F) p. 258.
41. MN, II, 32, (F) p. 161.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 162.
45. Ibid. It is the sixth of the thirteen principles enumerated by  
Maimonides in his Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10.1.
46. Ibid., pp. 162-163.
47. Shem-tob and Efodi ad locum in the Hebrew text of the Moreh  
Nebukhim. Maimonides spoke of this seventh cause of incon-  
sistency in his Introduction to the Moreh.
48. Jeremiah 45.5
49. MN, II, 32, (F) p. 163.
50. Ibid., 36, (F) pp. 177-178.
51. Abrabanel, ad locum. See Alvin J. Reines, "Abrabanel on Prophecy  
in the Moreh Nebukhim," Hebrew Union College Annual (Cincinnati,  
Maurice Jacobs, 1960)p. 128f.
52. Reines, op. cit., p. 134.

53. MN, II, 48, (F) p. 222.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 223.
56. Ibid., p. 224.
57. Ibid., 6, (F) p. 38.
58. Ibid., p. 37.
59. Ibid., 36, p. 173.
60. Ibid., p. 177.
61. See Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, I, 7.1,4. On the identity of  
Divine actions and natural actions see MN, III, 32, (F) p. 149.
62. MN, II, 34, (F) p. 170.
63. Ibid., II, 45, p. 214.
64. Ibid.
65. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, I, 7.6.
66. MN, II, 35, (F) p. 171.
67. Ibid., 33, (F) p. 167.
68. Ibid., 38, p. 183.
69. Ibid.
70. Aristotle, Anal. Post. II, 19, 100b, 4-13.
71. MN, II, 22, (F) p. 108.
72. Above, note 31.
73. MN, III, 22, (F) p. 97.
74. MN, II, 38, (F) p. 183.
75. MN, III, Introduction.
76. MN, II, 37, (F) p. 179.
77. Ibid., p. 181.
78. Ibid.

79. Ibid. Compare MN, II, 29, (F) p. 142.
80. MN, II, 45, (F) p. 208.
81. Ibid., 13, (F) p. 62.
82. Ibid. See Aristotle, Physics iv, 11.
83. Ibid., p. 63.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., p. 67.
87. Ibid., p. 65.
88. Ibid., p. 64. See also III, 15, (F) p. 59. Maimonides obviously agrees with this principle.
89. Ibid., p. 64.
90. Ibid., p. 65.
91. Plato also felt, along with Maimonides, that time was created.  
See Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, trans. by Jowett (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), vol. 2, Timaeus, pp. 530, 531, 525. Plato does not say that the heavens necessarily will come to an end, and although he views God creating out of matter, it is not clear whether this matter is really co-eternal or created by God. Like Maimonides, Plato compares the universe to an animal.
92. MN, II, 13, (F) p. 65ff.
93. Ibid., 14, (F) p. 68.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
100. Ibid., p. 70.

101. In terms of the fourth proof stated above.
102. MN, II, 13, (F) pp. 70-71.
103. Ibid., p. 71.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., p. 72.
106. Ibid., 15, (F) p. 72.
107. Ibid., p. 73.
108. Ibid., p. 74.
109. Ibid., p. 75.
110. Ibid., 16, (F) pp. 76-77.
111. Ibid., p. 76.
112. Ibid., 6, (F) p. 42. See also MN, III, 25, (F) p. 124, II, 17, p. 79, II, 22, pp. 107-108, and II, 29, p. 140.
113. Ibid., 29, (F) p. 140.
114. Ibid., 30, (F) p. 146.
115. Ibid., 17, (F) p. 77.
116. Ibid., pp. 77-79.
117. Ibid., p. 77.
118. Ibid., p. 79.
119. Ibid., p. 80.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid., p. 81.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid., 18, (F) p. 82ff.

125. Ibid., pp. 82-84. Maimonides takes this from Abu-nasr whom he quoted earlier (MN, II, 15, p. 75) as holding the position that: "It is clear and deomonstrable by proof that the heavens are eternal, but all that is enclosed within the heavens is transcient." Maimonides quotes this philosopher several times with respect to the problem of creation and it is questionable whether Maimonides voices his disagreement in these places. It may be possible in instances such as this to discover this contradiction voicing the actual view of Maimonides, that he did not in fact believe in creation ex nihilo. However, our point of view is stated in this chapter.
126. Ibid., p. 83.
127. Ibid., pp. 84f.
128. Ibid., p. 85.
129. With respect to his objections to the first proof given above.
130. MN, II, 18, (F) p. 85.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid., p. 86.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid., 19.
135. Ibid., p. 95. Maimonides again quotes Abu-nasr: "There is a difference between the stars and the spheres; for the spheres are transparent, the stars are opaque; and the cause of this is that there is a difference, however small it may be, between their substances and forms." Maimonides' disagreement is only in degree, for he feels that the difference is great, not small. Otherwise he uses this statement as evidence of the fact of design in the universe, from which he derives creation.
136. MN, II, 19, (F) p. 96.
137. Ibid., 20, (F) p. 99.
138. Ibid., p. 100.
139. Ibid., 22, (F) p. 107.
140. Ibid.
141. Ibid., 29, (F) p. 141.

142. Ibid., 22, (F) p. 108.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid., 23, (F) p. 110.
145. Ibid., 25, (F) p. 118.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid., p. 119.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., p. 120.
151. Ibid., 12, (F) p. 57.
152. Note the comparison of the universe to an animal, MN, II, 10, (F) p.48.  
For the comparative statement in Plato see note 91 above.
153. MN, II, 10, (F) p. 49.
154. Ibid., p. 50.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
157. Ibid., p. 51.
158. Ibid., p. 53. See also II, 11, p. 55.
159. Ibid., 11, (F) p. 55.
160. Ibid., p. 56.
161. Ibid., p. 55.
162. Ibid., 12, (F) p. 57. This is the same notion that Maimonides allowed to remain unchallenged in the argument he considered first among those he attacked. See note 124 above. The comparison is here made to the active intellect (p. 59), indicating that Maimonides may have considered his analogy more far reaching than he had suggested. See note 126 above.
163. Ibid., p. 59.
164. Ibid.

165. Plotinus, op. cit., I, 182-183: "What conception are we then to form of this generation of Intelligence by this immovable Cause? It is a radiation of light which escapes without disturbing its quietness, like the splendor which emanates perpetually from the sun...which surrounds it without leaving it....Perfumes also furnish a striking example of this process; so long as they last, they emit exhalations in which everything that surrounds them participates. Everything that has arrived at its point of perfection begets something. That which is eternally perfect begets eternally..."
166. MN, III, 15, (F) pp. 60-61.
167. MN, II, 23, (F) p. 110.
168. See note 141 above.

#### Chapter Four

1. MN, III, Introduction.
2. George Foot Moore, Judaism (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962), Vol. I, p. 392.
3. R. Travers Herford, The Pharisees, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1924), p. 154. See Maimonides, MN, I, 50 (F) p. 171.
4. Herford, op. cit., p. 154; Moore, op. cit., p. 439.
5. Moore, op. cit., p. 440.
6. Ibid., p. 441.
7. Ibid., pp. 384-385.
8. Ibid., p. 391.
9. Ibid., p. 456.
10. Herford, op. cit., p. 158; Moore, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 202.
11. Moore, op. cit., pp. 230-231.
12. Moore, op. cit., p. 373, vol. I.
13. Ibid., p. 398.
14. Ibid., p. 239.

15. Ibid., p. 237.
16. Ibid., p. 283ff.
17. Ibid., p. 383. Maimonides considers this to be a great error.  
See MN, III, 12 and 13.
18. Moore, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 212.
19. For the simile of the palace see MN, III, 51.
20. If it had been, Maimonides would not have violated many prohibitions so admittedly. It is clear, for instance, that he is writing a book on topics which one is not permitted to consider in such a manner.

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