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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF GERSONIDES AND HANS JONAS TO THE PROBLEM OF THEODICY

Harley I. Karz-Wagman

Thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish
Institute of Religion

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DIGEST

A theodicy is a response to the question: Why does God allow the righteous to suffer and the wicked to prosper? The theodicies of two Jewish thinkers, Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides) and Hans Jonas contain intriguing parallels, even though Gersondies wrote in 14th Century Provence, while Jonas wrote in 20th Century America. They are parallel in that they posit that God's control over events in our world is limited and that free human choice, to sme degree, fills that gap. However, they reach these conclusions by different routes.

Gersonides finds God's lack of control over evil to be the result of the nature of God and the world, while Jonas finds that God willfully forfeited such control. To Gersonides, evil, injustice, and chaos are not caused by God, but result from matter, which derives from a primordial material receptacle. God cannot directly intervene in the course of worldly affairs to assist us, since God cannot change. Nevertheless, God does care for us, enabling individuals to obtain foreknowledge to avoid suffering and to find true happiness in this world and individual immortality. Happiness and immortality result from adapting ourselves to the fundamental order of our world, which order is fixed and good.

To Jonas, that order is in constant flux. Freely chosen human actions affect the ultimate state of our world, and that of the divine realm. Jonas hypothesizes that God, at creation, willfully forfeited absolute control over our world "for the sake of unprejudiced becoming." Whether we desire it or not, our deeds

have a transcendent impact, either for good or for evil. Human evil, even such unmitigated evil as the Holocaust, is the result of human choice and cannot be prevented by God.

Despite these vastly different approaches, Jonas and Gersonides both maintain an optimism that we are capable of avoiding some suffering and of gaining sufficient reliable knowledge to find meaning and purpose to our lives, despite some unavoidable suffering. Their theodicies thus succeed in providing coherent and comforting explanations of what sometimes seems to be a chaotic and meaningless world.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The problem of theodicy has been articulated in various ways. One common statement of the problem is: why does God allow the righteous to suffer and the wicked to prosper? A more poetic expression is:

> "The rain falls on the just
> and on the unjust fella;
> But mainly upon the just
> Because the unjust has the just's umbrella."[1]

A "theodicy" is an explanation and justification of the apparently unfair suffering in our world, despite the existence of a God who, to some degree, knows about, cares about, and, at least at some time, acts on or interacts with us and our world.

The project of this thesis is to discuss and compare the theodicies of two Jewish thinkers, Levi Ben Gershom (1288-1344), better known as Gersonides, and Hans Jonas (1918-). This introductory chapter will discuss: (1) the purpose of a theodicy; (2) the reasons for choosing these particular thinkers from the myriads who have addressed the problem; and (3) the method by which their responses will be considered.

(1) The Purpose of a Theodicy

Every human being confronts in his or her life a great deal of chaos, including the disorienting perception that the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper. Clifford Geertz, in The Interpretation of Cultures, describes this chaos in our lives as giving rise to "The Problem of Meaning." Geertz finds that such chaos confronts us in three interrelated areas. First, we

experience bafflement when we encounter seemingly inexplicable events, such as death, frightening dreams, or earthquakes. The lack of an available explanation for these events yields a "deep disquiet" in us.[2] Similarly, we experience a sense of moral paradox when confronted by situations such as those described in the above poetic quatrain. This is usually termed "the problem of evil", that is, the "threats to our ability to make sound moral judgments." We become vexed by "the gap between things as they are and as they ought to be if our conceptions of right and wrong make sense."[3] A third type of chaotic feeling results from our encounter with suffering, that is, the mere existence of pain, whether or not it is seen as unjust. The religious problem is, as noted by Geertz, paradoxical. The religious concern is "not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make a physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat or the helpless contemplation of others' agony something bearable, supportable -- something, as we say, sufferable."[4]

All three of these types of encounters give rise to the same underlying feeling, which Geertz describes as "the uncomfortable suspicion that perhaps the world, and hence man's life in the world, has no genuine order at all -- no empirical regularity, no emotional form, no moral coherence." When religious people attempt to respond to the suspicion, "the effort is not to deny the undeniable -- that there are unexplained events, that life hurts, or that rain falls upon the just -- but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable, and that justice is a mirage."[5]

In other words, a religious response posits that life has a worthwhile meaning and purpose, despite the confusion, suffering, and injustice.

The religious response to these chaotic experiences is described by Peter Berger in The Sacred Canopy as containing both an active component, that is, ritual practices, and a cognitive component, which Berger terms theodicy, that is, the explanation of the baffling, chaotic, and discomforting phenomenon in our life in terms of an all-encompassing sacred order or nomos.[6] The goal of this explanation is not to find happiness in our lives but to give them meaning. We cannot deny the misfortunes which occur from natural disaster, illness, or the acts inflicted upon some people by others. However, we can integrate such misfortunes into an overall order, which explanation makes them more tolerable.[7]

(2) The Choice of Gersonides and Hans Jonas

Theodicy is thus a universal concern of all religious persons, although the level of sophistication may vary. When an illiterate peasant bemoans the death of a child as the will of God, that is as much a theodicy as the complex analysis of a sophisticated thinker[8], such as Gersonides or Jonas. If theodicy is so universal, why choose Gersonides and Jonas for special consideration? The primary reason is that, although Gersonides and Jonas differ in many fundamental aspects of their thought, their conclusions concerning the problem of theodicy appear to be remarkably parallel. Both thinkers solve the conflict among

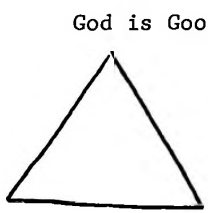
God's goodness, God's control over events in our world, and our experience of suffering and injustice by limiting God's control. Moreover, both fill at least some of the gap enacted by God's lack of control with free human choice. Nevertheless, they reach these conclusions by different routes.

Gersonides and Jonas differ in their presuppositions about the nature of God, such as whether God is immutable; in their conclusions about the nature of human beings, such as whether or not our existence can be known as a whole or only with respect to its "essence"; and in their findings about our world, such as whether or not it can ever be destroyed. Moreover, they respond to differing philosophic environments, and, as an apparent result, they focus on different questions. Gersonides wrote in fourteenth-century Provance and responded primarily to Maimonides, Aristotle, Plato, and various medieval Aristotelians. The issues with which Gersonides was concerned include: the apparent conflict between divine omniscience, human choice, and divine providence to individuals; the process of creation, particularly the existence of and nature of a material receptacle as the substratem of creation; and the nature and scope of human knowledge, particularly knowledge about God. Jonas wrote in mid-twentieth-century America. He explicitly responds to the temper of his time, particularly to the nihilistic attitude that there is no transcendent meaning to our lives. Thus, he focuses on such questions as: how does the mental realm relate to the physical realm?; do human beings have any transcendent self or soul?; is

there any transcendent/divine purpose to human lives?; and is our knowledge anything other than subjective, unreliable projections from our finite internal perspective?

Despite these wide ranging distinctions, much in the theodicies of Jonas and Gersonides is similar. Both maintain that our lives have a purpose, that that purpose was endowed by God, who is our creator and is wholly good. Moreover, God cares about and for human beings, as much as is logically possible. The purpose of our lives and these attributes of deity are intelligible to us. Nevertheless, both thinkers contend that the pain and suffering in our world is real and that such suffering is "unfair" in that it is not allocated based on the degree to which the sufferer is good or bad, innocent or guilty, righteous or evil.

These beliefs seem to conflict with each other. Why would a good, caring, creator God permit such real evil? This question may be pictured as a triangle of three propositions, only two of which may be maintained as true. The propositions are: (1) God is good; (2) God controls all events in our world; and (3) evil and injustice actually exist. In triangle form, this appears as:



Both Gersonides and Jonas respond to this formulation by rejecting God's total control over events in our world in order to maintain God's goodness and the reality of our perceptions of evil and injustice.[9]

The parallel extends beyond the similar limitation upon God's control over all events in our world. Both hold that the gap created by this lack of control can be filled by freely chosen human action, that is, each human being is a responsible agent, capable of deliberating over a variety of choices, choosing one, and implimenting that decision.[10] Beyond this focus on human choice as the key to explaining how God's lack of control does not deny God's goodness, both thinkers reflect hopeful, optimistic views of human capabilities. Both maintain that despite some uncertainty in our knowledge, we are capable of knowing enough to comprehend, at least somewhat, the divine purpose of our lives and to determine what we need to do to fulfill that purpose. Moreover, despite the suffering of the righteous and the innocent, we are capable of finding happiness in our world and in attaining immortality.

The existence of the similarities, despite the contrast in the focus of the writings of Jonas and Gersonides, gives rise to the question of whether the similarities are mere coincidence or whether they reflect an underlying similar theodicy, so that the distinctions are merely the culturally determined focusing on different issues and the culturally determined use of different metaphors to describe fundamentally similar pictures of ourselves,

our world, and God. This thesis only begins to answer that question. It will examine in detail the respective theodicies of Gersonides and Jonas and will then compare them, at least to the extent that the theodicies themselves appear to reflect culturally determined presuppositions as to what assumptions are self-evident, what methods of reasoning are valid, and what conclusions are satisfactory. The task of reconciling the two theodicies or of finding them irreconcilable is left incomplete.

(3) The Structure of Presentation

The theodicies of Gersonides and Jonas will be considered as follows. Chapter Two will analyze and evaluate the theodicy of Gersonides. The structure of this chapter will reflect, to some extent, Gersonides' own structure of argumentation. Gersonides, in his primary philosophical work, Milhamot Hashem, The Wars of the Lord,[12] proceeds by five steps: (1) he presents the views of his predecessors; (2) he critically analyzes them to determine what is valid and what is invalid; (3) he presents his own views; (4) he shows that none of the arguments raised with respect to the views of others leads to any valid objections against his own views; and (5) he shows that his own views agree with the proper interpretation of the Torah.[11] Chapter Two will add an initial overview of Gersonides' response to the problem of theodicy, and will omit the final step, that is, it will not consider how Gersonides reconciles his views with his interpretation of the Torah. The chapter will begin with a general overview of Gersonides' definition of the

problem of theodicy and his solution to the problem. Following that will be a detailed consideration of how Gersonides responds to other theodicies, with an emphasis on the areas of apparent greatest concern to Gersonides, that is: creation; God's knowledge; divine providence; human happiness and immortality; and human knowledge. The chapter will conclude with an evaluation of Gersonides with respect to his internal consistency and his persuasiveness.

The research underlying this material on Gersonides depends primarily on translations of his works and to analysis of his thinking by various commentators. The Hebrew original of Gersonides was consulted in those cases in which the English translations appeared questionable or incomplete. None of this consulting is reflected in this thesis, since the purpose here is to describe and to evaluate Gersonides' theodicy, not to evaluate the translators. Gersonides' direct response to the problem of theodicy may be found in his Commentary on the Book of Job.[13] The same conclusions, although with a more complete philosophic argumentation, may be found in Milḥamot Hashem, although the purpose of that series of treatises is not theodicy, but a search for truth concerning religious concepts which Gersonides felt that Maimonides had either not covered adequately or not explained correctly, such as God's knowledge, divine providence, creation, and immortality. Since there appear to be no contradictions between the Commentary on Job and Milḥamot Hashem, Gersonides' arguments will be presented as if they appeared in one coherent work.

Chapter Three will consider the theodicy of Hans Jonas. Unlike any treatment of Gersonides, the materials consulted concerning Jonas are all primary sources. Thus the chapter will follow Jonas' own presentation of his thought in his primary collection of essays, the Phenomenon of Life,[14] except that the chapter will add an initial overview of Jonas' theodicy and will include, where relevant, material from other published essays of Jonas. The overview will describe how Jonas defines the problem of theodicy and his general conclusion, which is expressed as a myth of creation. The chapter will then discuss in detail how Jonas reaches this conclusion. His goal is an understanding of human life, particularly an investigation of whether there may be a transcendent purpose to our life, whether we can know that purpose, and whether there are standards to guide us to help fulfill that purpose. In order to reach that goal, Jonas examines the phenomenon of life, particularly with respect to organic freedom, which reaches its highest level in human being as makers and beholders of images. From this conception of the human self or soul, Jonas derives a conception of individual immortality, which implies, or at least may imply a conception of God and God's role in our world. Jonas employs a myth to describe his conception of deity, and then examines the consequences of the myth, particularly how it explains the existence of evil in our world and what it implies with respect to ethical guidance for our lives. Jonas' theodicy will then be evaluated with respect to its internal consistency, its comprehensiveness, and its persuasiveness.

The fourth chapter will consider some key distinctions between the theodicies of Gersonides and Jonas. This is not an exhaustive, comprehensive comparison, but a consideration of some fundamental distinctions, which might possibly be determined by cultural context. A crucial example is Gersonides' assumption of divine immutability, which also gives rise to his presupposition that our world is immutable as to its essence. In contrast, Jonas views our world as being in constant flux and derives from that the possibility of change in the transcendent realm. These differing presuppositions lead to numerous differences between their theodicies. For example, Gersonides sees God's lack of control over the world as a result of God's ontological status, that is, God's immutable perfection does not permit God to have either knowledge of, or control over, particular events in our world as particulars. In contrast, Jonas finds that God's lack of control derives from God's choice, that is, God took an intentional risk in forfeiting control over all events in our world in order to permit free reign to human choice and "unprejudiced becoming". A further example is the resultant diverging conclusions of Gersonides and Jonas with respect to the "limitations" upon God's knowledge of our world and the impact of human actions upon the transcendent realm.

The purpose of the fourth chapter is to provide another perspective for viewing the intriguingly parallel yet contrasting theodicies of Gersonides and Jonas. The findings of Chapter Four could also provide the basis for further analysis. For example, Chapter Four could be used in a comparison of each of the thinkers

with others in their same cultural contexts. In addition, Chapter Four could become the basis for an attempt reconciliation or synthesis of the two theodicies.

CHAPTER ONE - FOOTNOTES

1 Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, Inc., 1973) p. 106.

2 Geertz, Cultures, p. 100.

3 Geertz, Cultures, p. 106.

4 Geertz, Cultures, p. 104.

5 Geertz, Cultures, p. 108.

6 Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967) p. 53.

7 Berger, Sacred Canopy, p. 58-59.

8 Berger, Sacred Canopy, p. 53.

9 See Chapter 3 at notes 6-8 for an alternative formulation by Jonas of the question.

10 Norbert Samuelson, "The Problem of Free Will in Maimonides, Gersonides, and Acquinas," CCAR Journal, XVII, January, 1970, p. 2.

11 Norbert Max Samuelson, Gersonides' The Wars of the Lord: Treatise Three: On God's Knowledge (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1977) p. 4.

12 Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), Sefer Milhamot HaShem, Riva di Trento, 1560.

13 Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), "Commentary on the Book of Job" in Mikraot G'dolot, vol. 10, Jerusalem, 1967.

14 Hans Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life: Toward A Philosophical Biology (New York, N.Y.: Harpes & Row, 1966).

CHAPTER TWO: GERSONIDES' RESPONSE -- What God cannot know should not be held against Him

Gersonides' response to the problem of theodicy will be considered as follows: (1) his framing of the problem; (2) his response; (3) his refutation of the solutions of others which differ most significantly concerning: (a) the process of creation (Section 4); (b) the extent of God's knowledge (Section 5); (c) the nature of God's providential care for individuals (Section 6); and (d) the true basis of human happiness and immortality (Section 7). Section 8 of this chapter will consider how and what humans know, which is the basis for obtaining individual providence, happiness, and immortality and which is also the epistemological basis of Gersonides' theodicy. Section 9 will evaluate Gersonides' response, with respect to its internal consistency, its consequences, beyond those which Gersonides mentions, and ultimately its persuasiveness. A further discussion of what Gersonides assumes as self-evident and what he finds self-evidently satisfactory will be deferred until Chapter Four.

1. Framing the Question

Gersonides focuses on the paradigm of Job, the pious suffering individual, although he also considers the situation of suffering peoples, especially the Jews, as discussed below. The question of theodicy is presented in his Commentary on Job as twofold: (1) why did God arrange a world in which the innocent and righteous, such as Job, suffer while the wicked prosper?; and (2) why did God give life to those who, like Job, would prefer not to exist, or, more generally, why does God allow evil to exist altogether in our universe?[1] This framing of the issue presupposes that God exists, a proposition which Gersonides assumes but does not purport to prove,[2] and further presupposes that God created the world, an assertion which Gersonides does prove, as discussed in Section 4 of this chapter.

The initial response to the problem admits only two possible positions, according to Gersonides. Either God determines the good and evil which befall humans, or God does not. Those who believe that God does make that determination include many of the Jewish people, who are represented in the Book of Job by Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. To support their position, they must explain the existence of injustice, that is, the fact that the righteous meet adversity while the wicked do well.[3] As discussed in the next section, Gersonides rejects all of their explanations, in part since they deny the reality of the injustice. Those who do not attribute all good and evil to God need not discount the apparent injustice in our world, but they must account for the apparent order which we do experience in our world.[4]

Gersonides places Aristotle in this second group. He finds Aristotle's basic solution in the argument that God, who can only do good, arranges our world in a generally good manner, such as providing each species with means of survival, but that God does not determine the particular events which occur. The reason that God does not do so is that God cannot know those events, for such knowledge would require God to change and God, as the perfect being, cannot change. Gersonides finds this solution unsatisfactory, for it implies that God shows no providential care for individuals.[5] Instead, Gersonides proposes a solution which, unlike Aristotle's, does not deny individual providence, while, unlike the positions of Job's friends, it does not deny the reality of the unjust distribution of good and evil in our world.

2. Gersonides Response - An Overview

God to Gersonides is the perfect being, eternal, unchanging, perpetually engaging in the single act of self-contemplation, and totally good. God cannot possibly be the source of the injustice and evil which we experience in this world. Rather, the source is matter. All things in our world consist of form, that is, the essential attributes by which a thing is defined, and a quantity of matter, the disordered substrate which is arranged according to form. The forms of things are completely ordered and beneficial to all things, particularly to humans.[6] All forms derive from God by emanation. Matter, the substrate on which the forms act, derives not from God but from a primordial material receptacle, a "body"

with no form and no order. This body, as matter, is utterly deprived of arrangement, that is, of good, and is ultimately the source of all the chaos, evil, and injustice which we experience.[7] The nature of this body and the process of creation are discussed in Section 4 of this chapter.

Since the essential aspects of all things, that is, those attributes of a thing without which it would be something else, are perfectly ordered, the world, on an essential level, is perfectly ordered. All species are thus provided by God, the source of all essences, with perfect means to survive and prosper. However, each particular member of a species has a material, disorderly aspect, which distinguishes that individual from others that share its essence. God cannot control or even know about these material aspects, for they are constantly changing and unpredictable. For God to know them, God would have to change, and change would imply that God was not already perfect. Thus, the evil and injustice in our world are explained as the price of God not knowing particular things, such as individual people, nor the events that they experience.[8] The nature of God's knowledge is discussed in Section 5.

From this limit on God's knowledge, Aristotle concluded that individual providence cannot exist. Gersonides disagrees. God cannot know particulars qua particulars, that is, their material aspects, but God can know the essential aspects of particular things and people.[9] This distinction allows Gersonides to posit that the providential care of God extends beyond the general providence for species to a special providence for individuals, that is, at least

to some of us. Each person benefits from the general, essential order in the world, but is subject to misfortune from the material chaos in the world and in us. Thus, a righteous person may suffer. However, an escape route is available. If that righteous person actualizes his or her intellectual potential, some foreknowledge can be gained so that evil can be avoided and benefits enhanced.[10] The process of acquiring such individual providential knowledge is discussed in Section 6.

Despite the possibility of this foreknowledge, and despite the overall beneficial arrangement of the world, some innocent individuals nonetheless suffer severe misfortunes. Ultimately, Gersonides argues that these unjust misfortunes, that is, those disproportionate to whatever wrong the person may have done, are not truly human evil, for they are material. On the essential human level, the level of intellect and conception, justice, prevails. True happiness in the world is available to all to the degree that they actualize their intellects. Moreover, immortality is available to all individuals to the extent that they properly conceive of the essences.[11] The process of obtaining immortality and also true felicity in this world is discussed in Sections 7 and 8.

In sum, Gersonides does not attribute to God the adversity experienced by the righteous nor the prosperity of the wicked. Adversity of the righteous derives from five sources. (1) Either the recipient of the evil or others pursue sensory, material pleasures, which leads them to act contrary to reason. (2) The

recipient faces adverse hereditary and environmental conditions. These first two sources both derive from our material nature. (3) In a few cases, the evil spares the righteous from greater adversity, such as forcing someone to miss a boat which is destroyed in a storm. (4) The adversity serves as a rebuke to prevent the recipient from pursuing an evil path. The third and fourth sources are results of the general providential order in the world. (5) The adversity results from natural disasters, such as earthquakes and lightning. These misfortunes are a necessary result of the material substratum and of the interactions of the contrary forces of the basic elements. The four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, combine to form all existing things in our world. These element contain contrary qualities, which are active (hot and cold) and passive (moist and dry). Through the interaction of these contraries, generation, change, and passing away occur. Also, an equilibrium is maintained. This equilibrium makes life possible and thus benefits all things as a part of general providence. In order to attain the equilibrium, the contrary qualities conflict and events such as earthquakes result. By accident, that is, as a result of chance rather than of the heavenly arranged order in our world, we may be present where these events occur, so that misfortune results despite our righteousness.[12] The fifth source is thus a combination of the workings of general providence and our material nature.

The results of all of these types of adversity may be avoided by individual providence, that is, a person may properly

conceive of the essences which conception gives that person a foreknowledge, or prescience, of the conditions which will bring about the harmful result. Such foreknowledge can also allow one to direct greater benefits to oneself.[13] Thus, not only is God not the source of the adversity to the righteous, but God provides them with a means of escape.

The prosperity of the wicked is also not caused by God in response to their wickedness. Some good from God does reach the wicked in the general providential scheme which aids everyone, but this is not related to their wrongful behavior.[14] Moreover, the wicked are unable to obtain individual providence, for their pursuit of sensory pleasure interferes with their ability to properly conceive the essences of things.[15] More crucially, the wicked's inability to properly conceive essences denies them any opportunity for ultimate happiness in our world and for immortality as well.[16] Thus, not only is God not the cause of prosperity to the wicked, but the God-given possibilities of true felicity and immortality are denied to the wicked.

The role of God in Gersonides' scheme appears to be limited. God does not respond to particular events in our lives, and God does not judge us, rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. Gersonides argues that these limits are not limits on God's power, but merely examples of things which it is logically impossible for God, the perfect being, to be able to do.

It is not logically possible for God to respond to particular events, because to do so, God would have to learn of those

events as they occur, which would necessarily imply that God's knowledge changes. Changing necessarily implies becoming better or worse, but God, who is understood as the most perfect possible being, cannot become more perfect or less knowledgeable.[17] Gersonides could have argued, as did Ibn Sina, that God need not "learn" of particular events, because God knows all of them in advance. Gersonides, like Aristotle, rejects this argument, for it denies the possibility of real human choice and attributes everything in our world, including evil, to God.[18]

Although God's knowledge cannot change, God is nevertheless seen by Gersonides as the willful creator of our world. God eternally performs the single act of self-conception, that is, the knowing of all of the forms (essences), and the content of this knowledge perpetually overflows. Creation occurred not by a change in God or God's knowledge, but when, at a particular random moment, the material receptacle became prepared to receive the divinely emanated forms, which resulted, through a process discussed in Section 4, in both the incorporeal world of heavenly intelligences and spheres and the material, sublunar universe which we inhabit.[19] If the material receptacle was never so prepared, no world would have been generated, but "God would have been no worse for it."[20]

This view of creation contrasts with the view held by Maimonides and many medieval Jewis thinkers that God created the world ex nihilo, from absolutely nothing. Adherents of creation ex nihilo would argue that the pre-existence of a material receptacle implies a limit on God's power. Gersonides responds that creation

ex nihilo is logically impossible, for reasons discussed in Section 4, and therefore God's inability to do it is not a limit.[21] Since creation ex nihilo is impossible, something must have existed prior to creation. That something could either be primieval matter, a separate intelligence or being, or a material receptacle. For reasons discussed below, Gersonides argues for the latter. The question arises: Why did God not transform that receptacle into a good, fully ordered entity? Gersonides responds that God could not, since the essential nature of the receptacle is potentiality, that is, deprivation of good, and since it is logically impossible to cause two contraries to exist simultaneously in the same thing.[22] Moreover, the separate continuing existence of such a receptacle is not a limit on God's power, because God, the unchanging, perfect being, could not logically relate to such an entity.[23] The nature of the receptacle is considered in Sectoin 4.

A crucial consequence of God's role as the unchanging creator is that God cannot judge human actions nor reward or punish our behavior. To so judge would require knowledge of all our particular actions, which God cannot know, since they result, in part, from our disorderly material nature. It would be unjust for God to judge us without full knowledge and equally unjust to punish us for actions caused by our materiality, which we cannot fully control.[24] Moreover, to punish us would be to cause "misfortune in its essence," that is, misfortune which is not accidental, and God, who is perfectly good, cannot cause such misfortune.[25]

Even if God's power is not limited, God's ability to relate to our world is restricted. It might seem to follow that our world is controlled more by its chaotic material attributes than by whatever essences reach it from the divine. Gersonides refutes that possibility. The world is governed in the best way possible. Gersonides interprets God's speech to Job as teaching that "God possesses all the possible wisdom and might to bring good to this lower existence, and He does extend His Providence to it in the best possible manner."[26] That providence is evident on two levels, general and individual. General providence is reflected in the empirical observation that the "total order of existence ... is found to be just, equitable, good and perfect."[27] For example, the science of biology has shown that living things could not be more perfectly ordered, in their essential natures.[28] This providence derives from God, since the heavenly intelligences arrange the general order in our world in accordance with God's perfect self-contemplation. Those intelligences do so because they are attracted by the perfection of God's self-contemplation and desire to imitate it.[29] Gersonides sees much empirical evidence for this teleological perspective. While there are evils in our world, many are ultimately beneficial in preventing greater evils or as chastisement. Other misfortunes are not nearly as significant as the benefits one finds in our world. Even the misfortunes caused by the wicked are far less than one would expect, considering the number of wicked people and the energy and ingenuity they apply

to causing evil. Moreover, the righteous can escape most evils by actualizing their intellects.[30]

The escape, as discussed above, depends on obtaining foreknowledge of future conditions, and our ability to do so is the result of what Gersonides calls individual providence.[31] Thus, beyond the necessary good ordained by the heavens, individuals have the God-given possibility of obtaining further benefits, and avoiding evils, by developing their intellect.[32] This escape is also available to peoples, such as Israel, if they listen to their prophets, who issue true warnings of impending misfortunes, or if they pay attention to some of the limited misfortunes, that they suffer, which are part of the general providential order and function to rebuke the people.[33]

General and individual providence are beneficial not only in helping individuals and peoples avoid material evils and obtain material goods. They also allow individuals the ultimately more significant benefit of actualizing at least part of one's intellect. By pursuing and attaining wisdom, one finds true human happiness in this world.[34] One also attains eternal good, that is, immortality, to the extent that one "acquires" proper conceptions of the essences.[35] On the level of these true rewards, justice does prevail, in that one is rewarded only to the extent that one actualizes one's intellect, a task that is not possible if one is not righteous in conception and in deed.[36]

3. Gersonides' Refutation of Other Solutions

This overview of Gersonides' response to the problem of theodicy can be better understood in contrast to various other responses which Gersonides considers and rejects. These responses are reflected in the five views on providence as set forth by Maimonides. Three views are summarily rejected, those attributed to the Epicureans, the Asharites, and the Mutazilites. Gersonides does not even consider the first view, the Epicurean solution that all is governed by chance, that there are various gods, who are concerned with their own happiness, and that man has completely free will.[37] This solution would contradict Gersonides' presumption that God is one and wholly good. It would also contradict Gersonides' empirical presumption that our world reflects a teleological order which humans can understand well enough to make accurate prognostications. What Maimonides lists as the third and fourth views, respectively attributed to the Asharites and the Mutazilites, posit that God created the world ex nihilo and that, therefore, God knows and determines all events in our world. Both propositions are refuted by Gersonides when he considers other views. Thus, he merely mentions the unacceptability of the Asharite claim that God directly causes each event in our world and the Mutazilite view that not only does God do so, but does so justly, balancing the suffering of the pious in this world by rewards in the next world.[38]

The second view, attributed to Aristotle, is considered carefully. Gersonides accepts Aristotle's argument that God cannot

know particulars, that is: (1) if God knew particulars, God's knowledge would have different degrees of perfection; and 92) if so, God's essence would contain plurality and complexity, which is less perfect than a unified, single essence. From this, Aristotle concludes that there is no individual providence. While Gersonides accepts these arguments, he maintains that they are not inconsistent with individual providence.[39]

Gersonides' basis for this position is the same as his basis for refuting another argument, which he attributes to Aristotle, against individual providence. According to Gersonides, Aristotle reasons that if there were individual providence, one would see an equitable distribution of benefits and misfortunes, which our experience denies. Moreover, God would not concern Himself with the affairs of inferior beings such as humans. Gersonides disagrees. Individual providence is empirically evident in the accuracy of prognostication by prophecy, dreams and visions, an accuracy which Aristotle accepts.[40] Moreover, Gersonides finds that divine providential assistance is extended (by the agony of the Active Intellect) to all individuals who properly actualize their intellect. Such individuals gain a foreknowledge which helps them avoid evil and obtain benefits beyond what they would otherwise obtain. (See Section 6). They also gain, to the degree that they actualize their intellects, true happiness in this world and immortal existence beyond this world. (See Section 7). Thus, Gersonides finds individual providence, at

least for some individuals, despite the existence of inequity in the distribution of benefits and misfortunes.

Most of Gersonides' argumentation about divine providence in Milhamot Hashem and in his Commentary on Job is directed against the fifth view, that of the adherents of our Torah (תורתנו אלהי). Gersonides divides these adherents into a group which believes that providence extends to all individuals and a group which believes, as do Gersonides and Maimonides, that providence extends only to some. The first group, called by Bleich the "fundamentalists", all maintain that reward and punishment come from God "measure for measure". These fundamentalists are divided into those who claim that all events are governed by providence and those who, similar to Gersonides but not Maimonides, believe that some events, especially the inequitable occurrence of good and evil, are caused by something other than providence. The fundamentalists who attribute all to God must explain the experience of the righteous suffering and the wicked prospering. Differing versions of this explanation are represented in the Book of Job by two of Job's friends, Zophar and Bildad. The fundamentalists who find some other cause but still affirm reward and punishment "measure for measure" are represented by the third of Job's friends, Eliphaz. The correct view, according to Gersonides, is represented by another friend, Elihu.[41]

Gersonides counters the notion that reward and punishment occur "measure for measure" by arguing that since God cannot know particulars qua particulars, it would be unfair for God to reward

or punish humans for particular actions. Also, God cannot provide for reward and punishment of humans by building such providence into the general worldly order ordained by the heavens, since humans, by free choice can contravene that order. Gersonides further maintains that God cannot directly punish evil doers, since God is all good and can cause only good.[42]

Gersonides' specific responses to the views of each of Job's three friends further clarifies his own position. Gersonides' responses to Zophar and Bildad are similar. Zophar asserts that the injustice we experience is only apparent, for we cannot accurately judge who is righteous and who is wicked. We see only deeds, but judgment depends on whether an individual reaches or falls short of his or her natural disposition and temperament, which only God can know. For example, what we perceive as a minor wrong by an individual may be far beneath that individual's disposition and thus merit the severe punishment which we perceive as unfair. Similarly, what we perceive as a major sin by another individual may be only slightly below that individual's potential and thus may be appropriately punished by anxiety and guilt.[43] Bildad, like Zophar, asserts that injustice is only apparent, but for a different reason. Bildad claims that we are unable to judge what is good (reward) and what is evil (punishment). Apparent misfortune to the righteous is, in fact, always beneficial in that it ultimately leads to good in this world or the next.[44]

Gersonides concedes that both Zophar's and Bildad's explanations apply to some injustice, but we experience other injustice which cannot be so explained. Job is the paradigmatic example.[45] More basically, Zophar and Bildad deny our experience by appealing to the mysterious nature of God's ways. If so, they cannot maintain that the world is conducted in an orderly and just way, because there would be "no criterion for testing" our knowledge of order and justice.[46]

Eliphaz, on the other hand, does not appeal to the mystery of God's ways. Gersonides agrees with Eliphaz that some evils result from something other than divine providence, but disagrees as to the other source. Eliphaz posits that such source is the folly and silliness of individuals who are not sinful in that they do not rebel against God. Our sense experience shows that such "good" individuals suffer for only a short time and suffer relatively mild reprimands rather than severe punishments. In contrast, the wicked suffer severely, including an early death. Gersonides responds that some suffering of the righteous, as Job, lasts for a long time and is quite severe. Moreover, a quick death may be far less severe than a long, painful life. Thus, even if Eliphaz were empirically correct, he would not have proved his point. Moreover, as mentioned above, Eliphaz's explanations attributes to God a knowledge of particulars.[47]

The five views which Gersonides refutes do not exhaust the possibilities. At least one other significant view is worth distinguishing from Gersonides. This is the view that Gersonides

attributes to Plato. Plato's actual position as to the sources of evil in our world may be quite different from Gersonides understanding.[48] The view of Plato which Gersonides discusses is similar to Gersonides' own view in that it asserts that our world's generally orderly arrangement is the source of evil. Plato differs with respect to the nature of the material receptacle which limits sublunar order and with respect to the nature of the ordering. Plato's receptacle exists in disorderly motion. Gersonides cannot accept disorderly motion in the receptacle, because motion requires form which requires divine origin. God could not cause disorder.[49] Plato views the ordering of the world as necessary and passive. Gersonides also rejects that view, for the ordering came from God through the heavenly intelligences, who created our universe by will and by active choice.[50] These distinctions are discussed further in the next section, concerning creation.

When viewed in contrast to these other responses to the problem of theodicy, Gersonides' view differs most significantly in four interrelated areas, considered in the next four sections of this chapter: (1) the process of creation (Section 4); (2) the extent of God's knowledge (Section 5); (3) the nature of God's providential care for individuals (Section 6); and (4) the true basis of human happiness and immortality (Section 7). Section 8 will consider how and what humans know, which is the basis for obtaining individual providence, true happiness, and immortality, and is also the epistemological basis of Gersonides' theodicy.

4. Gersonides' Description of Creation and the Material Receptacle

Gersonides's theodicy clearly rests upon a cosmology which envisions a perfect, absolutely unified, unchanging God from whom knowledge of the forms perpetually overflows. The forms interact with a chaotic material receptacle, and, through that interaction, our world and the supralunar realm are created. Gersonides' goal is the explanation of our experience of injustice without attributing evil to God and without denying that God cares for individuals. Thus, he seeks a synthesis of the view of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian physics of God as a perfect, unchanging being and the "Jewish view of God as a Being who willfully creates and providentially governs."[51] The synthesis is successfully achieved.[52] While the workings of heavenly intelligences and spheres may sound obscure and archaic to the modern mind, it will be argued later that all of Gersonides's cosmology may be construed as a metaphoric representation of a process, emanation, which seems obscure and archaic only if viewed on the literal level.

Fundamental to Gersonides' description of creation are the propositions that the world is created, not eternal, and that creation was willful, not by chance nor by necessity. Gersonides argues that creation can be demonstrated philosophically, and applies Aristotelian physics to refute the Aristotelian concept of eternity. We can prove that our world is created, because it exhibits the properties of things which come to be. It is teleologically ordered, that is, at least on the level of essences,

the workings of nature reflect a purposefulness, a final cause, from which a creator who acted with purpose may be inferred. This essential order is evident, for example, in the usefulness of the organs and instincts possessed by living things. Also characteristic of a created thing is the possession of non-essential (accidental) qualities, that is, properties which do not define a substance so that it would remain the same substance whether it kept that quality or not. Accidental qualities occur only infrequently and endure only for a relatively short duration. Otherwise, the qualities would be essential. Since we find, particularly in the heavenly realm, non-essential features which are enduring and recurring, those features must have been endowed by a creator, that is, the heavenly bodies must have been produced. While Maimonides claimed that such non-essential features could be explained in a non-created, eternal world, Gersonides considers this, together with the teleological argument, to be a decisive proofs.[53] Gersonides also proves creation from the premise that time and motion are finite, since the alternative of infinite past time leads to many absurdities.[54] The steps of this proof are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Having established creation, and thus having distinguished himself from Aristotle and Averroes, Gersonides demonstrates that creation was willful, rather than by chance or necessity and thus distinguishes himself from Plato.[55] As to chance, the evidence of purpose in the world disproves it, for accidental creation would not have produced the general order we find.[56] Moreover, creation

was not a necessary result of God's nature, which was the view attributed to Plato.[57] Creation occurred only because, at some random time, the material receptacle became prepared, that is, randomly assumed a shape, in which it could receive the forms. Had the receptacle not become prepared to receive the forms, the world would not have been created.[58] This randomness is essential to Gersonides' theodicy, for it leads to the conclusion that God has no part in creating the chaos and disorder of our world. Similarly, the intentionality in our world order is vital to Gersonides' theodicy, for it leads to the conclusion that God plays a role, the central role, in bringing about the good in our world.

Having established willful creation by an unchanging God, Gersonides describes a process of creation which leads to the general order that is evident in nature, while also explaining the evil and injustice we experience. The order proceeds from God, who performs the single, perpetual act of self-conception, that is, a coherent comprehension of all of the forms as a single unit. As a by-product of this act, the divine will (nomos, order) overflows and the forms emanate from God. When the forms appear in ("inform") the material receptacle, the result is a sublunar world of material things and a supralunar world of heavenly bodies. Some of this emanation appeared as living rational intelligences, which, although incorporeal, move the heavenly bodies, that is, the spheres, in well arranged patterns and thus generate and order our sublunar world. All of the forms conceived by these heavenly intelligences are conceived as a unit by the Active Intellect, which directly generates

and governs our world.[59] This is an unusual view of the Active Intellect, which is often described s the final and lowest link in the chain of emanated Intelligences and as the heavenly Intelligence which has the least scope of knowledge, not the greatest. By enhancing the knowledge of the Active Intellect, Gersonides enhances the possibilities of human achievement, since what we can know, and consequently the providence, happiness, and immortality we can achieve, depend on the Active Intellect.[60]

The generated sublunar world contains some disorder, as discussed below, but "essentially", it is the best world possible. It is necessarily so, since all the essence derives from God. All things serve their natural function "in the most perfect possible way," and "the world is a macrocasm in which all parts are interrelated and in which nothing is useless."[61] The purpose, or end goal, of the sublunar and the supralunar order is the benefit of humanity.[62] The celestial bodies exist "for the sake of" the lower world, including humanity, in that, since they are more perfect than the self-concerned existents of the lower world, they act for the benefit of others.[63] Humans are the "end" of the lower world in that we are less dependent on our material bodies, and therefore more perfect and less deprived of order than any other thing in our world.[64] Humans have conceptual potentials which no other being possesses, and the actualization of that potential is the means to providence, happiness, and immortality (Sections 6 and 7), all of which are evidence that one purpose of creation was the benefit of humanity.

The general order in our best possible world is maintained by the balanced interaction of the contrary forces of the four basic elements, earth, air, fire and water. The interaction of these elements leads to the generation of all existent things, but also gives rise to their change and their passing away.[65] However, a balance, an equilibrium, is maintained by the arrangement ordained by the heavenly intelligences, which cause a regular cycle in the inevitable domination of some forces of the elements over others. For example, if the passive (moist and dry) regularly dominated the active (hot and cold) qualities, all would be destroyed. The balanced interaction gives rise to some events, such as lightning and earthquakes, which may accidentally cause harm, but it generally operates as it was intended, for the benefit of all.[66]

Nevertheless, the general order is limited by the material nature of our world, which causes adversity to befall the righteous, as discussed above. The material attributes derive from the material receptacle, an unusual entity whose nature, as described by Gersonides , differs significantly from the receptacles of the divine nomos which are described by other philosophers. This distinct nature explains why all injustice and evil derive from the receptacle, not from God.

The receptacle, called by Gersonides "the body which does not preserve its shape," ("גשם בלתי שומר הצורה")[67] is "intermediate between existence and privation."[68] The function of the receptacle during creation is the receipt of the forms of

the four basic elements, from which the rest of the world is formed. Its "intermediate" nature allows it to perform this function, while still remaining independent of divine control. It is not non-existent. This distinguishes Gersonides from proponents of creation ex nihilo, such as Maimonides. Gersonides finds that impossible consequences flow from the ex nihilo theory, that is, creation from absolutely nothing. It would imply that a body came from absolutely nothing.[69] Generation of any body requires an agent, or maker, a substrate (the object of the acting of making), and a product (the universe). The ex nihilo theory deletes the substrate.[70] Also, ex nihilo implies the existence, prior to creation, of a total vacuum, or void, which is not possible according to Aristotelian physics.[71] Most significantly for theodicy, if God created the world ex nihilo, then God, who always acts with purpose, intentionally caused all of our world, including the evil and injustice which we experience. God is good and perfect and could not do so.

Although the receptacle is not non-existent, it is not actual in that it has no form. If the receptacle, the cause of evil, had a form, then either God, the source of all forms, would be the cause of evil, or there would be another source of form in the universe and that source would be the cause of evil. To Gersonides, a "form" is the purpose, a final cause, of the thing in which it inheres. Thus, the source of a "form" is that which endowed it with purpose. Purpose means order. God is the source of all order in the universe. If there were another source of

order, that is, another source of "form," then the universe would not reflect one coherent order, but two (at least two). In other words, there would be two creators, not merely the one God. Since Gersonides finds only one God, he cannot posit a receptacle which has a "form". Gersonides thus rejects what he understands to be the Platonic position that the receptacle consists of disorderly motion, since any motion, however disorderly, requires form.[73]

Gersonides' view of "the body which does not preserve its shape" is also distinct from the views of various medieval Aristotelians who posit that creation was a two step process. First, the underlying receptacle, called "first matter," receives "corporeal form," which endows first matter with some type of dimensionality. As discussed below, the thinkers are distinguished by how they describe this dimensionality. In a second step, the informed first matter receives the forms of the four elements, resulting in the creation of those elements, which then interact to create the rest of our world. Gersonides does not discuss a "corporeal form" as separate from the receptacle. Rather, the receptacle directly received the element forms with no intervening step. Thus, Gersonides' "body which does not preserve its shape" can best be understood in comparison to the "informed" receptacle posited by the medieval Aristotelians.[74]

One such thinker is Al-Ghazali, who posited that corporeal form endowed first matter with actual definite dimensions. Gersonides could not accept this, since only a thing with form can have such dimensions. As discussed in distinguishing Plato,

Gersonides cannot accept that the receiver of the four elements has a form, become form implies final cause which implies a creator. The receptacle, for Gersonides, has no creator. God is the only creator and God did not create the receptacle, the source of evil.[75]

Although Gersonides cannot accept a receptacle which has any form, that is, the receptacle must be "nothing," it cannot be absolutely formless, for then it would be absolutely nothing, which is the ex nihilo theory Gersonides rejected. How can this be? Avicenna described such an entity in his picture of first matter infomred by corporeal form. As noted, this entity, informed first matter, is what receives the elemental forms in the process of creation. This entity was only potentially existent, in that it had no definite or even indefinite dimensions, but it had a pre-disposition to receive dimensionality, which pre-disposition was actualized when it received the forms of the elements.[76] Such a receptacle would not fit Gersonides' purpose, since it is so non-existent that it would merely reflect the forms which it received from God. If so, the world which was created in it, would be a precise reflection of the forms, that is, of God's will. In that case, just as in the ex nihilo theory, evil would be attributed to God.

Averroes also proposed a receptacle (informed first matter) which was "intermediate between privation and existence." Unlike that of Avicenna, it had no actualized, definite dimensions, yet, unlike that of Al-Ghazali, it had dimensions. The dimensions were actual but indeterminate. When a portion of the receptacle

received the forms of an element, then that portion became determined.[77] This view of informed first matter is probably parallel to what Gersonides posited of the body which does not preserve its shape, because it is most consistent with Gersonides purposes.[78] The actual dimensions, even though indeterminate, would refract the forms received from the divine nomos, so that the elements from which our world was created would not be a precise reflection of God's will. On the other hand, since the dimensions are indeterminate, they do not imply any formal cause, that is, a responsible creator. The result is a receptacle which is a "body", since it has dimensions, and an entity "which does not preserve its shape," since its dimensions are constantly and randomly changing.[79]

The concept of a "body which does not preserve its shape" seems to violate the Aristotelian principle that there can be no matter without form. Gersonides anticipates this objection and responds that even in Aristotle's physics, at least in Gersonides' understanding thereof, there exists matter without form. That matter is the aether, in which the heavenly bodies exist. Moreover, since there can be forms without matter, such as the celestial Intelligences, there can be matter without form as well. Also, Gersonides claims that one can "empirically" observe the formless matter, that is, the body which does not preserve its shape, since it persists after creation between the celestial spheres. Its existence is necessary to the explanation of certain astronomical phenomena.[80] It functions to prevent the spheres from interfering

with the motions of the stars of other spheres.[81] This "empirical evidence" supports Gersonides' argument, but is not essential to it.

Most importantly, this body, although eternal and independent from God, is not another deity, because divinity depends not on externality or independence, but on what a being can do and does.[82] God is divine because God has a totally independent will. The body has no will, and, as discussed above, is not the creation of an agent. Thus, Gersonides' theodicy does not deviate from monotheism.

5. The Extent of God's Knowledge

Since those aspects of our world that derive from the material receptacle, that is, the material attributes of each existent thing, came to be independent from the influence of God, they cannot be known by God. God knows only the forms. Since each particular entity in our world consists of matter as ordered by a form, God can only know its formal order, not the total entity. The formal order, or essence, determines the potentiality of the entity. Thus God can know what each entity is able to do. However, what the entity actually does, both as a doer and as a receiver of actions, is determined by the interaction of the formal and the material. Since the material attributes have no order, they cannot be known by God, and thus God cannot know what the entity does. In sum, God can and does know particulars as essences, but not as particulars.[83] Whether or not God can know, that is, distinguish individuals, is discussed below.

Two key consequences follow: (1) God can neither cause nor prevent the disorder, that is, evil and unjust occurrences in our world, because God cannot know about them; (2) however, God can still care for the world and even for individuals, because God knows the essences.

With respect to the first consequence, as discussed above (Section 3),[84] Gersonides accepts Aristotle's arguments that God cannot know particulars qua particulars, since that would limit God's perfection implying that God's perfection varies in degree and that God's essence is plural and complex. Without such knowledge, God cannot anticipate all evil and injustice, much less prevent their occurrence. Also, God cannot punish the perpetrators of evil nor reward the doers of good, since God knows only what they can do, not what they actually did. Judgment without such knowledge would be unjust, and God, who is wholly ordered and good, cannot be unjust.[85]

With respect to whether God cares for individuals, Gersonides disagrees with the Aristotelian argument that these limits on God's knowledge contradict the possibility of individual providence. The Aristotelian argument is based on the problem of theodicy. If one assumes that God knows the particulars, one must then conclude either (1) that God governs the world in a good and perfect order, or (2) that God does not so govern. The first conclusion contradicts our sense experience, especially our perceptions that the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. The second conclusion contradicts one of two fundamental assumptions

of Aristotle (and of Gersonides). It could imply that God is imperfect in power or knowledge, which is contrary to the perfectly ordered essence of God. Alternatively, it could imply that God could so govern but is not interested, either because the particulars are too lowly or because God is jealous of them. Either of those reasons would be contrary to God's essential and unqualified goodness. Thus, Aristotle concludes that God can neither know nor govern the particulars.[86]

Gersonides accepts Aristotle's argument to the extent that God does not govern the world in an absolutely good order. Experience contradicts that. However, God's governance does lead to the best possible order. For example, the case of an innocent man drowning in a storm would not occur in an absolutely perfect world. Yet the storm resulted from the laws of meteorology, which serve a good purpose in maintaining our world's equilibrium, and the drowning resulted, in part, from the laws of biology, which serve a good purpose in enabling humans to survive and to find satisfaction. With respect to the operation of those laws which govern our world, the drowning does not contradict the world's absolute goodnes. Thus God could (and does) know those laws and all the universal ordering of our world and still be as knowledgeable as is logically possible and perfectly good. The cause of the drowning which would contradict God's perfect knowledge or goodness is the coincidence that the man happened to be out in the storm. This circumstance results not from the laws of meteorology or biology, but from man's material attributes, which, as explained

below, prevented the man from avoiding the storm. God could not know the man's material attributes and thus could not know where the man would be at a particular time, because matter has no essence, no form, which is all that a perfect, unchanging God could know. Since God cannot know such particulars as particulars, God could not save the man.[87]

Nevertheless, God can know the particulars from the aspect of their universal ordering. Gersonides calls what God knows "essences". An essence is that by which a thing is ordered for perfection and that by which a thing is defined, that is, essence consists of those qualities without which a thing would not be itself. Essence determines the thing's capacity and disposition. Each thing in our world also consists of something besides essence, that is, it has material, accidental properties, but those properties totally lack order. God (and only God) is all essence, that is, all order. "In the act of knowing, the knower (the subject, such as God) and the known (the object, such as essences) are in some sense one."[89] God possesses no disorder and thus can have no knowledge of disorder. Disorder, or matter, cannot truly be known by any being. However, humans can have a "sense acquaintance" with the material and thus with the particulars qua particulars, although such sense acquaintance, or perception, is not objectively accurate (as explained in Section 8, in which human knowledge is contrasted with God's knowledge). God has no senses, for senses imply receiving perceptions from other entities, which inplies a deficiency in the receiver.[90]

Two questions remain. (1) If God knows all the essences, can God distinguish the actions and thoughts of individual people? (2) If God knows only essences, can God know future contingent events? Gersonides must answer no to both questions, for otherwise, God would be able to punish the wicked, to reward the righteous, and to prevent the individual suffering which occurs in our world. The content of Gersonides' answers further clarifies his conception of God's knowledge.

By knowing all the essences, God can know individuals, although only "by accident". What an individual person does and thinks is determined by his or her essence, that is, capacity and disposition, but only in interaction with his or her material attributes. Those cannot be known by God. How then could God know an individual person? Samuelson uses the example of Socrates. By knowing a number of essences, God might "know" Socrates. God would know such essences as man, philosopher, resident of ancient Athens, drinker of hemlock, and other essential attributes of Socrates. Each of these essences, and all of them together, determine a class of individuals. No matter how many essences happen to apply to Socrates, the class which they determine must, in principle, be capable of containing more than one individual. However, it may happen by accident that a combination of essences may designate a class with only one member, such as Socrates. God could then know Socrates, or any individual, although only by accident. What is crucial to Gersonides' theodicy is that even if God, accidentally, knew who and what Socrates was, God could

not have prevented Socrates from drinking the hemlock. Similar to God's knowledge of the drowning man, God could know only that Socrates is disposed to sacrifice himself for his principles and that if he drinks hemlock, he will die. God cannot know whether or not Socrates will drink the hemlock, since that depends on Socrates' material nature and on the actions of other humans.[91] In other words, God cannot know what Socrates or others will choose to do, because that choice is determined by their human will, which consists of both essential and material attributes, the latter of which God cannot know. Thus, God's knowledge of individual events is contingent.

This implies the second answer, that is, God cannot know future contingents. Gersonides accepts Aristotle's argument that God cannot know propositions such as "a sea battle will occur tomorrow." Assuming that humans actually choose whether to wage a battle or not, such a proposition has no present truth value, that is, it may or may not be true. However, after tomorrow, the proposition will either be true or false. If so, God's knowing it would mean a change in God's knowledge, which is impossible, for perfect knowledge never changes. One alternative to Aristotle's argument is to deny human choice. Avicenna does so and concludes that God can know the sea battle will occur because the occurrence is not truly contingent.[92] Gersonides rejects this alternative, presumably because it would imply God's knowledge of particulars and because it would deny any significance to human deliberation.[93] Gersonides goes beyond Aristotle and argues that God could not know

that a battle would occur, because the occurrence of the battle is not logically necessary, that is, circumstances, such as human choice, can prevent it. However, God does know the essences of the ingredients of battles. Thus, for example, God does know that if a nation which has F description joined a battle against a nation which has G description, the nation which has $\bar{F}$ description would be destroyed. (As discussed in Section 6, God does not know whether the nation which has F description is Israel or any other particular nation. That knowledge, that is, the instantiation of the particular, may be added by the human prophet, although the added knowledge is not certain). The essences of the two nations, of wars, and of other circumstances make this result "necessary," but only on the contingency that nation F joins the battle. God does not know if nation F will join the battle.[94] In other words, God knows the possible alternatives, but does not know which one will be actualized.

God's inability to know future contingent events is not considered by Gersonides to be a defect in God's knowledge. He expresses this in Milhamot Hashem:

> His lack of knowledge ... of which two possible alternatives qua possible will be actualized is not a deficiency in Him. This is because perfect knowledge consists in knowing the nature of the thing. Were the thing to be conceived to be other than it is, this would be error and not knowledge.[96]

There is no deficiency in that God knows all that it is logically possible to know.

Such knowledge by God is significant, despite its contingent nature, for individuals such as prophets can learn it and thus try to prevent Israel from entering an inevitably disasterous war. In other words, some of the essences which God knows can be comprehended by individuals, who use that information, despite its contingent nature, to avoid evil or attain greater good. Individual providence thus becomes dependent both on God's knowledge and on human choice.

6. Providence

To Gersonides, knowledge leads to providential care for humans in two senses: (1) what God knows, God must provide and (2) the more we know, the more we can take advantage of what God provides. In the first sense, God's knowledge leads to general providence, that is, God created the best possible world and God governs it in the best manner possible. In the second sense, human knowledge leads individuals to foreknowledge of the consequences of alternative courses of action, so that they can avoid such evil as does exist even in our best possible world. Thus, although God cannot know the particulars, God can care for us both generally and individually.

Gersonides' reasons for the existence of general providence were discussed in Section 4 concerning creation. As noted, on the level of essences, the world is perfectly ordered and all is designed for the benefit of humanity. God governs as "to make the greatest maximization of good possible.[97] The four elements

(their formal attributes) interact to create an equilibrium which maintains the necessary conditions for human survival, felicity, and immortality.

One aspect of Gersonides' theory of general providence not previously discussed is the indestructibility of the universe, a comforting concept. Individual things in our world become corrupted, that is, they experience substantive change (acquire a new form) or alteration (acquire a new quality), including death. This corruption results from the contrary qualities of the elements, which, as discussed above, also gives rise to generation and to equilibrium. The heavens do not possess such contrary qualities and are thus indestructable. The heavens only purpose is to bestow benefits on the world, and the heavens could not exist without purpose, that is, gratuitously. Thus, the world must continue to exist indefinitely.

Maimonides and Plato had argued that God must be able to will the world's destruction, or God's power is limited. Gersonides responds that it is no limit on God to be unable to do the logically impossible. God's only possible motives for willing destruction would be anger or jealousy, neither of which can be attributed to God, or dissatisfaction with the creation, which is impossible because a good and perfect God would have produced, and did produce, the best possible world in the first place.[98]

Beyond the indestructibility of the world, some other aspects of general providence apply to all members of the human

species. Humans, as all creatures, are provided with organs and instincts which enable them to survive and flourish. Humans have, in addition, both a practical intellect, which allows them to craft materials for their benefit, and an intellectual ability to plan to flee harm and pursue good, which ability is beyond the instinctual ability of other creatures.[99]

Nevertheless, despite all these general providential benefits, evil and injustice can and do occur, because of the nature of matter. Individual providence enables individuals to escape such evil. One does so by actualizing one's intellect sufficiently to gain foreknowledge.[100] What one learns are essences, that is, one knows, in advance, that if certain conditions prevail, evil (or good) will occur. One can then avoid (or seek) those conditions.[101]

How can one change one's fate? One can obtain knowledge, through a process discussed in Section 8, of the essences of some things. By knowing a thing's essence, one knows its capabilities. Thus, if one knows the essences of enough things, one can know what might possibly occur, given a situation involving those things. Such knowledge is similar to (although, as discussed below, it is less complete and less accurate than) God's knowledge of future contingents. As in example discussed in the previous section, one can know that if a ntaion which has F desctiption, that is, it has certain essential attributes, wages a war against a national with G description, nation F will be destroyed. Of course, this knowledge is not helpful unless one knows which nation fits F description and

which fits G. As discussed, God cannot know this, for the same reasons that God cannot know Socrates. In other words, God cannot instantiate the particular nation, but can only know a description which applies to a class of nations, which class may include one nation or it may include many.

A human being can instantiate the national. For example, determine that F describes Israel and G describes Babylonia. One does this by imagination and sense perception, neither of which are so reliable as one's knowledge of essences. Nevertheless, the knowledge that F is probably Israel and G is probably Babylonia can be combined with the knowledge of the outcome of a war between F and G to guide an Israelite to try to stop that war from taking place. Thus, one can obtain useful, albeit not totally reliable, foreknowledge. The same conditional knowledge, of essences as instantiated, can be obtained concerning potential storms, diseases or other impending misfortunes, and thus lead one to avoid that misfortune. Similarly one can obtain conditional knowledge of potential benefits and then bring about, by chosen actions, the conditions which bring one those benefits.[102] Both such avoidance of misfortune and such attainment of benefits are examples of what Gersonides means by individual, divine providence. It is "individual" in that they benefits only the individual who sufficiently actualizes his or her intellect, and it is "divine" in that one's knowledge of essences derives from the Active Intellect, which knows the forms which overflow from God (see Section 8).

How does Gersonides prove that such individual providence exists? He begins with the empirical evidence that precognition occurs, at least in dreams and visions, based on numerous historical reports, on current stories (such as that of a physician dreaming of a new cure) and on his own experience of solving metaphysical problems in his dreams.[103] He deduces that the experience of prescience requires that the future state of affairs must have a structure and order which may be known in the present. This deduction creates a problem. If events are predictable, they are no longer contingent, but predetermined, and if so, human deliberation and choice have no real significance. Gersonides solves this problem by positing that future events are generally ordered by the heavenly intelligences, but human beings can change their ordained fate by use of their reasoning power and will.[104] For example, one cannot predict that if Israel enters a war, it will lose.[105] What one can accurately predict is limited by what God can know, since the Active Intellect, the source of human foreknowledge, only knows what overflows from God.

Individual providence works together with general providence to give us the best possibel world. When we face potential harm from the operation of the heavenly ordained forces in the world, we can, by human choice and foreknowledge, avoid that harm. Moreover, when the choice of another human might harm us, the heavenly ordained order often inhibits them from carrying out that choice. Thus, divine providential care leads to the situation in our world in which "life at the human level ... is the

best possible result of the positive tension between these two factors (heavenly ordained general providence and human choice leading to individual providence) through which divine grace is rationally administered."[106] In other words, "the power of possibility (of human choice) is allowed in the order of perfection so that everything should finally come back to the unifying perfection which unites all into one,"[107] that is, the unity which overflows from God.

One apparent drawback of this two-tiered system of providence is that individual providence is more available to some people than to others, in proportion to the development of their intellect.[108] Samuelson uses the metaphor of radio transmissions to explain Gersonides' conception of individual providence. The Active Intellect acts as a powerful radio station, transmitting from a great distance. The senses function as smaller stations, creating static which interferes with the transmissions. The intellect acts as the radio receiver, and all of us are the listeners.[109] Those whose intellect most dominates the sensual attributes of their psyche hear the transmission most clearly. Thus prophets who receive the communications most clearly focus their intellectual attention (tune their receivers) on a particular area (station) and do so in fear of God, pursuing reason and Torah (which are identical in what they communicate) rather than pursuing sensory pleasures. Others properly pursue God's ways, but do not as fully develop their intellects, so that their reception is less clear and may come in riddles or parables.[110] For the wicked, or

when anyone acts wrongly, no reception is possible, because the wrong action is always the result of material, sensory pursuits. They are thus left to the fate of general providence in its interaction with matter.[111]

Not all precognition is the result of prophecy, that is, of one actualizing part of one's intellectual potential. Some precognition precognition occurs in dreams and visions, which are times when the sensory activities of one's psyche are lessened so that the imagination can directly receive information from the Active Intellect, without sensory interference. Unlike foreknowledge received by prophecy, what is learned in dreams and visions is not evaluated by the intellect. Thus, it is often unclear and may even mislead the dreamer or those who hear about the dream. In contrast, prophecy is always accurate, although its clarity varies. Precognition through dreams and visions does not require the exercise of one's will and thus is part of general providence, unlike prophecy, which is by definition the result of individual intellectual development.[112]

Prophetic foreknowledge can assist not only the individual receiver. It can help an entire people, as exemplified by the Israelites in the biblical narratives. When they followed God's ways, they were fully protected from evil. When they turned away, they were subject to the fates of the heavenly arrangement as flawed by matter. In those cases, warnings came. Sometimes, the warnings came in a limited amount of pain and suffering, which was designed to save the people from severe impending evil. In

other instances, it came from prophets who received knowledge from the Active Intellect and transmitted it to the people.[113] Of course, these warnings are only effective if the people listen.[114]

The prophecy which Gersonides describes is a human perfection. Its immediate cause is a change by a human. God is not the direct cause of the experience of prophecy. This raises a question as to the authority of the Torah. Gersonides assumes, implicitly, that Moses wrote the Torah. Gersonides assumes, explicitly, that the teachings of the Torah are true, and are identical with what one learns by scientific (philosophic) investigation. There is no distinction between "science, the theoretical explanation of the world, and the Torah, the experience of the Jewish people. Both reveal at bottom the same truth through a different language."[115] All conflicts are merely apparent and arise "either from a misinterpretation of Torah or a misuse of Philosophic Thought."[116]

If so, then Gersonides's philosophical conclusion that prophecy is a human perfection must apply to Moses and Torah and thus another Moses could theoretically arise, with a new "Torah." Gersonides argues that not only might another Moses arise, one will, and that new prophet will be the Messiah. Moreover, another Moses could arise before the Messiah, although the innate and developed intellectual qualities which Gersonides attributes to Moses would be difficult to duplicate. However, the truths of Torah would remain, for a prophet as capable as Moses would be identical in essence with Moses. That prophets new "Torah"

would vary from that of Moses only in form, that is, it would merely reflect different applications of the eternal truths from the Active Intellect (see Section 8).[117] Thus, the message of science and Torah, of reason and revelation, would remain identical.

The prophecy which Gersonides describes follows Gersonides' view of what Maimonides proposed, with two significant exceptions. First, according to Gersoniees, Maimonides concludes that even if one develops all the prerequisites for receiving prophecy, God can, by will, withhold it. To Gersonides, God cannot know when a particular individual becomes qualified and thus cannot withhold knowledge.[118] Rather, prophecy depends on human perfection. What God provides, the knowledge transmitted through the Active Intellect, is always available to anyone who properly develops his or her potential.[119] Secondly, Gersonides claims that Maimonides did not sufficiently describe what information is conveyed, to whom, and by what means.[120] How Gersonides describes those items is discussed in Section 8.

Gersonides anticipates some doubts about his concepts of prophetic foreknowledge. Two of those doubts concern whether such foreknowledge is a help to righteous individuals only or whether it assists all people. One concern is that it would seem that wicked people can also receive individual providence, either by their own intellectual development or by learning what the righteous prophets have comprehended. Gersonides responds that the wicked could not gain such foreknowledge by themselves,

because in their wrongful actions, material concerns distract their intellect from focusing on understanding the essences of things. Moreover, while the wicked may learn foreknowledge from the righteous, they will not benefit as much, because they will not accept the information as absolutely true. An example is the many Israelites who doubted prophetic warnings. Also, some benefit to the wicked through others is no more objectionable than the wicked benefitting by general providence, because "God could not fail to cause as much good as possible to emanate to the creatures."[121] The second doubt is that those who do not fully develop their intellects, as righteous people should, may gain foreknowledge in dreams and visions. Gersonides responds, as he did concerning the wicked, that the information received will not be as accurate as that which the righteous obtain and that what is received is merely part of the general benefits ordained by the heavens.[122] Thus, reliable foreknowledge is available only if one lives fully righteously, which includes developing one's intellect.

Beyond precognition, the righteous may also benefit from "miracles" which occur to help them. While a detached analysis of Gersonides' conception of miracles would go far beyond the scope of theodicy, a few general aspects are significant. Miracles are not acts of God's will. They cannot be a specific response by God to a specific situation in our world, since that would require either new desires or new knowledge in God. Alternatively, miracles cannot be predefined and ordered at creation, because that would imply either that no events are contingent or that the miracle's special

ends are accidental. The latter requires that God (through the Active Intellect) did a purposeless act, which is impossible. Moreover, miracles have worked too well in history to be accidental. Miracles are not interruptions by God of the course of nature, but are part of what Julius Guttmann called a "natural law of miracles."[123] What triggers a miracle is the intellectual achievement of an individual prophet who is "granted" the unusual event by the Active Intellect. The events are not chance, for all occur in the presence of a prophet, most are predicted, and all have a providential significance in guiding people to true belief and practice.[124] Miracles, in effect, are a subset of prophecy.

Gersonides describes in great detail the process by which human beings conceive of the essences. This description is discussed in Section 8, since humans gain foreknowledge by essentially the same process as they gain any knowledge. In general, one receives sense perceptions of our world and abstracts the essential from the material. One then knows essences, which are entities, and one's accumulated knowledge of essences is termed one's "acquired intellect". The acquired intellect "knows" the essences on two levels. One "apprehends" them, that is, comprehends their definitions, and one also "verifies" them, that is, makes judgments about them, as they are connected to material substances. Verification allows one to prognosticate future events, at least on a contingent basis, in our material world. The judgments help us here, as individual providence, but are not everlasting, because they depend on material substances, which are

by nature corruptible. In contrast, our apprehensions, our knowledge of definitions or essences of things, are distinct from all material substance and thus everlasting.[125] It is on the level of apprehension that individuals achieve immortality and also find true felicity in our world.

7. Human Happiness and Immortality

Despite general and individual providence, Gersonides acknowledges that nevertheless, misfortune befalls the righteous and innocent in the world, even if the truly righteous should theoretically be able to escape evil by intellectual development. In consolation for this suffering, Gersonides argues that the evils which befall the righteous, although real and painful, are not "proper human evils", because they are material. If these evils, such as those from which Job suffered, were "proper human evils," then "the recipient ... should prefer death to life," a preference which Job at one time expressed. Gersonides acknowledges that "death ... is merely preferable to a life which is not in accordance wit human dignity." However, every person can obtain "true human good," that is, good for our essence, or soul, in other words, actualization of our intellectual capacity to conceive of the essences. The possibility of attaining of such good justifies living. "Even when (such good) comes together with evils which are not truly human," that is, evils which affect only our material aspects, it remains, "in reality ... a good in itself." Gersonides

concludes that even for Job, "it is better to live, though suffering (material evils), and try to attain (true human good), than die.[126]

Similarly, the unjust benefits which flow to the wicked are not true rewards, since true reward is the well-being of the soul, not the consumption of sweet foods and other sensory objects. With respect to the well-being of the soul, good and evil "proceed without exception in accordance with order and justice."[127] Just reward and punishment can thus be found on the immaterial level, in which an individual can achieve both immortality and true happiness in this world.

An individual becomes immortal to the extent that he or she develops his or her intellect in order to properly conceive the essences which the Active Intellect knows. The process of such proper conception is described in Section 8. In sum, one abstracts the essence from a material thing. Initially, one receives sense impressions of a thing. One's intellect orders these impressions so that one comprehends the thing's "hylic form," that is, its form as embodied in a material substrate. Since one comprehends it as hylic, one's knowledge of it will pass away, since all things rooted in matter pass away. However, one's intellect can further abstract the form so that one comprehends it as separate from its material embodiment.[128] Forms do not pass away. When a substance, that is, an embodied form, passes away, that is, becomes another substance, one form is replaced by another. Both the replacing and the replaced form exist separately from the material substrate, except when they are embodied.[129]

Thus one comprehends an eternal object, a form, that is, one conceives of the definition of the thing, which is its essence. The effect of comprehending an essence is the actualization of one's potential intellect, which, as to that essence, becomes part of one's "acquired intellect, which constitutes the immortality and eternity of the soul, because the universals (essences) are eternal."[130] As mentioned, only the righteous can attain "eternal happiness, that is wisdom and understanding, which is acquired by means of the fear of the Lord and by turning away from inequity."[131] Without such fear and righteous action, one cannot properly focus one's intellect to apprehend the essences, for one's intellect will be distracted towards the pursuit of material pleasures. The same intellectual power which enables one to attain immortality can also distance one from proper apprehension. The act of apprehending arouses a "power of desire", which is sometimes called the "evil inclination."[132] If left undirected in our material world, the power will lead to the pursuit of bodily pleasures. This is not one's true desire, which is "to fulfill (the soul's) function of true conception." This true desire results from one's perception of the order of lower existent things and one's "longing to perceive them truly in their oneness."[133]

Gersonides distinguishes immortality to the extent that one attains an acquired intellect from immortality by conjunction or complete union with the Active Intellect, even though that is the cause of our perception of essences. The consequence of this distinction is that immortality is individual.[134] Gersonides

criticizes Averroes, who argued that all humans exhibit the same intellect and when one dies, all that remains is the Active Intellect. To Gersonides, this implies that an individual's achievements would make no difference in his or her attainment of immortality. If so, then no individual would have any incentive for intellectual pursuits.[135] Averroes' argument is refuted, because it assumes that all individuals have the same intellect. If that were true, they would achieve the same knowledge when exposed to the same sense data. Yet we often find, empirically, that two individuals attain different levels of knowledge even when exposed to the same sense data. Thus, their intellect, or capacity to know, must differ.[136]

The rejection of conjunction with the Active Intellect is a rejection of mysticism. To Gersonides, since one cannot wholly identify with the Active Intellect, one should devote oneself to obtain only what is possible, that is, "knowledge" of the world in which one lives. As discussed below, one can only "know" essences, so that knowledge of our world means knowledge of its essences. However, the human intellect is a "material intellect" and cannot know essences in the same way that the Active Intellect knows them. The human intellect is only a potential knower, which "acquires knowledge successively, cumulatively, and intermittently."[137] The Active Intellect is not so limited, for it always possesses knowledge. In addition, the human intellect knows the formal structure of things only by abstracting it from sense data. The Active Intellect's knowledge enables this abstraction, but the object

which humans can know is not the Active Intellect, merely the structure of nature. The Active Intellect knows this structure as fully abstracted from its particular, material embodiment. Moreover, the human intellect can only know fragments of the formal structure of our world, which the Active Intellect comprehends as a whole. Our knowledge is so limited that we cannot even know some of what is important to us. Feldman gives the modern example that we cannot know all the relevant data about our eco-system and thus we might kill an insect because we would not know how it benefits us.[138]

Nevertheless, even though conjunction is impossible, the human intellect can sufficiently comprehend essences as to become, in part, an acquired intellect, which continues to exist after one's death. One needs a transcendent entity, the Active Intellect, in order to achieve such comprehension, but the achievement "does not terminate in the obliteration of the self in a transcendent being."[139] In effect, the inability to conjoin leads to the preservation of individual immortality, which gives continuing significance to an individual's intellectual achievements in our world.

The same knowledge (without mystical escape into a transcendent realm) which leads to immortality also leads to true happiness in this world. Like Plato, Gersonides finds ultimate happiness in the pursuit and attainment of human wisdom.[140] Even if one cannot unite with the Active Intellect, one can still attain "'genuine perfection' (which) lies in the comprehension of existence

and in the better understanding of the unity of the intellegibles." The result is a "unique delight which the soul experiences during comprehension."[141] The more one comprehends, the more delight. "The degree of human felicity is related to the extent that one's acquired intellect approximates the conception of the Active Intellect."[142]

While moral deeds are not insignificant, they are not as important as comprehension, because actions "only affect the body and the lower faculties of the soul associated with it."[143] How one understands the world is the basis for perfection in the realm of deeds. Social perfection depends on the fear of God. Those who understand best will fear God as prerequisite to comprehending the essences. Others will fear material punishment from God, which fear, even if not grounded in reality, leads them to abstain from wrong. Understanding also leads to individual material perfection, since proper comprehension leads to foreknowledge which enables one to escape evil and attain greater good.[144] Nevertheless, all these material benefits are mere by-products. The true end of understanding is felicity in this world and immortality.

A prime example of how understanding can lead to moral actions is how we can be lead to obey God's commandments. What ultimately persuades us to follow God's ways is not merely the recitation of the commandments in the Torah, but the perfection of the divine nomos. Thus, even without studying Torah, if we studied merely the existent things in our world, that study would lead us to conceive of a creator who is to be feared and served. It is that conception which will then lead us to fear and serve

God, including obedience of the commandments.[145] The study of Torah can also lead us to the same obedience. The Torah tells us stories, which serve as positive and negative examples of how to live. These models arouse us to perfect our virtues and dispositions, which is vital to our bodily well-being. To attain that perfection, we must study existent things in our world, that is, we need to attain knowledge of essences, which as discussed above, can lead us to material benefits and to the well-being of our soul. Thus, study of Torah will lead us to the study of existent things, which will lead us to fear and serve God, including obedience of the commandments.[146] As discussed below, what we discover by a properly reasoned inquiry into our world is always consistent with what we discover by a proper interpretation of Torah.

Since human understanding, that is, knowledge, is fundamental to attaining the material benefits made possible by individual providence and the spiritual benefits of felicity in this world and individual immortality, it may be helpful to discuss in detail the process by which humans obtain knowledge and the nature ane extent of what they can know. In addition, Gersonides' conception of the way we "know" and how much we know are fundamental to what Gersonides himself can know, that is, those conceptions are the epistemological basis for all of Gersonides' theodicy.

8. How and What Humans Know

A human being, as any thing in our world, consists of "matter" and "form". The form determines one's essence, that is,

one's nature, while matter individualizes each particular person. The form of any living thing is termed the "soul", that is, the thing's "capacity through which it originates different operations." For each operation, such as nutrition, motion or perception, there is a "power" or "faculty" (כוח) to perform it. What sets humans apart from other organisms is the power to know intelligible form, which power is termed "intellect" (שכל).[147] The intellect is capacity to operate the internal senses, such as memory estimation, common sense, and various types of imagination. Internal senses function by imposing an order on the unordered impressions of the external senses, which are taste, touch, smell, hearing and vision.[148] The external senses perceive essences as embodied in matter. As such, the things perceived are multiple, diverse, particular and not objectively knowable, as discussed below. The senses present such perceptions[149] to the "material intellect", which is our capacity or potential to conceive the universal forms of material things. It constructs images of the disordered sense perceptions, and these images are actualized in intelligible form by the "Active Intellect", through a process discussed below. The actualized images are termed "concepts", or "universals". The universals are not what we know, but the tools by which we know. What we know, that is, the objects of our knowledge, are "essences". Gersonides sometimes describes knowledge of essences as knowledge of particulars but only in a universal way, that is, only so far as they are intelligibly ordered. The same type of knowledge is also described as human knowledge of the essences known by Active Intellect, but humans do not know them directly, that is, not in

a primary sense. In a primary sense, an essence is the model by which things in our world are created, ordered, and governed. All the essences are "identical" with the Active Intellect in that they are the objects which the Active Intellect, a subject, knows. In this primary sense, an essence is an existing entity, with complete reality. As discussed above, humans cannot know essences in the complete, integrated sense in which the Active Intellect knows them. Essences also exist in a secondary sense, either as universals or as attributes which define a class of things, such as genus or species. As a universal, an essence exists only in the mind, and thus is merely a tool of knowledge, not an object of knowledge. As it defines a class, an essence exists materially, that is, as an aspect of a particular. That aspect is what humans know.[150] The material cannot be "known" at all, since to know, for Gersonides, means to conceptualize or to define, and one may do so only to objects with some order. A human has only a sense acquaintance with the material attributes of a thing, which are the disorderly aspects through which one's intellect must sift to abstract the essence.[151]

To Gersonides, these distinctions are not merely semantic. First of all, the notion of essence, which exist separately from the knower is fundamental to Gersonides' theodicy, particularly as it relates to the process of creation, God's knowledge, individual providence, true happiness, and individual immortality. In addition, the separate existence of essences makes possible objective human knowledge. The reason one can know only essence and not

universals is that essences are entities which exist separately from the knower and thus may be "objectively" known, that is, the knower may make objective statements about them. If this were not possible, Gersonides could make no statements about theodicy on any other philosophical topic which would be understood by others as Gersonides intended them. To Gersonides, if a term has meaning, it refers to some object, which object is the "objective" meaning of the term. If the object is a material, physical thing, the reference is objectively understood. A problem arises with respect to non-existent objects, such as mathematical or religious concepts. If they are merely concepts (universals), they exist only in the mind and cannot be objectively communicated. Gersonides solves this problem by positing that non-existent objects exist not only as univerals but as essences.[152] As mentioned, essences can be known by humans only in a secondary sense, but at least they can be known. Similarly, one can know general terms such as "mortal" or "combustible" because they are essences, not merely universals, and are thus "external to the mind of the speaker."[153] Essences also make possible real definitions, that is, those which tell the listener something new. An example is: "humans are rational animals" (a is b). This contrasts to nominal definitions, which give no new knowledge, such as all humans are homo sapiens" (a is a). The latter is a tautology, while the former communicates the essence of the defined thing,[154] that is, its capacity, its purpose, and its dispositions.[155]

In the process of knowing essences, a key step is the ordering of one's sense images into concepts, a step which Gersonides describes as the actualization of the potential of the material intellect by the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect, as all the intelligences which overflow from God, is a simple form, which continuously performs the single act of knowing itself. The sublunar consequences of this single act are plural. Samuelson explains this by an analogy to the effect of a train passing through a field. The train performs the single act of passing through the field, yet the consequences of that single act will be multiple, both as to direct and indirect consequences. As examples of relatively direct consequences of the train's movement, a cow may be killed, a child may be scared by the train's noise, or a person may suffer hearing loss from the noise. As an example of an indirect consequence, a horse might be scared by the noise from mating with another horse, thus preventing the conception of a prize race horse which would have affected the lives of many people.

The prime consequences of the Active Intellect's single act are the giving of order, purpose, and intelligibility to the material world and the actualization of human knowledge. In our material world, the Active Intellect's single essence becomes manifest as multiple essences, disunified by the interaction with matter. Those embodied essences are the objects of human knowledge.[156] Gersonides uses an analogy to the construction of a house. All the building processes (essences), that is, the

electricity, plumbing, and carpentry, unite in the fundamental work of construction. The house is known as a unity only by the architect (Active Intellect). The workers (humans) cannot fully conceive of the entire house, but they can, by studying the building processes, determine that some parts of the processes (the universal parts) are vital to an overall purpose, while other parts of those processes are irrelevant, that is, accidental. The workers can only make such a determination, because the essential aspects of the processes exist, in the mind of the architect and as expressed in the plans (models, or "essences"). Thus, objective knowledge is possible.[157]

Nevertheless, although objective, human knowledge is "inherently defective". We comprehend only by abstracting the universal from our sensual perceptions. In contrast, God and the Active Intellect perceive the universal directly, without the intermediary of the senses.[158] As discussed above, our senses interfere with our perception of true reality, that is, of the forms. In Samuelson's radio transmission analogy, the senses function like static which prevents clear reception of the forms transmitted by the Active Intellect.[159] Beyond the static, our perspective is liomited. We are like the viewers of a completed building, who can know it from various perspectives, but whose knowledge is necessarily less than that of the architect who conceived the model, of which the building is an effect.[160] Since it is an effect of a purposeful agent, there is a final cause, that

is, an agent who intended the building to be as it is. We infer such a final cause from the nature of the effect.[161]

In other words, we know the effect, whereas God knows the cause. God knows the original, while we have only the copies, which vary in degree of accuracy. Thus, the degree of truth in our knowledge varies.[162] God's knowledge and our knowledge are associated by "prior and posterior", in that God's comes from God's own essence, while ours is an effect of God's knowledge.[163] What we know is uncertain, ambiguous, but the ambiguity does not mean absolute equivocation, only pros hen equivocation,[164] that is, prior and posterior. Our knowledge differs from God's (and from that of the Active Intellect) in that: (1) ours is multiple, diverse, and particular, while God's is single, integrated, and universal; and (2) the essences which we can know can be expressed by a finite number of universal conditional propositions while the essences which God knows could not be expressed except by an infinite number of such propositions.[165] As discussed above, essences are unlike particulars in that essences can be expressed as conditional propositions, such as, "If Israel goes to war with Babylon, Israel will be destroyed." The essences tell us the dispositions and potentials of Israel, Babylon, and war, but whether or not the war occurs depends on material (unknowable) factors and on (unpredictable) human choice.[166] God's knowledge is "limited" to essences, but could only be expressed by an infinite listing and integrating of all possible universal conditional propositions. Such expression is necessarily impossible for humans.[167]

As mentioned at the end of the previous section, how we know and what we can know are significant not only as underlying Gersonides' concepts of individual providence, human felicity, and human immortality, but also underlies Gersonides' theodicy, since it limits the certainty of his knowledge about God, the world, and ourselves. Most crucially, the pros hen equivocal nature of our knowledge also applies to our knowledge of attributes of God. Two vital consequences follow: (1) we are capable of knowing divine attributes, at least to some degree; and (2) our knowledge of such attributes is limited. The former distinguishes the theodicy of Gersonides from the theodicy of those who contend that our knowledge of God is always "absolutely equivocal". The latter provides a caution to those who might abuse human knowledge by applying it in judgment of God.

Gersonides explicitly rejects what he understands to be Maimonides' theory that our knowledge of God is "absolutely equivocal", at least as regards "positive attributes" of God. According to Gersonides, Maimonides argues that since we have experience only with created things, all that we can find intelligible must refer to the genus of "created thing". God is not created and thus we can refer to nothing in our experience which would be an intelligible reference to God. Similarly, we can know only contingent existents, that is, things which came to be by an external cause. God is a necessary being, the only such being, and thus is not part of any genus to which we can refer for knowledge.[168]

Some of the arguments of Gersonides in response to Maimonides clarify Gersonides' view. First, God's knowledge is identical to God's will. If so, God created, by will, prior and posterior. Second, we attribute knowledge to God because we have knowledge. Possession of knowledge is a perfection in man, and God cannot be devoid of anything which is a perfection in us. Thus, we know that God knows.[169] Most significantly, Gersonides argues that if what we predicate of God is absolutely equivocal with what we predicate of ourselves, then we can affirm anything of God, including corporeality and ignorance, or we can affirm its opposite, since the predicates have no meaning. Maimonides anticipates this response and posits that we cannot apply to God a predicate which denotes a deficiency, such as a corporeality or ignorance. Gersonides counters that one cannot tell what predicate is a deficiency until it is applied to a subject.[170] If two predicates are absolutely unrelated, such as good and blue, then to say that God is blue while humans are good tells nothing about God's goodness. For any predicate, it and its apparent contrary (such as man is moving while God is motionless) constitute contraries only if the predicate term (motion) has the same meaning in both instances.[171]

To Gersonides, our knowledge of all subjects, including God, has meaning, but, as discussed, it has a limited degree of accuracy, and should not be applied too hastily to condemn God for the evil in our world. Thus, Job learns from God's speech that humans cannot judge God's actions or power, because no human

can conceive of them and a judge "must have complete knowledge of things before he judges."[172] Similarly, in making assertions about the "body which does not preserve its shape," Gersonides admits that it is "not the proper object of true conceptual knowledge, (however) it is the proper object of cautious assertions which make inferences about it based upon the state of affairs of matter in the created world."[173] The approach of "cautious assertions" underlies all of Gersonides' arguments in this theodicy.

Nevertheless, despite the limits on our knowledge, the fundamental conceptions of a workable theodicy are to some extent conceivable, and not absolutely equivocal, in part because general providence makes possible "the most perfect possible human conception of existence." We can know some divine attributes, even if our knowledge is only pros hen equivocal. We can know about the material receptacle, if only by inference. We can also know about of the essential attributes of the supralunar heavenly realm and of our world and ourselves, because all three are governed by an order which overflows from God. That knowledge can potentially lead us toward the blissful state in which we conceive "of the unity and perfection of this divinely governed world."[174]

In sum, Gersonides asserts that we can know enough about the world, ourselves, and God to explain the suffering of the innocent without deeming it a mystery. God is not responsible for such suffering. Rather, God is good and God's goodness overflows to us

through the heavenly intelligences. That goodness is reflected in overall good order of our world, including the abilities possessed by all creatures in it to live happy lives. The suffering of the innocent, and all disorder and evil in our world, results from the material receptacle which was the substrate within which creation occurred. Since all existent things in our world have material properties, all are somewhat disordered. One effect is suffering caused by natural disasters, such as storms or earthquakes. Another effect is suffering caused by human choice, which is inevitable since human beings are partly material, that is, disordered. However, divine providence endows individuals with a means of avoiding such suffering by sufficiently actualizing one's intellect in order to obtain foreknowledge of impending harm. The intellectual actualization also leads us to a truly happy life in this world and immortal existence beyond this world. Thus, despite the real suffering of innocent, God is good, God cares for us as much as is logically possible, and we have the ability to live happily in this world and beyond.

9. Evaluation

That part of the evaluation concerning what Gersonides deems to be self-evident, both with respect to his assumptions and as to the satisfactory nature of his conclusions, will be deferred until Chapter Four. This section will discuss: (1) Gersonides' internal consistency; (2) the consequences of distinguishing

"material evil" from "true evil"; (3) the viability of the distinction between essence and accident, order and chaos, good and evil; and (4) the relation between Gersonides' epistemology and his conclusions.

Gersonides has been widely criticized by later Jewish thinkers for his controversial views, particularly concerning the "limited" role of God in our world.[175] "Shem Tob's pun on the title of (Gersonides') book, Wars Against the Lord (מלחמות ה'), became better known than the book itself."[176] Nevertheless, Gersonides "is nothing if not internally consistent."[177] Kellner claims that Gersonides' approach is inconsistent with classical rabbinic thought,[178] which claim goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Internally, Gersonides consistently maintains that God is perfect, single, and unchanging, overflowing with forms which cause all the good and order in our world, while evil and disorder arise solely from the existence of the material receptacle. These assertions underlie all of Gersonides' claims concerning creation, divine knowledge, divine providence, prophecy, miracles, human happiness, and immortality, and all of his arguments form an integrated, coherent whole.[179] Gersonides pursues his arguments to their ultimate conclusions, even if the result conflicts with prevailing Jewish doctrine. "The Law (Torah) cannot prevent us from considering to be true that which our reason urges us to believe."[180] As discussed above, properly applied reasons and properly interpreted Torah eventually lead to identical conclusions.

Two well known critics of Gersonides, Isaac Arama and Isaac Abravanel, find Gersonides inconsistent with himself and with Torah in his account of miracles. Their concern is that Gersonides denies that miracles are direct effects of God's will, a concern which could apply to all of Gersonides' theodicy,. including his explanaiton of creation, divine knowledge, and providence. They argue that if Gersonides can accept God's miraculous action at creation and at Sinai, then other miracles should be so accepted. The stakes involved in their argument were not merely God's direct involvement with miracles, but whether God willfully created the world. Arama and Abravanel believed that miracles proved that God could willfully interrupt the course of nature, just as God did at creation. Willful creation is fundamental to finding purpose, order, and law in our world. These attacks on Gersonides' consistency are not persuasive, however, since Gersonides does not believe that creation or the revelation at Sinai or any miracles were direct effects of God's will, for that would imply a change in God's will. Moreover, Gersonides believed that he had proved willful creation without referring to miracles.[181] Gersonides' consistency remains intact.

More persuasive criticisms focus on issues stemming from Gersonides' argument that the evil which the innocent and righteous suffer in this world is merely material evil and not true human evil. This sounds similar to Bildad, one of Job's friends, who claimed that what we perceive as evil suffered by the righteous is not really evil. Gersonides found Bildad's claim deficient in that

it denied our experience, which is "the foundation of knowledge," by claiming good and evil are mysteries to humans. If they are a mystery, then we have "no criteria for testing" our knowledge of order and justice.[182] Gersonides does not appeal to mystery. Rather, he distinguishes material evil from true evil because the former is material and the latter essential or spiritual. If this distinction is valid, then, unlike Bildad, Gersonides leaves criteria for our knowledge. The validity of the distinction is discussed below.

Even if not mysterious, the notion that the suffering of the innocent is purely material might not bring much comfort to the parents of the children who died in the Holocaust or to the parents of a child who died at a young age, after years of suffering from a debilitating disease. Gersonides does not deny that such suffering is real, and very painful, but his argument that such suffering is of a lesser quality than spiritual suffering might seem more initiating to the sufferer than comforting. Moreover, it is difficult to see how Gersonides' notion of individual providence could help such children escape their suffering, because they had little time to develop the prerequisite intellect to attain foreknowledge of impending evil, particularly in the case of a fatal genetic disease, in which no foreknowledge would have helped the child. Most importantly, these children have no opportunity to obtain the spiritual happiness and immortality which, for Gersonides, depends on intellectual development.

Gersonides might counter that the medical knowledge which could have cured or prevented the disease could have been developed by the child's parents or other adults. That counter would also aply to the child during the Holocaust, whose parents could have developed enough foreknowledge to escape. In both cases, the fault is human, not divine. However, if the human failings are widespread and grotesque, as they appear to be in our century, the qustion of divine responsibility for creating such humans arises.

Gersonides argues that the overall nature of humans is not grotesque, especially since human behavior is moderated by the general providential order. Gersonides does not have a naive faith in human goodness. While he lived in a time and place in which he and other Jews were treated with relative tolerance,[183] he complained bitterly of the suffering of the Jews, condemning "the upheavals of the times which deter all meditation."[184] The suffering of his people and the suffering of individuals whom he saw as a physician apparently disturbed Gersonides deeply, as indicated by the fact that his first work was a Commentary on Job[185] and by his consistent refusal to deny the reality of evil in our world, even if that refusal leads to unorthodox conclusions. Still, within the context of Gersonides' philosophy, the amount of sufferings caused by humans to each other is not surprising. Gersonides notes that the material diversity in our composition leads to such a wide diversity in people that one would expect a Hobbesian world in which people are "constantly engaged in strife and quarrels so that they would kill one another."[186]

To Gersonides' surprise, even though the wicked "are numerous and try with all their strength (and ingenuity) to do evil to others ... the misfortunes which befall men through them are found to be few."[187] This is an empirical premise for finding a general providential order in the world. The premise is debatable, for one can reasonably find, in Gersonides' world or in today's, that misfortunes caused by humans to innocent others are far from "few".

Another premise underlying the generally good nature of our world is that escape from evil is possible by foreknowledge, which, as discussed above, is based on the empirical assumption that precognition actually occurs. Beyond the debatability of that empirical assumption, Gersonides' concept of individual providence seems to aid more the intellectually well-endowed than those with lesser innate talents. Precognition (as well as immortality) requires conprehending essences, an objective standard which implies and unfairness to those who have, subjectively, less ability to comprehend, no matter how they develop their intellect. Gersonides mitigates this, somewhat, since he argues that wicked actions and intentions prevent accurate comprehension.[188] Still, those who are righteous but intellectually limited seem to be unfairly left to the fates by a providential system deriving from a God who is purportedly all good and all wise.

In many theodicies, including most Christian schemes, such individuals can be helped by direct intervention into our

world by God. Gersonides allows for no such intervention. God's will cannot change, nor can the essential laws which govern our world, since they are but results of God's constant will. Also, God could not directly help such individuals since God cannot distinguish such individuals. This implies that God does not "hear" our petitionary prayers,[189] as one human might hear another's plea for help. God cares for everyone, but the degree of care depends not only on goodness and intellectual development, but on intellectual ability.

Gersonides sets such limits on God's providence, in order to reconcile, in a consistent manner, God's perfect goodnes with the reality of our experience of evil. This reconciliation depends on the distinction between form and matter, which may also be expressed as a distinction between spirit and body. Two questions arise, one concerning the validity of the distinction and the second concerning whether the distinction implies more than one diety. The latter question was answered negatively, as explained in the discussion of creation. The former needs to be addressed.

The distinction between form and matter is internally effective in achieving its purpose of reconciling God's perfect goodness and our experience of evil. The distinction reconciles innumerable problems, as discussed, concerning the process of creation, divine knowledge, providence, and human knowledge. The difficulty is the lack of criteria by which to distinguish what is essential, good and ordered from what is accidental, evil, and

disordered. Without a criteria, one cannot objectively judge our experience, and Gersonides' philosophy requires that we be able to judge objectively, at least somewhat objectively. The distinction between form and matter is persuasive to the extent that it leads to a coherent explanation of our world, but the distinction seems to arise more from its desirable consequences than from an inherent, intelligible difference. The righteous sufferer, such as Job, the sufferer's friends, who also suffer, and even an outside observer would be unable to describe what about the suffering is essential and what is material. Gersonides might respond that wherever one finds order and purpose, one finds essence. That sounds circular and tautological.

The problem of definition by desired consequences is most apparent with respect to the nature of the "body which does not preserve its shape," the material receptacle which is the ultimate source of disorder and evil in our world. Gersonides admits that this "body" cannot be "known" in that it has no form. We can only make "cautious inferences" about its nature.[190] It is just as possible, logically, that we can make no inferences about the body.

Gersonides asserts that we can know about the "body" by deducing its attributes from our empirical knowledge of our world as it is and from our logically induced understanding of God's perfect nature. One might question this approach by arguing that one cannot make necessarily valid inferences from the world's present actuality to its condition before it came to be.[191] Such

inferences require retrojecting casuality into the conditions prior to creation. In creating the world, God could have "created" causality. Gersonides might counter that the same inferences would apply to "the body" both before and after creation, because "the body" did not come to be. Yet even if the body did not change at creation, the laws of causality might have. Gersonides asserts that "the laws of logic are universal and eternal." However, this assertion is not necessarily true and Gersonides gives no argumentation for it.

Gersonides' description of the "body" and about creation might be persuasive if human knowledge were objectively certain. As Gersonides admits, it is not. We only know by pros hen equivocation. If so, the inferences which rely on our knowledge should be only probable, not demonstrable. In some instances, Gersonides concedes these limits on our inferences. For example, in his Commentary on Job, Gersonides interprets God's speech to Job as a lesson that neither Job, nor any human being, can judge God's actions, since Job cannot conceive of them as a whole. A fair judge must "have complete knowledge of the things he judges."[192] However, assuming that humans need an explanation of why evil exists in order to remain emotionally stable, they must make judgments, even on the basis of incomplete knowledge.

While Gersonides maintains that his inferences about the receptacle are objectively valid, he may, at least unconsciously make his judgments without complete knowledge. He concedes that we can make "cautious inferences" about the material receptacle.

We can make no objectively true assertions about it, for it has no form. Staub suggests that Gersonides could assert that although we cannot "conceive" of the body which does not preserve its shape, we can form a view about it by applying other faculties of our soul, such as perception (of sensual experience), imagination, and memory. The result would not be "true knowledge," but could provide one with reasonable certainty that one's view is more probable than others.[193] On the level of reasonable certainty, Gersonides' notion of a receptacble has much persuasive merit today. It successfully reconciles the need to explain, coherently and consistently, the evil and injustice we see in our world with the desire to believe in a God who is as wise, as good, and as caring as is logically possible. To that extent, Gersonides' theodicy is most appealing.

CHAPTER TWO - FOOTNOTES

[1] Abraham H. Lassen, The Commentary of Levi ben Gersom (Gersonides) on the Book of Job (New York, N.Y.: Bloch Publishing, 1946), pp. 209, 19; Leon D. Stitskin "Ralbag's Introduction to the Book of Job," A Treasury of "Tradition" edited by Norman Lamm and Walter J. Wurzouryer (New York, N.Y.: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1967) p. 371.

[2] Nima H. Adlerblum, A Study of Gersonides in His Proper Perspective (New York, N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1926), p. 36. Adlerblum speculates that Gersonides avoided this question either because he felt Maimonides had exhausted the subject or because he feared the reprecussions of even raising this question, since his family already was viewed with suspicion for their strong support of scientific research. Adlerblum's latter reason might be questioned, since Gersonides otherwise showed no fear of taking extremely controversial positions on basic religious questions.

[3] Lassen, Job, p. 82-3; J. David Bleich, Providence in the Philosophy of Gersonides (New York, N.Y.: Yeshiva University Press, 1973), p. 35.

[4] Lassen, Job, p. 85.

[5] Lassen, Job, p. 3.

[6] Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 105-6, n.26.

[7] Jacob J. Staub, The Creation of the World According to Gersonides (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), p. 57.

[8] Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 18.

[9] Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 19-20.

[10] Bleich, Providence, p. 40.

[11] Seymour Feldman, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect," AJS Review, 3 (1978), p. 121; Bleich, Providence, p. 42.

12 Lassen, Job, p. 7-8; p. 200; Bleich, Providence, pp. 59-61, 78-81; Menachem Marc Kellner, "Gersonides, Providence, and the Rabbonic Tradition," Journal of American Academy of Religion, Vol. 42, 1914, p. 675-6 n.7.

13 Bleich, Providence, p. 40; Lassen, Job, p. xvi.

14 Lassen, Job, p. xviii, 211; Bleich, Providence, pp. 41, 78.

15 Bleich, Providence, p. 41.

16 Lassen, Job, pp. 232-233.

17 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 6.

18 See Section 5 as to why Gersonides rejects Avicenna's solution to the problem of future contingents.

19 Staub, Creation, p. 59.

20 Staub, Creation, p. 113.

21 Seymour Feldman "Platonic Themes in Gersonides' Cosmology," Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume, Vol. 1, edited by Saul Lieberman (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1974) p. 387.

22 Staub, Creation, p. 59.

23 Staub, Creation, p. 112.

24 Lassen, Job, p. 104.

25 Bleich, Providence, p. 62.

26 Lassen, Job, p. 252.

27 Lassen, Job, p. 210.

28 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 120-121.

29 Staub, Creation, p. 109.

30 Bleich, Providence, pp. 42, 76-77.

31 Kellner, "Providence", p. 676.

32 Alderblum, Gersonides, p. 69.

33 Lassen, Job, p. 201.

34 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," p. 120.

35 Lassen, Job, p. xix.

36 Bleich, Providence, p. 42; Lassen, Job, p. 174; Staub, Creation, p. 365, n.507.

37 Bleich, Providence, p. 19.

38 Bleich, Providence, p. 30, p. 22-25.

39 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 6.

40 Bleich, Providence, p. 34.

41 Bleich, Providence, pp. 31, 35-36.

42 Bleich, Providence, p. 37.

43 Bleich, Providence, p. 36; Lassen, Job, pp. 80-82.

44 Lassen, Job, p. 55-56; Bleich, Providence, pp. 36; 54-55.

45 Lassen, Job, pp. 57, 103.

46 Lassen, Job, p. 87.

47 Bleich, Providence, pp. 36, 38, 53-54; Lassen, Job, p. 37-50.

48 For a fascinating paper arguing that Plato posited three separate sources of evil, see Harold Cherniss, "The Sources of Evil According to Plato," in Plato, edited by Gregory Vlastos Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1971, pp. 244-258.

49 Staub, Creation, p. 198.

50 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 258 n.437.

51 Staub, Creation, p. 113.

52 Staub, Creation, p. 125.

53 Seymour Feldman, "Gersonides Proofs for the Creation of the Universe," in Essays in Medieval Jewish & Islamic Philosophy, edited by Arthur Hyman (New York, N.Y.: Ktav Publishing House, 1977) pp. 220-224; Staub, Creation, p. 113-114.

54 Feldman, "Creation," pp. 231-238.

55 Staub, Creation, p. 123.

56 Staub, Creation, p. 15; Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 258 n.437.

57 Feldman, "Creation," pp. 220-222.

58 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 258 n. 437.

59 Staub, Creation, pp. 113, 59.

60 Adlerblum, Gersonides, pp. 59-60; Lassen, Job, p. xii.

61 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," pp. 116-117.

62 Staub, Creation, p. 108.

63 Feldman, "Creation," p. 222; Staub, Creation, pp. 285-287.

64 Feldman, "Creation," p. 222.

65 Staub, Creation, pp. 285-287.

66 Staub, Creation, pp. 262-263, 309.

67 Bleich, Providence, p. 59-61.

68 Staub, Creation, p. 4.

69 Staub, Creation, p. 116.

70 Staub, Creation, pp. 49, 95.

71 Feldman, "Platonic Themes", pp. 392-393.

72 Feldman, "Platonic Themes", pp. 387-91.

73 Staub, Creation, p. 124.

74 Staub, Creation, pp. 197-198; Feldman, "Platonic Themes", p. 394.

[75] Staub, Creation, pp. 187-211, considers the possibility of interpreting Gersonides as positing a corporeal form, but rejects such an interpretation as less consistent with the rest of Gersonides' scheme than the notion of "indefinite dimensionality."; See also Arthur Hyman, "Aritsotle's 'First Matter' and Avicenna's and Avenoes' 'Corporeal Form'" in Essays in Medieval Jewish Philosophy, edited by Arthur Hyman (Ktav Publishing House, Inc., New York, N.Y., 1977) pp. 335-355.

[76] Staub, Creation, p. 197.

[77] Staub, Creation, p. 196; Hyman, "First Matter," pp. 336, 353-355; Hyman, "First Matter," pp. 336, 352.

[78] Staub, Creation, p. 196.

[79] Staub, Creation, p. 206.

[80] Staub, Creation, pp. 205-206.

[81] Feldman, "Platonic Themes", p. 395.

[82] Staub, Creation, pp. 193, 101, 242.

[83] Feldman, "Platonic Themes", p. 395.

[84] Lassen, Job, p. xv; Husik, p. 345.

[85] See discussion at notes 39-40.

[86] See discussion at notes 42-46.

[87] Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 18, 120-121.

[88] Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 18-19, 120-121m n.n.50, 53, 437.

[89] Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 100, n.13-14.

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91 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 11, 105, 65.

92 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 255-257, n.436, pp. 65-66, n.589; See also T. M. Rudavsky, "Divine Omniscience and Future Contingents in Gersonides" in Journal of the History of Philosophy, xxi, (October, 1983), p. 527.

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94 David Wolf Silverman, "Dreams, Divination & Prophecy: Gersonides and the Problem of Precognition," in The Samuel Friedland Lectures 1967-1974, edited by Gerson D. Cohen (New York, N.Y.: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1974) p. 106.

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97 Rudavsky, p. 526.

98 Menachem Marc Kellner, "Maimonides and Gersonides on Mosaic Prophecy," in Speculum - A Journal of Medieval Studies, Vol. LII, No. 1, Jan., 1977, p. 67.

99 Feldman, "Platonic Themes", p. 396-397.

100 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 234-235; Bleich, Providence, pp. 67-68, 39-40.

101 Lassen, Job, pp. 232, 264; Bleich, Providence, pp. 40, 60-61; Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 67.

102 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 236.

103 Samuelson, "Free Will," pp. 8-13.

104 Silverman, "Prophecy", p. 105.

105 Silverman, "Prophecy", pp. 105-6; Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 67.

106 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 236.

107 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 298.

108 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 69.

109 Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 69; Staub, Creation, p. 112; Bleich, Providence, p. 65.

110 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 285, n.560; Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 71.

111 Silverman, "Prophecy", pp. 109-110; Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 284-5.

112 Kellner, "Providence", pp. 676-677; quoting Lassen, Job, pp. 232-233.

113 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 285; Silverman, "Prophecy", p. 111; Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 70.

114 Lassen, Job, pp. 201-202.

115 Bleich, Providence, p. 88.

116 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 114.

117 Norbert Samuelson, "Philosophic and Religious Authority in the Thought of Maimonides and Gersonides," in C.C.A.R. Journal, 1969, p. 31.

118 Kellner, "Prophecy," pp. 73-74.

119 Kellner, "Prophecy," pp. 66-67, 73.

120 Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 73; Silverman, "Prophecy", p. 110.

121 Kellner, "Prophecy," pp. 66-67.

122 Bleich, Providence, p. 88.

123 Bleich, Providence, pp. 85-88.

124 Menachem Marc Kellner, "Gersonides and His Cultured Despisers: Arama and Abravanel," The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall, 1976) p. 281.

125 Silverman, "Prophecy", pp. 112-115; Kellner, "Cultured Despisers," pp. 281-84, 288, 293.

126 Staub, Creation, pp. 363-364 nn.502, 504.

127 Lassen, Job, p. 20.

128 Bleich, Providence, pp. 73-75, 42.

129 Staub, Creation, p. 359, n.454.

130 Staub, Creation, p. 324 n.335.

131 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 68.

132 Lassen, Job, p. 174.

133 Staub, Creation, pp. 360-361 n.491.

134 Staub, Creation, pp. 371 n.531.

135 Silverman, "Prophecy", p. 115, n.33.

136 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," pp. 104, 110.

137 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," p. 113.

138 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," p. 117.

139 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," pp. 117-119.

140 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," p. 120.

141 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," p. 120.

142 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 66.

143 Staub, Creation, p. 365, n.507.

144 Lassen, Job, p. 209.

145 Lassen, Job, pp. 209-210.

146 Staub, Creation, p. 168 n.17.

147 Staub, Creation, p. 179 n.37.

148 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 105-6 n.26.

149 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 57.

150 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 68.

151 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 61-63.

152 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 65.

153 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 67-68.

154 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 68-70.

155 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 70-72.

156 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 60-61.

157 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 58-59, 106-107.

158 Adlerblum, Gersonides, pp. 63-65.

159 Adlerblum, Gersonides, pp. 67-68.

160 See discussion at notes 106-108.

161 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 79.

162 Staub, Creation, p. 213, n.59.

163 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 77; Harry A. Wolfson, "Maimonides and Gersonides on Divine Attributes as Ambiguous Terms," in Mordechai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume, edited by Moshe Davis (New York, N.Y.: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1953) p. 515.

164 Wolfson, "Divine Attributes," p. 520.

165 Staub, Creation, p. 116; Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 76.

166 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 66.

167 See discussion at notes 92-94.

168 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 66/

169 Norbert Samuelson: "On Knowing God: Maimonides, Gersonides and the Philosophy of Religion," in Judaism, Vol. 18, No. 1, (Winter, 1969) pp. 65-67; Silverman, "Prophecy", p. 104.

170 Wolfson, "Divine Attributes," pp. 519-521.

171 Wolfson, "Divine Attributes," pp. 523-524; Samuelson, "Knowing God," pp. 69-72.

172 Samuelson, "Knowing God," pp. 71-72; Wolfson, "Divine Attributes," p. 522.

173 Lassen, Job, pp. 251-252.

174 Staub, Creation, p. 115.

175 Staub, Creation, p. 127.

176 Kellner, "Cultured Despisers," pp. 269-271.

177 Kellner, "Providence", p. 685, n.29.

178 Kellner, "Providence", p. 680.

179 Kellner, "Providence", pp. 680-685.

180 Staub, Creation, p. 112.

181 Isaac Broyde, "Levi Ben Gerson," Jewish Encyclopedia Vol. 8 (New York, N.Y., 1904) p. 29; and Samuelson, p. 3, both quoting Introduction to Milhamot Hashem.

182 Kellner, "Cultured Despisers," pp. 284-294.

183 Lassen, Job, pp. 87, 103.

184 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 27; Brodye p. 28; Bleich, Providence, pp. 9-10; Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 2-3.

185 Bleich, Providence, p. 10, quoting Introduction to Milhamot Hashem.

186 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 133.

187 Bleich, Providence, p. 75.

188 Bleich, Providence, p. 76.

189 Bleich, Providence, p. 76.

190 Staub, Creation, p. 127.

191 Silverman, in "Prophecy", p. 104, attributes this argument to Maimonides.

192 Lassen, Job, pp. 251-252.

193 Staub, Creation, pp. 117-118.

CHAPTER THREE: Hans Jonas' Response to the Problem of Theodicy:

God's Self-Forfeiture For The Sake of Unprejudiced Becoming

1. Introduction and Summary

What comprised a satisfactory response to the problem of theodicy for Gersonides could not satisfy the temper of our current century. Our world is one in which flux is overwhelmingly evident. Out of our experience, we would find it difficult to accept the static universe described in Gersonides' conception of an unchanging God overflowing into an unchanging realm of heavenly bodies which transmit the unchanging forms to our world. Perhaps even less satisfying to the modern temper is the implication of Gersonides' response that human actions have no effect on the transcendent realm. The modern temper demands a response to theodicy which accounts for the flux in our universe and which provides some transcendental import to our deeds. Hans Jonas, a contemporary philosopher and theologian, presents such a response.

Jonas' agenda differs from that of Gersonides. Gersonides sought to reconcile the Aristotelian concept of a static God, whose perfection permitted no change, with the Jewish concept of a God who created the world by will, endowed individuals with free choice, and cares about and for individuals. These aspects of the prevailing Jewish conception conflicted with various philosophic concepts with which Gersonides disagreed, but still felt were worthy of serious philosophic consideration. Examples of such concepts are: the world is eternal; all human actions are determined; and God neither

knows about nor cares for individuals. Thus, Gersonides focused on distinguishing his views from these concepts, in addition to his attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Torah.

Jonas, like Gersonides, attempts to take into account these traditional Jewish beliefs that God created the world by will, endowed individuals with free choice, and cares about and for human beings. However, Jonas responds to a different philosophic environment. In our present century, as Jonas views it, the widespread philosophic challenge to these beliefs focuses on the issues of flux, uncertainty, and relativity. Our world is perceived as unceasingly dynamic, a state described by Neitzsche as "sovereign becoming".[1] To the existentialists, the lack of absolute standards and of constant, predictable ethical guidelines leaves humans with only will and power.[2] To modern science, inevitable uncertainty about what we can know means that all of our knowledge, no matter how complex, is mere hypothesis, always tentative, always subject to revision.[3] Jonas responds to all of these views, as well as to those modern materialists, who believe that reality is purely physical, that all change is physically determined, and that the mental realm is merely an epiphenomenon, not real[4] in itself, and to those modern idealists who believe that primary reality is consciousness, while the physical realm is both secondary and unknowable.[5]

In response, Jonas seeks to find, in forms acceptable to the modern mind, a basis for true knowledge of ourselves and our world, a basis for meaning in our lives, including a definition

of the essence of being human, and a basis for determining how one should live, that is, a standard for ethics. In order to be persuasive, such basis must be transcendent, that is, it must be located outside of mundane, physical reality, even if it is not separate from such reality. Otherwise, the modern mind would probably reject it as a projection of Jonas' own desires. Jonas will ultimately describe this basis, which is both transcendent and immanent, as divine, that is, as the creator God. Section 2 of this Chapter will discuss Jonas' myth of creation, which is both the conclusion of his search and his ultimate response to the problem of theodicy.

Jonas finds this divine basis through an examination of the phenomenon of life, which leads him to a reliable, albeit subjective and anthropomorphic, theory of knowledge and an interpretation of the nature of human life. Section 3 will discuss Jonas' idea of life as the basis for integrating the polarity of mind and body. Throughout Jonas' discussion, the concept of freedom plays a persistent role. Freedom is essential to the simplest organism, and it increases with the complexity of the organisms. Moreover, freedom is inseparably linked to an increase in risk and uncertainty. Section 4 will discuss these ascending levels of freedom. At the most complex level, that of human beings, freedom is expressed in will or choice, as demonstrated by our ability to make images, that is, to recreate our world. The choice is made by our transcendent, non-physical identity, called "self" or "soul". Section 5 will consider how Jonas discovers this human essence. As an image-maker and image-beholder,

a human being becomes, unlike any other animal, a question to himself or herself. Some philosophic answers to that question are analyzed and rejected by Jonas, as discussed in Section 6. Jonas' examination of the human self leads him to conclude that the soul is immortal, at least in its deeds, a conclusion at which Jonas arrives by looking at moments in which we make ultimate decisions. Section 7 will discuss Jonas' concept of immortality.

The source of our soul is the creator God. It is only at this stage in Jonas' discussion that he directly deals with the question of theodicy. However, since his examination of life leads to his theodicy, the phenomenon of life will be discussed first. When Jonas reaches the level of God's role in our world, he chooses to express his views through the vehicle of myth, a form of representation which began as his own personal fantasy and is still emerging. The myth derives from Jonas' philosophic exploration of life, yet he seeks to connect it to traditional Jewish thought. The myth, reproduced in full below (Section 2), posits a God who is becoming and who is not omnipotent. On this foundation, Jonas sees, for reasons discussed below, that the only choices are dualism or creation ex nihilo. He chooses the latter, imagining a God who willfully limited His self "for the sake of unprejudiced becoming," that is, in order to permit ultimate free reign for human choice, even if the divine realm itself must be placed at risk. This is not a God who creates as a clockmaker, nor a God who acts by arbitrary will and power, nor a God who abandons humanity.

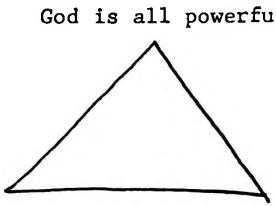
Rather, it is a God who knows the events in our world, even our greatest tragedies, such as the Holocaust, and who cares about the victims of such events, so that God suffers when human beings suffer. Moreover, it is a God who reacts to our world and provides powers and revelation to human beings to cope with our world, although God does not, and cannot, directly intervene in our affairs. Section 8 will consider Jonas' depiction of God's role in our world.

The ethical consequences of this myth coincide with those of Jonas' philosophic examination of life, that is, our deeds have transcendent impact. We have no choice whether to have such impact or not. That much is given. What we can choose is the nature of that impact. We face a tremendous responsibility, with no certain outcome, for we can use our freedom to develop the positive possibilities of human existence or we can end human existence. Jonas cannot accept Gersonides' optimism that the world is indestructible, since nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, and genetic engineering give us the tools to destroy our world, at least, to destroy human life. Our duty becomes, at least, to keep alive the possibilities of human achievement. Ultimate evil or good depends not on the nature of God nor the actions of God, but on the choices and deeds of humanity. Section 9 will explore these ethical consequences.

The final part of this Chapter, Section 10, will evaluate Jonas' response to the problem of theodicy, with respect to: internal consistency; the scope of his response; and the adequacy of his reconciliation of God's goodness and the existence of evil in our world.

2. The Myth of Creation

While Jonas' myth of creation admittedly began as a "personal fantasy"[6] and while it is the logical conclusion of his philosophic examination of life (Sections 3 through 7), the myth is also his ultimate response to the problem of theodicy. Jonas defines the problem in terms of three attributes of God, omnipotence, intelligibility, and goodness, only two of which can be true.[7] This definition may be depicted as a triangle, of which any two sides can be maintained together, but not all three:



Such a triangle assumes the existence of real evil in our world, an understandable assumption for a Jew who has lived through most of our present century.

Jonas' solution explicitly rejects God's omnipotence. He cites "Jewish norms" as requiring that God be good and be at least somewhat intelligible. "After Auschwitz," Jonas argues, "we can assert more than ever that an omnipotent deity would have to be either not good or totally unintelligible," since evil is so overwhelmingly evident.[8] Since the idea of omnipotence is a doubtful concept in any case, for reasons set forth in section 8 of this chapter, Jonas rejects it.

Jonas' myth goes a step beyond a mere voluntary limit on God's power, which God could revoke at will. Such a limit is insufficient for Jonas, in light of contemporary experience of such unmitigated evil as the Holocaust, Jonas cannot imagine why a good God who could have revoked that limite did not do so. The rest of this chapter will discuss the reasons for and the consequences of the further step in Jonas' myth, that is, that God cannot revoke the limits, but "has (fully) divested Himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things . . . (and that therefore God) responds to the impact on His being of worldly events - not beyad chazakah uvizeroa netuyah, but with the mutely insistent appeal of His unfulfilled aim."[9]

The myth reads as follows:

> In the beginning, for unknowable reasons, the ground of being, or the divine, chose to give itself over to the chance and risk and endless variety of becoming. And wholly so: entering into the adventure of space and time, the deity held back nothing of itself: no uncommitted or unimpaired part remained to direct, correct, and ultimately guarantee the devious working-out of its destiny in creation. On this unconditional immanence the modern temper insists. It is its courage or despair, in any case its bitter honesty, to take our being-in-the world seriously: to view the world as left to itself, its laws as brooking no interference, and the rigor of our belonging to it as not softened by extramundane providence. The same our myth postulates for God's being in the world . . . In order that the world might be, and be for itself, God renounced His own being, divesting Himself of His deity--to receive it back from the Odyssey of time weighted with the chance harvest of unforeseeable temporal experience: transfigured or possibly even disfigured by it. In such self-forfeiture of divine integrity for the sake of unprejudiced becoming,

no other foreknowledge can be admitted than that of possibilities which cosmic being offers in its own terms: to these, God committed His cause in effacing Himself for the world.

And for aeons God's cause is safe in the slow hands of cosmic chance and probability--while all the time we may surmise a patient memory of the gyrations of matter to accumulate into an ever more expectant accompaniment of eternity to the labors of time--a hesitant emergence of transcendence from the opaqueness of immanence.

And then the first stirring of life--a new language of the world: and with it a tremendous quickening of concern in the eternal realm and a sudden leap in its growth toward recovery of its plenitude. It is the world-accident for which becoming deity had waited and with which its prodigal stake begins to show signs of being redeemed. From the indefinite swell of feelings, sensing, striving and acting, which ever more varied and intense rises above the mute eddyings of matter, eternity gains strength, filling with content after content of self-affirmation, and the awakening God can first pronounce creation to be good.

But note that with life together came death, and that mortality is the price which the new possibility of being had to pay for itself . . . . If, then, mortality is the very condition of the separate selfhood which in the instinct of self-preservation shows itself so highly prized throughout the organic world, and if the yield of this mortality is the food of eternity, it is unreasonable to demand for its appointed executants, the self-affirming selves--immortality. The instinct of self-preservation indeed acknowledges this, for it implies the premise of extinction in its straining each time to ward it off for the nonce.

Note also this that with life's innocence before the advent of knowledge God's cause cannot go wrong. Whatever variety evolution brings forth adds to the possibilities of feeling and acting, and thus enriches the self-experiencing of the ground of being. . . . The ever more sharpened keenness of appetite and fear, pleasure and pain,

triumph and anguish, love and even cruelty--their very edge is the deity's gain. Their countless, yet never blunted incidence--hence the necessity of death and new birth--supplies the tempered essence from which the Godhead reconstitutes itself. All this, evolution provides in the mere lavishness of its play and the sternness of its spur. Its creatures by merely fulfilling themselves in pursuit of their lives, vindicate the divine venture. Even their suffering deepens the fullness of the symphony. Thus, this side of good and evil, God cannot lose in the great evolutionary game.

Not yet can He fully win in the shelter of its innocence, and a new expectancy grows in Him in answer to the direction which the unconscious drift of immanence gradually takes.

And then He trembles as the thrust of evolution, carried by its own momentum, passes the threshold where innocence ceases and an entirely new criterion of success and failure takes hold of the divine stake. The advent of man means the advent of knowledge and freedom, and with this supremely double-edged gift the innocence of the mere subject of self-fulfilling life has given way to the charge of responsibility under the disjunction of good and evil. To the promise and risk of this agency the divine cause, revealed at last, henceforth finds itself committed; and its issue trembles in the balance. The image of God, haltingly begun by the universe, for so long worked upon--and left undecided--in the wide and then narrowing spirals of prehuman life, passes with this last twist, and with a dramatic quickening of the movement, into man's precarious trust, to be completed, saved, or spoiled by what he will do to himself and the world. And in this awesome impact of his deeds on God's destiny, on the very complexion of eternal being, lies the immortality of man.

With the appearance of man, transcendence awakened to itself and henceforth accompanies his doings with the bated breath of suspense, hoping and beckoning, rejoicing and grieving, approving and frowning--and, I dare say, making itself felt to him even while not intervening in the dynamics of his worldly scene: for could it not be that by the reflection of its own state as it wavers with the record of man, the transcendent casts light and shadow over the human landscape?"

3. Life as the Source of Integrating Body and Mind

The philosophic underpinning of this myth is fleshed out in Section 3 through 7 of this Chapter. Sections 8 and 9 will discuss consequences of the myth, respectively for God and for humanity, while Section 10 will evaluate Jonas' overall viewpoint.

Jonas begins with a fundamental polarity of human existence which confronts all philosophers, the co-existence of the mental and the physical, mind and matter, spirit and body. Many philosophers have attempted to separate the two realms. Before Copernicus, philosophers tended to view the natural condition of human beings as life, that is, what needed to be explained, was death, the inanimate, material part of existence, not the spiritual. After Copernicus, many philosophers have rejected this panvitalism and replaced it with a panmechanism, in which the inanimate is the standard. This model derived from the physical sciences, in which the objectively knowable aspects of nature, that is, knowable without anthropomorphism, came to be regarded as nature's essential aspects. Life became "a possible variant of the lifeless."[10] The historical link between the ancient attitude and the modern one was dualism, which, in its medieval forms, viewed the body as the "tomb of the soul." One modern response is materialism, which has concluded that "the tomb is empty," that is, there is no soul.[11] What is primary is physical substance, while physic functioning is merely epiphenomenal.[12] Jonas' criticism of materialism is discussed below.

The other post-Renaissance attempt at monistic ontology is idealism, in which consciousness constitutes primary reality and physical appearance is secondary. Idealism is not truly monistic, for it never deals with the living body, but merely ignores it. Without consideration of the organic body, knowledge is reduced to what Hume permitted, knowledge only of "sequences of contents external and indifferent to one another,"[13] related in a spatio-temporal sense. We cannot know of any efficient cause, except subjectively, and only objective knowledge is permitted.[14]

Kant responded to Hume by grounding causality in "pure consciousness," but Jonas argues that causality, which is itself a concrete experience in our world, cannot be derived from pure understanding, which is an abstraction from our world. Causality itself is a basic experience of our bodily activity, not an a priori basis of experience.[15] Our bodies give us "firsthand knowledge of force," an experience which Kant, and Hume, ignore.[16] Force and influence are the primary aspect of causality. The idealists seek objective percepts, such as regular connection or necessary connection, but force and influence are not percepts, derived from sense perception, but original contents of our bodily experience.[17]

Beyond rejecting efficient cause as subjective and inexact, the idealists followed the lead of modern science and rejected final causes as anthropomorphic, a remnant of the primitive view that nature was designed for the benefit of humanity. The only means to exact knowledge is cognition, since any inference from the nature of life, including an inference from our

"causal" experience of bodily effort resulting in impact on things and resistance by things, is an anthropomorphic inference and therefore invalid. Modern science could afford to dismiss final causes, and even efficient causes, since it sought only a description of regularities and of quantities, not an explanation of our world.[18] When modern philosophers, such as Hume, gave up on explaining the world, they conceded that life was unintelligible. If so, a primary aspect of our experience, was ignored.[19] The problem is not merely epistemological, but ontological. To Jonas, life is the only aspect of our world which is potentially fully intelligible, for it is the only thing we see from inside as well as out. By ignoring concrete, bodily life, and by referring to take into account our inside view, idealism becomes yet another dualism. Only two monistic choices are available. Either we begin with our inward experience of purpose, despite its subjectivity and anthropomorphism, or we deny even the possibility of teleology and view all as merely mechanical matter.[20] Jonas adopts the former, but his critique of the latter, that is, of materialism, sheds further light on his philosophy. In criticizing materialism, Jonas' concern is not with epistemology but with ontology, just as it was in his critique of idealism.

Unlike idealism, modern materialism at least confronts life, although it does so from a perspective which, like the idealistic position, derives from modern physics. With the Copernican revolution, modern physics became based on the principles of natural necessity, that is, that all things are governed

by causal law, and of radical contingency, that is, that there is no constancy in what occurs. These principles were applied by the materialists to organic life, especially after Darwin.[21] The theory of evolution eliminated a primary argument for finding telos in nature, since the variety of species could no longer be seen as too vast to be attributed merely to chance. The forms of Plato or Aristotle, which gave purpose and essence to existent things, were not necessary to explain nature's plentitude.[22] Evolution also eliminated the need for fixed species, or immutable essences, since the particular structure of an organism was only "a temporary stoppingplace of a continuous dynamism."[23] Variations occur constantly and unforeseeably. Instead of an agent, such as God, teleologically arranging organisms, the environment naturally selected among chance variations (mutations), resulting in a "progress by elimination".[24]

However, the crowning of materialism by evolution also contained the seed from which materialism would be overcome. At least since Descartes, materialism had separated mind (res cogitans) from body or matter (res extensa). Animals were viewed as matter, without inwardness, existing only for human minds, but the existence of human consciousness was left unsolved. Evolution now made untenable the special position of humanity and the ontological separation of mind from body. While opponents of Darwin, including present day creationists, saw this as a lowering of human status, it can be seen as a restoration of dignity to all life, since all organisms, not only human beings, may be conscious of themselves.[25]

Jonas' rejection of materialism, and of idealism, thus depends on his understanding of the nature of organisms. Organisms evidence the same material focus as inanimate objects, but are unique in exhibiting the process of metabolism, the organism's "exchange of matter with its surroundings." The organism constantly changes its material content, but persists as the same form, the same "self". A mathematical-mechanical account of metabolism would compare it to changing physical structures, such as waves, which are no more than the sum of their elements and whose individuality is only apparent, a "fleeting conveyance or pattern." To an outside observer of organisms, this account is just as accurate as the explanation that the organism's "self" intentionally preserves its form. Which account is more true? We, who are ourselves organic, have an inside view, unavailable to the outside observer. We see each life-form not as a temporary material conveyance, but as a "self-centered individuality, being for itself and in contraposition to all the rest of the world, with an essential boundary dividing 'inside' and 'outside'." (emphasis added).[26] Each organism is an individual, not by the categorizing of an observer's mind,[27] but ontologically, essentially.[28]

From our internal view, we perceive organisms not as mere sums of component parts, but as "self-integrating wholes," in which "form (is) for once the cause rather than the result of the material collections."[29] Unlike the inorganic, form here is the essence and matter the accident. The organism is free from matter in that it returns its identity regardless of any exchange of matter. However, it is dependent on matter in tht it requires matter to exist.

Organism and matter thus exist in "a dialectical relation of needful freedom." (emphasis in original).[30] This inference of freedom, and by an internal identity for each individual organism, cannot be arrived at for an outside observer, but is only accessible to one with subjective organic experience.[31]

Classical and medieval thinkers generally viewed individuals from without. For example, Aristotle asserted that a particular occurs when matter is conjoined to form. Medieval Aristotelians differ as to whether the same form creates differing individuals, that is, matter individuals, or whether each individual has its own form. Jonas rejects all these views as finding individual identity in only its outwardly manifest attributes. Individual identity is created by the individuals himself, who is exposed to the alternative of not-being and, in response, comes to be. As such, the individual is temporal and "have being only by everbecoming."[32] "Needful freedom" results from one's power, one's freedom, to use the material world, despite one's dependence upon that world in order to exist.[33]

Such freedom implies a polarity between the self and the outside world, with the organic identity compelled continually to reassert itself against the material forces which would disrupt its forms. Unlike other matter, the organism will not and cannot accept whatever form it happens to attain. It has a "feeling of selfhood," a sense that the world is outside of itself, in other words, it has a disposition towards "self-transcendence."[34] The organism feels, senses, and desires, and through its transcendence,

becomes and remains "selective and 'informed' instead of a blind mechanism."[35]

Such transcendence implies teleology. Unlike the inorganic, life is not only determined by what it was, but by what it is becoming and what it is going to be.[36] The polarity of self and world is also a polarity of being and not being. Existence is not assured. Thus, the organism is not indifferent to its difference, but is primarily concerned with preservation of its selfhood, not preservation of its elements. The organism "wants" to remain a being, and "teleology is the concommitant of want."[37]

The carrier of the telos may be termed "self" or "soul", but it is not an entity separate from the organism, for to posit a separate soul is to assign the identity of the organism to an outside bearer. Rather, the teleology is internal.[38]

Internal teleology distinguishes the organism from a material artifact, such as a ship, which has only external purpose, derived from the maker, or beholder. Like the organism, the ship can maintain its identity despite a complete exchange of matter if it undergoes massive repairs assuming that the exchange (repairs) are only done a bit at a time so that the original ship remains, rather than becoming a "new" ship. Metabolism is a similar exchange, with key differences. The exchange is not accidental, but is necessary for existence. More importantly, the exchange is effected from within, and thus the teleology is internal.[39]

A materialistic, mechanical, external approach to life might lead the observer to unravel life into component elements.

While scientifically useful, a complete unraveling would result in merely parts, which are not life. Moreover, a scientist would not consistently assert that an organism is merely its physical components, for the scientist is a living being with experience of life's "something else."[40] On the other hand, the inside perspective is subject to attack as subjective. Two philosophies raise this attack. Materialism argues, for reasons discussed below, that the mind is a powerless epiphenomenon of the material. Jonas' response is that such an approach denies the validity of rational thought and thus invalidates itself as a system of thought.[41] A second philosophy, Cartesian dualism, posits that the mind, as subjective, is a separate field which cannot interact with the physical. While logically consistent, such a position is not necessary, as discussed in the next paragraph. Moreover, it is emperically unpersuasive. If the mind could not affect the physical, one would expect that the external, physically observable, reality of an organism would often differ from the physical appearance which the organism subjectively desires to assume. If mind cannot affect matter, it would be an incredible coincidence if the mind's internal view of what organic structure should be happened to coincide with the external reality of what the organic individual actually is. Yet it does so coincide. A much more palatable explanation is that the parts are organized according to inward purpose.[42]

The same argument shows that Cartesian dualism is not necessary and that material determinism is not necessary. The

argument responds to the riddle raised by Cartesian dualism, how can a non-physical mind move a limb?[43] Two responses are possible: (1) "willing" is a deception and is rather a neuro-physiological process in disguise; or (2) our subjective perception of the mind willing movement is credible at face value. Jonas accepts the second response. He finds that the first response is based on the argument that since matter can exist without mind, but not mind without matter, mind must be an epiphenomenon, derivative from and fully dependent on matter. Jonas rejects this argument as inconsistent, since it assumes that the non-physical is "cost-free", that is, it does not cause anything, which is impossible in a determined, material world.[44] Moreover, it would be a delusion to say that a thought leads to another thought, if both were false appearances of physical changes. Yet if that is a delusion, what is deluded, if not the mental realm. Similarly, and most significantly, as mentioned above, if the mental realm is a mirage, then no theory, including materialism, can have any validity.[45]

Still, it is not enough to refute the necessary validity of the materialists' reasoning. Thus, Jonas proposes a model to explain how the mental affects the physical. This model concedes as much as possible to the materialists, and implies a far more limited role to the mind than Jonas believes is true. The key to the model is the "trigger principle." Imagine a giant cone, perched on its tip. A slight force at the bottom would hardly be noticeable, but could cause much movement. If the force is

mental "willing," or decision, and the cone is physical reality, the nature of the cone can remain predictable, no matter what triggering decision is applied to it. The force applied would not change the physical measurements, although the effect could be monumental, such as war or peace, prosperity or famine.[46] Materialists might object that the many triggers (decisions) together would be noticeable. Jonas counters that it would not be noticed if the output of force from the mental into the physical realm were balanced by the input from the physical into the mental, that is, by human sensibility, since our minds are passive receivers as well as active deciders. This balance is necessary, if neither mental nor physical acts are to be "cost free." Thus, causality can be seen as a meshed net separating the mental from the physical. The mesh is wide enough to let the mental decisions and sensibilities slip in and out, but narrow enough to keep the physical intact.[47] Jonas' model is no more necessarily true than that of the materialists, but it is logically less troublesome and empirically closest to our inner experience of mental causation.

Jonas' critique of materialism, Cartesian dualism, and idealism illustrates the significance of this examination of the living body as a means of integrating the psychic and the physical. He does not pretend to undo the polarity between them, but "to absorb it into a higher unity of existence from which the opposites issue as faces of its being or phases of its becoming."[48] Our existence, our "being," is but a possibility, not a given fact. The possibility of not-being is so pervasive that life's "being is

essentially a hovering over the abyss" of not-being. So suspended, life is a fact of polarities, of being and not-being, of self and world, of form and matter, and of freedom and necessity. These are relationships and as such, imply "a transcendence, a going beyond itself." Jonas will seek to show that such transcendence exists in even the simplest forms of life, pre-mental forms, which shows that the mind is prefigured in the organic, a contention which would be "in tune with ancient belief," but not with modern theory. Jonas also contends that "mind even in its highest reaches remains part of the organic," a contention "in tune with modern belief," but not with ancient theory.[49] Jonas combines these contentions in a synthesis of the ancient and modern, resulting in a philosophy of life which responds to the problem of theodicy in the possibilities of unity and the potentialities of freedom, despite the necessary risks of organic and especially human existence.

4. The Nature of Organic Existence -- Ascending the Levels of Freedom

As shown above, all organisms possess the freedom to determine their own self, to preserve their own form against the outside forces which would alter that form. Animals, in contrast to plants, have far greater freedom, expressed in the power of motility, perception and emotion. This section will discuss how these powers, based on the principle of mediacy, provide animals with greater freedom and give evidence of inward purposefulness. It will then focus on one crucial aspect of perception, the aspect

of sight, as distinct from other senses, which will lead into the next section concerning image-making and the essence of man. These sections are essential to understanding Jonas' theodicy, since human freedom, its possibilities and its risks, and the "objective" existence of a human essence are fundamental to that theodicy.

Animals are distinguished from plants by their powers of motility, perception, and emotion. As the first two powers increase, that is, as the animal is better able to move about and to perceive at a distance, physical space becomes more a dimension of freedom than of dependence, as it is for a plant.[50] The third power, emotion, provides the temporal basis for freedom. Emotion, in the form of appetition, is the basis for animal motility, since "greed is at the bottom of the chase" and "fear at the bottom of the flight." In order for an animal to experience the distantly perceived as a goal, and to keep that goal alive while pursuing it, the animal must "desire" the goal. Desire thus allows deferred fulfillment.[51]

This is "the great secret of animal life," "the principle of mediacy," that is, the ability to give up immediate fulfillment in order to gain in the scope of satisfaction. In plants, metabolic exchange is continual and direct. Animals require an intermediate stage, such as reaching, conveying, and processing food for nutrition, before they can satisfy their needs. Desire or "want" bridges the gap between need and satisfaction.[52]

Mediacy is thus the key to freedom, since it separates action from purpose. That separation is spanned by the three

powers, which are modes of relation to the world. Perception enables the animal to cross the material rift between ourselves and the environment which nourishes it; motility enables a closing of the spatial gap; and emotion fills the temporal gap between need and satisfaction. Most crucially, since all these powers require intermediate action, the animal could fail as well as succeed. Thus, unlike plants, our mediated animal existence leads to the possibility of enjoyment, but also of suffering, since "both are wedded to the effort." Suffering (in the sense of intrinsic suffering, such as want or fear, as opposed to the occasional suffering, that is, pain, which gives rise to the problem of theodicy) is not a shortcoming which detracts from the animal's enjoyment, but a necessary complement of enjoyment.[53]

Mediacy, through appetition, frees the animals from blind metabolic exchange, so that the "animal being is essentially a passionate being." It lacks the "biological safety" of plants, but, Jonas stresses, the price is worth it. If certainty of survival was the only purpose of life, then it "should not have started out in the first place." Life is "essentially precarious and corruptible being, an adventure in mortality." The "means" of survival, that is, perception and emotion, change the end and become part of it. The animal who feels and perceives "strives to preserve itself" not as a mere organism but as an entity which feels and perceives. Without feeling and perception, there would be "less" to preserve.[54]

Animals are thus distinct from plants in their individuation. As the complexity of the animal increases, the animal

"self" becomes more pronounced, by greater centralization, that is, the functions are more centrally controlled. For example, motility is controlled by a more centralized nervous system. Similarly, sentience requires sensual perception to be reported to a center. For example, it is not our eyes that see. Rather, we see with our eyes.[55] Only at the centralized level do individuality and freedom apply. Centrality evidences individisibility, which underlies the concept of "individual."[56] As the centered self becomes more pronounced, so does the outside world. Greater hazards arise both in external exposure and in internal awareness of exposure.[57] Thus, new objects of dread confront the animal - the possibilities of annihilation, frustration, and isolation, but together with them and inseparable from them are new objects of desire - respectively, the possibilities of satisfaction, enjoyment, and communication. The gain for the animal comes from both the negative and the positive, which together enhance its selfhood in response to "indifferent nature."[58]

Of all the powers which grant freedom to animals, the one most significant for understanding the essence of human beings is the power of sight. Sight of course, is not unique to human beings, but a description of its unique characteristics will demonstrate the philosophic basis from which Jonas derives that essence. In sum, sight permits a freedom of choice not available when one perceives by the other four senses, a freedom which enables the seer to abstract an image from reality. Such abstraction is fundamental to theoretical thinking. This distinctiveness of sight is evident

in three characteristics of the sense -- (1) simultaneity of presentation; (2) dynamic neutralization; and (3) spatial distance. Each of these traits has been the ground for a concept basic to classical philosophy, for, as discussed below, "the mind has gone where vision pointed."[59]

Sight provides a simultaneity of image, that is, the mind's synthesis of a unified content from a series of sensations, is simultaneously present as a whole. To present, the content is detached from the object of sensation, which is a dynamic, transitory event, that is, the scene. The significance becomes clear in contrast to hearing. The sound which is disclosed is not an object, but "a dynamical event at the locus of the object." One may abstract the source of the sound, such as, a dog which barks, and, by further abstraction, perceive the object itself, the dog, but hearing presents only the bark. Any synthesis of content, such as, a large dog barking, requires memory, for the sounds are received sequentially and they remain dynamic.[60] Thus, the ordering of the object in the mind of the recipient depends upon "the order of the acquisition of the data." Even a synthesis such as a "melody" retains that order.[61] Most crucially, the hearing subject is a passive recipient of a dynamic fact. One cannot "let (one's) cars wander, as do eyes, over a field of possible percepts." The initiative belongs to the outside world and one has "less freedom of selective attention."[63]

In contrast, sight presents an entire field at the percipient's simultaneous disposal, not sequentially. Disclosed is a

present which is "more than the point experience of a passing now," as it is with sound. Rather, the present becomes a dimension, "an extended now," so that one may "take in the view" before the contents pass away. The beholder can thus compare and interrelate images, which allows a distinction between the changing and the unchanging, the being and the becoming, that is, it allows "objectivity."[63] The result in classical philosophy, which focused on the metaphor of sight (as opposed to the Biblical, which used both metaphors of sight and of hearing) is the "idea of enduring present, the contrast between changing and unchanging, between time and eternity."[64]

The second trait of sight, "dynamic neutralization" also increases one's freedom of choice. In sight, neither the subject nor the object need do anything to the other nor be affected by the other. If I see an object, "it lets me be as I let it be." Thus, the information received by th seer is separated from conduct which gave rise to that information. The object's dynamism is neutralized and an image is created.[65] One thereby gains objectivity. The imagination can deal with the image detached from the object's presence. One may detach "form from matter," "essence" from "existence," as discussed in the next section, and one may vary the image at will.[66] The significance of these distinctions to classical philosophy is obvious,[67] as exemplified in the philosophy of Gersonides. Yet, while sight benefits the seer with freedom and objectivity, sight can also deceive the seer, because it is abstract from reality. "Reality is primarily

evidenced in resistance," that is, force and impact, as in touch. Resistance is reciprocal, and thus the subject cannot be passive. The subject can dispel any suspicion of illusion by testing the object's resistance to the subject's efforts. Sight gives no such "effect," merely an image. Jonas agrees with Hume to the extent that Hume argues that the percepts (impressions and ideas) from sight are only more or less perfected instances of model cases of visual images. No causal information is obtained. However, Jonas does not believe sight must falsify reality, since the causal gap may be filled by other forms of experience, especially motility and touch.[68]

The third aspect of sight, spatial distance, underlies the first two. Only with sight is the best "view" at a distance. This provides a biological advantage, the foreknowledge of seeing ahead, which increases one's freedom, both as to distant objects and as to intervening space. In addition, sight is not distance "brought near," but "left in its distance," a perceptual distance which leads to mental distance, the essential ingredient in objectivity. Moreover, the terminal point in visual perception is arbitrary, continually increasing as one expands one's range of focus. In touch or motility, one can continue to move back the terminus, but the arbitrary choice of and point is not in the perception. Sight thus "bears in itself the germ of infinity," which is yet another fundamental concern of classical philosophy.[69]

Sight is not unique to human beings, but is shared by many animals. Nevertheless, it provides hints of trans-animal

potentialities, particularly the image-making or symbolizing activity which lies at the basis of all culture. As the earlier discussion of organic powers and freedom, the discussion of sight is a necessary preliminary to a crucial aspect of Jonas' theodicy, the objective existence of a human essence. The aspects of life so far considered are all part of what Jonas in his creation myth (above section 2) calls "life's innocence before the advent of knowledge" of good and evil. There is obvious risk to each individual animal, but God's "self-forfeiture of divine integrity for the sake of unprejudiced becoming" is not yet at risk. As discussed above (notes 57-58), possibilities which exist in more advanced forms of life, that is, possibilities of annihiliation and satisfaction, frustration and enjoyment, isolation and communication all enhance the organism's selfhood. Thus, "the self-experiencing of the ground of being," of God, must be enriched. "Even (the creatures') suffering deepens the fullness of the symphony" which God hears, at least, "this side of good and evil." Before the appearance of humanity, suffering is merely the necessary concommitant of enjoyment and satisfaction. Only human beings know about good and evil and only human beings can choose to do evil. Other animals can merely fulfill themselves, and the outcome necessarily enriches God. Human beings may choose to add to that enrichment, but we can also detract from it, even the extent of destroying the possibility of life in our world.[70] The next section discusses the nature of the awesomely consequential possibilities of human knowledge and freedom.

5. The Essence of Human Beings

What makes a human being unique? In other words, by what criteria would an observer distinguish human beings from other animals? Jonas chooses the ability to make and behold images, not as the only possible valid criteria, but because it yields results which are unequivocal and it yields much concerning a definition of human nature.[71]

Jonas begins by describing the properties of an image, in order to understand the properties of the subject (a human) who makes and beholds images. An image is a likeness, which is discernable at will, to another object. "The likeness is produced with intent." The maker intended the beholder to understand it as a likeness of the original object, not another similar object, and the beholder can recognize that intent. Moreover, the likeness is intentionally incomplete, so that the observer will realize that it is not an imitation, but an image. Since it is incomplete, the maker must have selected only "representative" features of the object, thus implying a freedom in the maker. Selected features of the incomplete likeness must have been altered, either due to inadequate ability or for the purpose either of symbolic communication or of some other visual or aesthetic concern. In other words, an image is a selective translation. As the degree of translation increases, the beholder may recognize less the similarity to the object than the intention of the maker, especially if the maker and beholder share symbolic conventions. An extreme example is written language. Only the visual shape of the object is represented, and vision, as discussed above, gives a great range of

freedom of choice of variables to represent. The variables are the aspects of the object, such as size, color, depth, or dimension. As a visual representation, the image is removed from the "causal commerce of things." For example, it can depict danger without endangering. Thus, the image suggests a timeless, non-transient present, as if it were no longer an effect of its maker. Unlike a footprint, which tells of its causation, an image tells of its object, even if it betrays its causality. Finally, based on all of the above, an image "hovers as an ideal entity" between its substratum, or physical carrier, and its imaged object. That enables the timeless presentation, "exempt from the accidents of a real (dynamic) event."[72]

What this implies for the image maker and beholder[73] is vital to Jonas' understanding of human life. The subject (human) must perceive the likeness as a "mere likeness." An animal would only perceive an image as the same as its object or other than the object. Only humans perceive both sameness and otherness, that is, "conceive" of the image. To do so, one must distinguish the image from its substratum and must distinguish the object from both the substratum and the image. That process is the "mental separation of form from matter," of "eidos (appearance) from concrete reality.[74]

In the process of perception of a real thing (as opposed to perception of an image) one initially enocunters not an eidos but an object. In the encounter, the object communicates its "self-giving presence, the awareness of which constitutes one's

perception." To experience the reality of the object, one must feel affected by it, as explained above concerning touch as distinct from sight. However, if one is to apprehend the object's objectivity, one must cancel out the affectedness, that is, abstract from the encounter. One "abstraction" is the mere designation of the object as other than one's self and other objects. A second abstraction is the assigning of an identity to the object, despite our constantly changing viewpoint toward the object. This visual abstraction is the basis of what Kant termed the "synthesis of recognition," that is, the combination of succession of aspects into one object. Such abstraction is part of vision, and this is done, to a degree, by all seeing animals.[75]

The unique step which humans take is the translation of "a visual aspect into a material likeness," that is, the detachment of image from object. Vision provided a step back from the subject's environment. Humans take a further step, in which "appearance is comprehended qua appearance, distinguished from reality." This step is achieved by imagination, particularly memoray. In "animal" memory (Jonas realizes that some animals may also have what he terms "human memory"), the memory is evoked by the situation, such as hunger leading to repeating the route to food. The objects, such as the path, or the food, are not present in animal memory as images, and thus do not remain available at call. In human memory, the images are always present, reproducable at will. They can even be altered at will, because

what exists in memory is the eidos, separated form the object as it was encountered in reality. Moreover, humans can translate this internal image into an external representation, which representation becomes a new object which can be experienced, as opposed to the experience of the represented object. Such external representation is shareable by other humans, and thus the individual perception of the initial object has become objectified, so that communication becomes clearer. In addition, one can "know" the image, since in the process of depicting, one "remakes" the object, as an artist, and "what one makes he knows." What one "knows" is the image, not the object originally encountered in concrete reality.[76] The similarities and distinctions between this "knowing" and Gersonides' concept of knowing by pros hen equivocation will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The ability to remake images and to retain them in memory leads to the ability to experience truth. The experience of truth is a subset of the experience of knowing, that is, one knows what things are, as opposed to another kind of knowing in which one knows what to do, that is, how to behave. The distinction between concern with truth and concern with doing will become significant in the next section in contrasting classical philosophy with modern science.[77] Here, the purpose is to explain how image-making leads to the experience of truth. In sum, one distinguishes truth from falsehood not by supplanting a "wrong" perception with a "right" perception, but by maintaining both, so that the "wrong" is confronted as falsified with the right one,

that is, the "right" one becomes the standard by which to judge the other. To do this, one's past must remain available in a non-commital way, that is, detached from the effectiveness of reality. Thus, as to theoretical truth, that is, dealing with things as opposed to "moral truth which means dealing with one's fellow men," human beings can experience it only because of their image-making faculty.[78] How human beings "use" such truth will be discussed in the next sections.

One further benefit of the image-making faculty is most significant to Jonas' theodicy, that is, the eidetic control of motility and of imagination. The attached eidos is used by the mind to command the links to move, as in writing, choreographed dance, and use of hands for technological developments. Only for humans is "muscular action governed not by set stimulus--response pattern but by freely chosen, internally represented, and purposefully projected form."[79] In other words, human beings have free choice in control of their bodies. The same free choice by eidetic control applies to use of one's imagination, such as selecting, making, and altering images, that is, one's "internal drafting," which is fundamental to rational thought. Together, the control of imagination and its application to the control of motility make human freedom possible.[80]

Jonas finds in Rabbinic commentary a similar understanding of human uniqueness. In Genesis Rabbah 17:4, the Rabbis expand on the story of Genesis 2 in which Adam named the animals, and observe that God praised Adam as greater than the angels

because Adam could give names. This was the first "distinctly human act, ... a step beyond creation." In bestowing names upon species, "the archetyped order of creation (is preserved) in the face of new individual multiplicity." Human beings thus "renew the original act of creation in its formal aspect," making "an ordering of nature." Analogously, the depicting of an image is a re-enactment of creation, "a symbolic making-over again of the world." Image-making makes clear what giving names assumes, that is, "the availability of the eidos as identity over and above the particulars, for human apprehension, imagination, and discourse."[81]

6. From Organism to Philosophy

The freedom obtained by mediation and objectification ultimately leads the subject, the human being, to perceive itself as an object, that is, to reflect. The self differs from the objects discussed above, for the subject perceives internally as well as externally. In the external perception, one abstracts the eidos, creates an image, and thus makes a new entity, an "I". On this image of self, through eidetic control, one "models, experiences and judges (one's) own inner state and outward conduct". "Willingly or not (one) lives the idea of man - in agreement or in conflict...with good conscience or with bad."[82]

The perception of self as object and the consequent conflict between self-image and self lead the human to a concern which was prefigured in simpler organic forms but only possible for humans. As Jonas describes it:

> The vital concern of feeling which is at the bottom of life's venture and toil, and which is always for the enjoyment of selfness in the meeting with otherness, has here by a daring detour found its true and, in a way, original object. As in all achievements of life, the price is high. As human satisfaction is different from animal and far surpassing its scope, so is human suffering, though man also shares in the animal range of feelings. But only man can be happy and unhappy, thanks to the measuring of his being against terms that transcend the immediate situation. Supremely concerned with what he is, how he lives, what he makes out of himself, and viewing himself from the distance of his wishes, aspirations, and approvals, man and man alone is open to despair.[83]

The possibilities of happiness and unhappiness lead us to theorize about fundamental concerns, such as theodicy. For each of us, "'a question have I become unto me': religion, ethics, and metaphysics are attempts, never completed, to meet and answer the questions within an interpretation of total reality." With the question, "biology cedes the field to a philosophy of man."[84]

The first response by Jonas is philosophical, since philosophy is "the elucidation of the nature of reality by secular (rational) thought, and of the nature of thinking about reality in secular thought." As such, it is "desirable and even necessary for theology," which is "the elucidation of the contents of faith (not, of course, of the internal structure of faith, which would be phenomenology)."[85] Jonas' theological response to the question of self (and of theodicy) will be discussed in Sections 7 through 9. This section considers his philosophical response.

Philosophers develop knowledge and theories in response to the question of self. They "use" these theories for a dual

purpose -- the preservation of life, and the promotion of a good life, or, expressed negatively, "to ward off extinction and to ovecome misery." For all philosophers, the purpose of knowledge and theory thus is happiness. However, a crucial distinction exists in how this purpose is achieved. For classical philosophy, especially Aristotle, "the condition of knowing itself (is) the perfection (supreme happiness) of the knower's being." As Gersonides illustrates, one cannot accept "knowing" as ultimate happiness unless the objects of knowledge "are the noblest, most perfect objects." Without such objects, "the contemplative ideal of classical philosophy becomes pointless." Modern science, exemplified by Francis Bacon, rejects either the existence of such objects or our ability to know them. Happiness is a goal towards which knowledge, as a means, leads.[86]

Aristotle and Bacon speak of two types of knowledge, as discussed above, the distinction between knowing as truth and knowing as doing. For Aristotle, Aquinas and all classical philosophers (including Gersonides), happiness exists in speculative knowledge, that is, knowledge concerning things unchangeable and eternal, such as first causes and intelligible forms. These are merely contemplated, not acted upon. A "lesser" level of knowledge is practical science, or art, concerning the changing and the changeable. Speculative theory assists practical science by giving wisdom to its user, but such a "use" of theory is not "the best response to the necessities of man." The "best response" is pure thought.[87]

To the philosophers of modern science, such as Bacon, one meets, and conquers, the "necessities of humanity" by art. Speculative reason (theory) remains, as for Aristotle, the "discovery and rational account of first causes and universal laws (forms)," that is, nature remains the object, but the purpose is art, "to command nature in action." Bacon seeks a science of "nature at work."[88] This reflects a "physical and moral urgency" not apparent in Aristotelians. They spoke of "perfection" and "fulness of being," while modern science focuses on "the necessities and miseries of humanity."[89] Knowledge yields means to deal with common things. One knows such things primarily, not derivatively as did the classical philosophers. "The nature of things is left with no dignity of its own . . . All dignity belongs to man . . . and all things are for use . . . sovereign use." Nature is conceived of as a power and humanity, in its own defense, must "rule or be ruled."[90]

To science, the whole is merely the sum of the parts. Thus, one merely learns the parts in order to explain the whole. There are no transcendent values, no self-sufficient unifying theory. Science is "value-free," dealing only with objects "lower" than human beings, "lower" in that the objects are neutral about whatever value is assigned to them. Even if the object is man, as in psychology and sociology, the object is only those aspects of man which are subject to causal laws, not man the knower. Science cares not about what things are, about "the God-created . . . intrinsic nature of the substances involved," but about the

accidental, the functioning of those substances under varying conditions."[93]

Science is a "know-how," not a "know-what."[94] As such, it, and its philosophic spin-offs such as existentialism (below), are committed to "unceasing dynamism," with "no abiding present," what Nietzsche termed "sovereign becoming."[95] Jonas laments that "there are those who cheer the surge that sweeps them along and disdain to question 'whither?'" Change, to Jonas, has no value unless one asks "what entity changes (if not toward what)." Moreover, implicit within the affirmation of change is a transcendent image of that which changes, that is, of "the nature of 'man as man'." "If (there is) an image, (there is) a norm, and if a norm, then the freedom of negation, . . . (which) freedom itself transcends the flux and points to another sort of theory," a theory concerned with ends, with happiness, a theory "on which science, committed to provide a means for happiness, cannot pronounce."[96]

The followers of modern science seek to avoid any question of ends, and "understandably so," when "faced with the threat of catastrophe." If so, happiness turns only on "resourcefulness," "the meeting of the recurrent emergency." In addition, since science has rejected transcendent value, happiness becomes "hedonism," "indulgence in the use of things." The question of ends is thus not avoided but resolved by default.[97]

The dangers of science are becoming evident in our century. Science is a skill, yet it "begets its use by its own momentum." As a result, "the hiatus between [possessing that

skill and using it], where judgment, wisdom, freedom have their play, is here dangerously shrinking: the skill possesses the possessor." The goals and uses of theory and art are determined by the results of the preceding use. Theory, which was designed by science "to liberate man from nature" subjugates him to a new nature.[98]

Thus, science remains in Plato's cave, even though the possibility of science implies and evidences something transcendent within human nature. Even if ignored, "pure theory" exists, and the goal of truth remains the most worthwhile goal. Within the "human fact of science," which is outside of science itself, lies a clue to the theory of human nature, the clue of image-making, through which modern philosophy can rediscover the essence of the human being and "through it, perhaps, even something of the essence of Being."[99]

Before Jonas can expand from the essence of human being to the essence of Being itself, he must respond to existentialism, as a widespread contemporary response to the conditions of our world and as the philosophic background from which Jonas, a student of Heidegger, emerges.

At least since Pascal, philosophers have responded to a sense of "utter loneliness," surrounded by a universe indifferent to human aspirations. Like reeds, man's existence is "but a particular blind accident, no less blind than would be the accident of his destruction." Yet human beings are "thinking reeds," so that we are aware of nature's indifference. Possessing minds, we

are separated from the rest of existence by an unbridgeable gap. No apparent role exists for us, and thus we have no frame of reference for understanding ourselves. Moreover, indifferent nature provides us with no reference to ends, to purpose, so that our values cannot be grounded in objective reality, but merely posited by each of us. To Pascal, the universe is God's creation, but it does not reveal the creator's purpose, wisdom, or perfection. All that is revealed is God's power, and our existence is contingent on God's inscrutable will. All that we can predicate of God is will and power, which become the essence of human life.[100]

Like the philosophy of Pascal, modern existentialism is based on the awareness of estrangement between man and nature, a dualistic response to conditions which are broadly parallel to those to which gnostic dualism responded. All forms of gnosticism posited an absolute rift between the human spirit and the world. The laws of our universe result from (the demiurge's) blind will to nullify and coerce. Our cosmos remains an ordered system of laws, but not one which is accessible to human reason, not an effect of divine wisdom, understanding and love. As we become "conscious of (our) utter forlornness," subject to a blind nature to which we, by our spirit, are superior, we become frightened and dread our "solitary otherness" (Pascal's term). We thus are internally alienated from the world which externally compels us. The gnostic response, parallel to the modern existentialist response, is not to seek integration but to deepen the alienation, to overcome the world by the power of knowledge, that is, to combat

nature's power with our power.[101] This also parallels the previously discussed response of modern science to nature.

The source of the gnostic perception of cosmic indifference also parallels the modern situation. Gnostics rejected the Greeks' "cosmic piety," which deemed the whole (universe) as that for the sake of which the parts, including humanity, exist, and in which the parts find a given role.[102] The whole had been the polis, or city-state, and later, the Empire, symbolizing the universe. The universe cares about the life of each individual, so that one's place is "to play one's part" and do it well, the widespread Stoic attitude. The problem for the gnostics in the alienating Empire, the same problem faced by us today, was that the alien whole provided no true caring for individuals, and individual lives had become cosmically irrelevant. The gnostics could no longer "act a part," but, in existentialist terms, sought rather to "exist authentically."[103]

Authentic existence in and through one's self is clearly antinomian, a trait which the existentialists have carried to its logical conclusion. Nietzsche declared that "God is dead," which, in Heidegger's interpretation, meant that the transcendental world, the realm of ideals which was the only source of sanction for objective values, had no effect on our world. Our only experience of God is of God's otherness. As Sartre explained, we are abandoned and since we are aware of that, we cannot help but reclaim our freedom, for "all is permitted."[104] Authentic existence thus means assertion of authentic freedom, not a psychic freedom, guided

by moral law, but a spiritual freedom, separated from law and nature. Psychically we can, at best, adjust to the established order, but spiritually, we are "beyond good and evil," in gnostic terms, "a law unto (ourself) in the power of (our) knowledge."[105]

We do not choose to emerge into the world, but are "thrown" into it. Dynamism prevails and we move from past to future with no provision for the present, no "now." To the gnostics the present was only a moment of gnosis, knowledge, although, unlike the existentialists, the gnostics found our origin and our purpose in an eternal deity. The existentialists (such as Heidegger) also found the present to be a mere "deficient mode of existence," a "moment (without duration) of crisis between past and future." Classical philosophy found a meaningful present in the contemplation of eternal objects, the Platonic or or Aristotelian forms, a world which no longer existed for the existentialists. One cannot stop in the present and behold values as objects, for they are mere projects, posited by will, and thus existence is "committed to constant futurity."[106]

A key distinction from gnosticism also helps clarify existentialism and Jonas' response to it. The gnostic felt thrown into an antagonistic nature. This same nature to the moderns is merely indifferent. The gnostics, however, had a direction to their existence, even if a negative one. Life for the existentialists has an unprecedented desparation. "Only man cares, in his finitude facing nothing but death, alone with his contingency and the objective meaninglessness of his projecting meanings."

Jonas finds in this difference from gnosticism a challenge to the self-consistency of existentialism. An indifferent nature could not "throw" humanity into the world, for if nature is indifferent, we, as part of nature, must be indifferent. If so, we should "eat, drink, and be merry." Yet we deny our own indifference. As Heidegger saw, "facing our own finitude, we find that we care not only whether we exist but how we exist." If we care, then nature, which includes us, cannot be wholly indifferent. If a dualism of humanity and nature is to be consistent, it must include a metaphysical base, as the gnostics maintained, for human separateness. Still, despite this inconsistency, the dualism of isolated selfhood confronts our modern reality. One alternative to the separation is monistic naturalism, in which humanity becomes indistinct from nature. Jonas, basing himself on the phenomenon of organism discussed above, presents a third approach, which seeks to avoid the dualistic rift while saving enough of the dualistic insight to uphold human uniqueness.[107]

Jonas' ontological base for integrating our unique essence into the natural world has been discussed at length. In order to complete this description of his philosophy, a discussion of his epistemology is necessary, for if image-making and beholding are a part of the essence of human being which can lead to a partial understanding of Being, then the image-beholder must conceive of the same image as its maker. How can one person understand the creation of another as it was intended by the creator?

Jonas responds that the best understanding could be gained if human essence were invariant. If each of us shared the same "hunger and thirst, hope and despair, deceiving and truth-telling," then we could draw on the identical essence and "imaginatively reproduce" in ourselves the experience of others.[108] Yet, today, the Platonic concept of "one determinate, irrevocably binding definition of man" is no longer acceptable, because "Nietzsche's message of 'the non-fixed animal' and the openness of becoming . . . was too powerful."[109] We cannot know each other "like by like." To some, this means that human understanding must necessarily fail because each "interpreter (beholder) indeed imports himself into the interpreted, inevitably alienating it from itself." Jonas agrees, but only to the extent that understanding is never complete, since there will always be "an indelible remainder of the nonunderstood, which recedes before (each advance of understanding) into infinity."[110]

Yet even if incomplete, Jonas finds understanding to be possible. While we cannot know another human "like by like," that other is a "human other", not "absolutely other," and thus "partakes in the same generic premises of our own possibilities," in spite of differing from our "contingent reality."[111] How can we even know that the "generic premises," the human possibilities are the same? Some would argue that our understanding of the other person's consciousness is merely by analogy or by transference and projection from what we learn by introspection. Jonas disagrees. Introspection alone cannot lead to knowledge even of our

own minds, since what we know depends on "communication with a whole human environment which determines . . . even what will be found in eventual introspection." Before we can be understood, even by ourselves, we must first understand others. From infancy, our "I" learns from others what it possibliy can be, can will, can feel. The shared possibilities, discussed below, underlie understanding.[112]

If only introspection gave understanding, a three month old infant could not "smile back" at its mother unless it knew its own face from a mirror (which it does not), correlated its expressions with its feelings, and then interpreted the same expression on the face of its mother. The infant understands not by projection from self-analysis but as "part of the intuitive beholding of life by life." This is not a neutral perception, such as viewing the other as prey, foe, threat, or sexual partner, but an instinctive familiarity, based on the common essence of human existence. The infant shares an "organic oasis" with the mother and understands her smile "like by like."[113]

The recognition occurs, because "something offers itself for recognition," which is perhaps the "primary phenomenon" of life, that is, that "animal life is expressive, even eager for expression." As discussed above (Section 3 concerning causality), each individual animal creates his or her own identity by forming its material self in its own mental image and by controlling the relations (the mediated relations) between its self and the world outside itself. A human observer would understand such "self-creation" because that also "creates" him or herself, that is,

expresses his or her identity. The observer's understanding of the human object is thus the "experience of (the) potential (of the observer), mediated by symbols," such as words, pictures, or gestures. We can understand based not only on our prior experience but based on our latent possibilities, "which are called on by the voice of others." Our understanding is empathetic, based on our shared human possibilities. By this, language can "conjure up the hitherto unimagined," which leads to poetry and to history.[114]

The understanding of history illustrates such shared human possibilities. One, discussed above, is the ability to make and behold images. The meaning of the image may not always be recognized, but the beholder will know "that it is an image, that it was meant to represent something, and that in such representation it let reality appear in a heightened and validated form." Similarly, if we find the historical evidence of a tool, we might not know its particular purpose, but we know that it had one and that its creator both conceived of it as a means to an end, a cause of an effect, and produced it according to that conception. Moreover, if we found a tomb, we may not know the maker's idea of death, but we know that he or she pondered "the riddle of existence and of what is beyond appearance." From images came art, from tools, physics and technology, and from tombs, metaphysics. Each one represents a transcendent mode of human freedom, by which we overcome unconditional givens, that is, by tools, or invention, we overcome physical necessity, by image, or representation and imagination, we overcome passive perception, and by tomb, that is,

by faith and piety, we overcome the paralyzing fear of inescapable death.[115]

These are some of the shared human possibilities which are empathetically understood by all human others, contemporary as well as historical. They lead us not to know the original experience, but "a vicarious co-experience," as in art, "hovering between . . . thought and experience," since it is representational and yet not unfeeling. "Only this we know: the self-transcending feat of understanding takes place on the base and is the ground of that abiding common humanity which is somehow always at our call."[116]

7. From Philosophy to Theology

In responding to the problem of theodicy, Jonas' philosophy has brought the reader this far, and a bit further, although at a point soon to be reached, the bounds of philosophy, based only on reason, will be passed and realm of theology will be entered. As mentioned, theology is "the elucidation of the contents of faith," while philosophy is "the elucidation of the nature of reality by secular thought, and of the nature of thinking about reality in secular thought. Philosophy is thus useful to theology, since theological discourse follows the rules of all discourse. Also, since "the contents of faith comprise the dealings of God with the world and with man," philosophy provides "knowledge as to what the world and man are." The most useful philosophy would be the one which provides the best such knowledge, that is, the most true to reality by the criteria of secular reason. Unfortunately for

theologians, there is no philosophic consensus on this and even if there were, they could not necessarily rely on its authority. Theologians must nevertheless make vital decisions about their lives, and thus must choose some philosophic base, either from present needs or from the relation of the particular philosophy to their faith. In any case, "a great deal of caution and mistrust" is in order. While philosophy per se can be most tempting in its similarity to one's faith, it may be most useful by its "otherness."[117] Despite this risk, the relationship between the two is unavoidable, as demonstrated in Jonas' consideration of human immortality and of its relation to the creation and nature of our world.

In the idea of immortality, all of the philosophy of Jonas so far discussed is applied and extended to its furthest reaches. Jonas deals with the "idea of immortality," because the fact of it is beyond proof or disproof. Immortality itself is not an object of knowledge, "but the idea of it is, "although that implies that one's belief in it depends solely on the appeal of its meaning. Thus, Jonas presents only evidence and arguments which he believes will appeal to the "modern temper."[118]

The contemporary mind, including Jonas', cannot accept the Greek concept of survival by one's immortal worldly fame, the most empirical of the approaches to immortality. That concept required trust in the judgment of those who bestow fame, that is, the future public, whose opinion is not held in high regard by the present public. Also, such a concept places a premium on vanity

and on spectacular deeds, so that the infamous, such as Hitler or Stalin, would gain an immortality denied to the humble and pious. Another empirical concept, immortality by one's influence on future generations, while a praiseworthy hope for the doers of just deeds, is similarly unacceptable. Moreover, both rely on the survival of the existing civilization, which is not a safe "repository of our 'immortal' acts."[119]

Nonempirical concepts of personal survival in an hereafter are also unpersuasive. One such concept envisions the hereafter as the realm of retribution or compensation for this life. One problem is that such justice calls for only a finite afterlife, since the accounts which it balances are finite. Moreover, undeserved suffering or missed happiness can be fairly compensated only in its original setting, that is, a world in which the outcome is unknown, so that one experiences "the anxiousness of chance and the zest of challenge and the sweetness of achievement under such terms." In sum, "the here cannot be traded for a there."[120] While Jonas does not mention it, this forecloses one type of response to the problem of theodicy, the justification of God by future reward and punishment.

Equally unacceptable today is the idealist concept that our world is "mere appearance" and that reality lies in another realm. The "shock of the external" makes it impossible not to take our world seriously. When confronted with "the beauty of the animated face," and particularly when presented with the horrors of Buchenwald, we must reject both the demotion of life to appearance and the consolation that it is not truly real.[121] The modern

mind also rejects the related concept which Kant may have endorsed, that time is not ultimately real, but merely a category or form imposed on a phenomenal reality which is apparent to our consciousness since it is of that noumenal world. As discussed above, time and finitude are "integral to the authenticity of our (organic) existence." In the spirit of the existentialists, we moderns "claim our perishability . . . and insist on facing nothingness on having the strength to live with it.[122]

Nevertheless, temporality is not the only acceptable modern position. Our mere "fact and fumbling (with the) idea of eternity" gives a hint that we may transcend transcience. The nature of human existence, particularly our transcendent freedom, provides another hint. Yet the most persuasive empirical signs of our potential immortality are the experiences Jonas calls "moments of supreme decision." Jonas does not rely on the mystical encounters of others, since the "psychologizing modern mind" would be too suspicious. Similarly, he rejects as unpersuasive the evidence of experiences of love or of beauty. Rather, he cites a feeling all have experienced, "in (those) moments of decision when our whole being is involved (and) we feel as if acting under the eyes of eternity." They are moments in which we feel that our "present deed" will affect our own eternal image and thereby affect the "spiritual totality of images that evergrowingly sums up the record of being." The key hint is not the nature of the act, but our perception of the significance of the decision and the deed. At these times, "we wish so to act that . . . we can live with the

spirit of our act through an eternity to come, or die with it the instant after this." Whether or not we succeed "in the incalculable course of mundane causality," whether or not we will later judge our deed as correct, at that moment we face "the agony of infinite risk" and "act as if in the face of the end." The now, the fleeting present which the existentialists denigrated as a deficient mode of existence, takes on an "absolute status by exposing itself to the criterion of being the last moment granted of time."[123]

These feelings hint at a "deathlessness, but not necessarily mine," which is nevertheless "so related to my mortality that I can, even must, share in it." Yet it is the action, the decision, not the feeling which relates us to eternity. Paradoxically, it is in the transient, momentary, fleeting event, a decision, that a relation to eternity becomes apparent, not in feeling, which has duration, extension, and "wishes to last." The paradox provides the clue. That which has extension, such as feeling, has an end, a limit, and "cannot outlast itself." In contrast, "the critical divide of the existential now, in which free action is born, has dimension only by accident, and is not measured by it."[124] It is the moment of free choice towards which Jonas' entire examination of organic and human existence has pointed. The choice occurs in the mental realm, separated from the physical, yet affecting it as if tipping an inverted giant cone.

The moment is not "a standing now," not a contemplation of an unchanging realm of ideals nor a "mystical release from the

movement of time," but "the momentum-giving motor of that very movement." For Jonas, eternity, as essence, is found in the midst of concrete reality, not removed from it. Time seems to wait in suspense, while we are exposed to the timeless, at the same instant as our decision hurls us into action and time. Thus, one finds "openness to transcendence in the very act of committing (oneself) to the transcience of situation, and, in this couble exposure, which compounds the nature of total concern, the 'moment' places the responsible agent between time and eternity. From this place-between springs ever new the chance of new beginning, which ever means the plunge into the here and now."[125]

This concept of "an immortality of deeds" should appeal to the modern temper, for it derives from the flux, the finitude, and the temporality of which we are so conscious. Moreover, it carries an essential aspect of three traditional ideas on immortality -- (1) the Greek notion of fame by "meteoric deed and daring," (2) the medieval concept of retribution for our "life sum of purpose, acts, and failures to act," and (3) the Kantian argument that personal immortality can derive only from "our moral being . . . as a postulate of practical (not theoretical) reason." As shown above, the first is "dubious," the second "faulty," and the third "invalid," yet all contain the aspect of justice and all find their appeal in conferring a "transcendent dignity . . . on the realm of decision and deed."[126]

With his concept of an "immortality of deeds", Jonas attempts to maintain this transcendent dignity and to maintain an

aspect of justice (in that a person's good deeds have a good effect on the transcendent realm and bad deeds have a bad effect). Jonas also attempts to overcome the limits of the other three concepts: unlike immortality by fame, Jonas' concept of immortality grants immortal existence to all individuals; unlike immortality as retribution, Jonas' concept does not posit any balancing of suffering and happiness; and unlike the idealist rejection of concrete actions as part of our immortality, Jonas finds such acts to be the base of our immortality.

Jonas posits that intimations like these are probably the source of various symbolic representations of immortality, such as the Jewish tradition of the "Book of Life" and the gnostic symbol of "the transcendent Image."[127] Jonas' analysis of these metaphors sheds further light on his own concept, and provides the link between his philosophy of human freedom, essence, and immortality and his concept of God.

While Gnostic literature contains several versions of the simile of "the transcendent Image" or "the last image." One significant version posits an eternal "celestial self", which waits in the upper world while the "terrestial self" experiences trials and deeds, through which the celestial self is perfected or, Jonas adds, spoiled. These selves, according to another version, contribute to "the last image," which builds up progressively from the processes of life in our world, especially human acts and images, at the end of time. Humans work to restore "to its pristine fullness" the image of Primal Man, our original spiritual self, an emanation from "First God (the good God, in contrast to the

Demiurge who created our world), whose initial self-surrender to the darkness and danger of becoming made the material universe possible and necessary at the same time." While the modern "antidualistic temper" will not accept the gnostic lowering of the status of our corporeal world, nor will its commitment to flux find acceptable the eschatologically fixed goal at the end of time, the notion of an accumulated total image should be appealing.[128]

A similar appeal would be found in the Jewish metaphor of a "Book of Life," "a kind of heavenly ledger wherein our 'names' shall be inscribed according to our deserts." Jonas envisions our deeds as inscribing themselves, registering "in a transcendent realm, by rules of effect quite different from those of the world, ever swelling the unfinished record of being and forever shifting the anxious balance of its reckoning." Jonas does not see this Book as a ledger, based on which God will reward or punish us. Rather, he speculates that our addition to the record will determine the outcome of the spiritual realm. In effect, "we, as mortal agents, [may] have no further stake in the immortality which our acts go to join," but those actions, determined by our free choice, "may just be the stake which an undetermined and vulnerable eternity has in us." The stake is most precarious, for we can freely choose good or evil. Jonas speculates, through his creation myth, that we are, "perhaps, an experiment of eternity [God], our very mortality [is] a venture of the immortal ground with itself [and] our freedom [is] the summit of the venture's chance and risk.[129]

8. The Role of God in Creation and Beyond

To fit his concept of immortality, which he describes as a "hypothetical fragment" into a comprehensive metaphysical explanation, Jonas chooses the "vehicle of myth or likely imagination," a method of expression which Plato permitted when one has "a license of ignorance, which in these matters is our lot."[130] In expressing theology, objective, philosophic, rational language is not adequate and potentially misleading, for, as noted, the basis of theological beliefs is not merely philosophic thought. Non-objective language is needed, but unlike the poet or the prophet, the theologian is committed to a theoretical elucidation and thus also needs objective language. For a solution, Jonas cites Rudolf Bultmann's position that despite the inevitable inadequacy of any language for theology, one can be less inadequate or more. "The question [for Jonas and "up to a point" for Bultmann] is not how to derive an adequate language for theology, but how to keep its necessary inadequacy transparent for what is to be indicated by it: its lesser or greater opaqueness is a matter about which something can be done."[131]

When one discusses humanity and our world, philosophic, objective speech is most adequate, yet when one turns to God and the divine realm, "symbolic speech must begin." Otherwise, "the understanding of God [would] be reduced to the self-understanding of man." Philosophy and its language are appropriate to explain the "self-experience of man 'before' God, . . . not in God,"[132] and are least appropriate "for the sphere of divinity itself."

Our uncertainty about that sphere is more accurately expressed "by the symbols of myth than by the concepts of thought." When all expression on the subject must be opaque, it is easier to keep clear the transparency in the "manifest opaqueness" of a myth than in the apparent objectivity of conceptual language. The consequences for interpretation of myth are a vital concern to Jonas. He explains:

> Myth taken literally is crudest objectification.
> Myth taken allegorically is sophisticated objectification.
> Myth taken symbolically is the glass through which we darkly see.[133]

Jonas' myth of God's role in creation and beyond is set forth in full in Section 2 of this Chapter. As noted, it began as a personal fantasy, although it reflects Jonas' entire examination of human existence, freedom, and transcendence. Moreover, Jonas seeks to connect his myth with aspects of Jewish thought. An analysis of this connection, which is not necessarily a reconciliation, brings more clarity to the aspects and the consequences of Jonas' myth.

Creation occurred when God, "for unknowable reasons . . . chose to give [Himself] over to the chance and risk and endless vanity of becoming."[134] This clearly implies a consequential dynamism and uncertainty, which will be discussed below. It also posits creation ex nihilo, a position which, for Jonas as for Gersonides, has great significance for theodicy.

Jonas accepts the "biblical" idea that the world was created rather than the "classical philosophical" concept that our world is eternal. The mere idea of creation, whether ex nihilo or otherwise, carries wide-ranging consequences. In sum, "the biblical doctrine pitted contingency against necessity, particularity against universality, will against intellect."[135] The classical doctrine of eternity reflected an ontological scheme which asserted that God has an essence, which is immutable; that since God cannot, by logical impossibility, "be other than he is," God must be pure reason or intellect; that the world's essence, or order, derives from the divine nature and thus "cannot be other than it is"; that the world is essentially rational, although, unlike God, it is qualifiedly so, and the apprehension of such rationality can lead one to induce the proper conception of God; and that the world's derivative nature implies that all being falls into a hierarchical system, from "grossest matter" to God, the "purest form."[136] Whereas Gersonides sought to reconcile this philosophic scheme with the idea of creation, Jonas rejects the scheme.

Jonas considers early medieval attempts to argue for creation from the world's apparent contingency, which would reflect divine will rather than intellect. Some Moslem thinkers, beginning with the Kalam, argued that all in nature could be other than it was, from the color of a flower to the order of the stars. Thus, the world gives more evidence that it results from divine free choice than from necessary emanation or derivation. Classical philosophy had allowed for contingency in particulars, but not in their

"generic properties" nor in the overall natural order.[137] The Kalamic argument was carried to its extreme by Alghazali, who, according to Jonas, anticipated Hume and argued that causal connection was not necessary, that is, not observable. We cannot understand the cause of our world by studying it.[138]

Maimonides responded to the "Humean" skepticism with a "Kantian" answer. He argued that while the world is determined by coherent laws, those of Aristotelian physics, the laws themselves are contingent, that is, neither self-evident nor logically deducible. In creating the world, God chose the total set of laws from an infinite number of possibilities. Thus, the laws of reason cannot be applied to God's relation to the world in order to prove its eternity.[139] Contemporary philosophers have gone one step further, holding not only that contingency disproves the rationally necessary character and order of our world, but also that since it does not establish creation by divine will, that notion may be rejected. Thus, creation was "dropped without a return to what it was meant to replace."[140] Jonas, as discussed above, responds to such nihilism by finding in our world of flux a transcendent human essence, which provides a basis for inferring creation, even if not as a necessary inference. In other words, from our existence as selves which maintain our own identity and have the freedom to choose between good and evil, and the ability to carry out our choices, one can possibly infer that a deity endowed us with that freedom and ability, even though that inference is not necessary.

Beyond the "mere" fact of creation, Jonas' myth posits creation ex nihilo. He concedes that the account in Genesis 1 does not require this, since it could easily be construed as suggesting primordial, chaotic matter preceding creation. He also concedes that a pre-existent material receptacle is logically compatable with divine creation, as shown by Plato in Timaeus.[141] Jonas, and others, prefer creation ex nihilo, since, without it, God can know only the universal (form), not particulars, and individual providence is impossible. Each individual, then, was "called forth from nothing and exists only as a constant renewal of (that) act," and therefore, all things are ends in themselves.[142]

The contrast to modern science is discussed above. Jonas also contrasts his position with the view of Gersonides (the only instance found in which he mentions Gersonides). He notes that Gersonides consistently derived from the dualism of form and pre-existent matter the "necessary corollary" that individual providence is impossible.[143] Jonas does not seem to realize that, as discussed in great detail in Chapter 2, Gersonides nevertheless argued that there is a type of individual providence, although it does not apply to particulars qua particulars.

Beyond a God who creates ex nihilo, Jonas conceives of a God who takes ultimate risks.[144] This is not a clockmaker who merely sets up a physical order and lets it run by itself, rest, for Jonas (above) finds that physical determinism does not correspond to organic reality. This is also not a "God of the physicists," who perceives human beings as only an effect of

external causes, but a God who knows of our "inner view" (discussed above), as the creator of our internal purposefulness. Moreover, this is a God who neither acts by arbitrary will and power, as modern existentialists have posited, nor who abandons humanity to a random dynamic interplay of worldly forces. Rather, Jonas conceives of a God who knows about events in our world, who cares about us and even suffers with us, who cares for us, and who interacts with us in that God is changed by what we do and God reveals some guidance to us. Each of these aspects of Jonas' God concept needs to be considered separately.

As a response to the problem of theodicy, the "most critical point" is that God is not omnipotent. "On a purely logical plane," Jonas doubts that absolute, unlimited power is possible. Power is a relational term, that is, one (including God) can only have power over an object. Without an object, power cancels itself out. To exist, power must meet resistance, an opposing force, and overcome it. Yet if an object, a something else, exists and provides resistance, then the powerful subject (God) cannot be "all-powerful," even if its power is far superior to that of the object. Power must be divided.[145]

Omnipotence is also unacceptable to Jonas for theological reasons. As discussed above in Section 2, God cannot be considered good, somewhat intelligible, and all-powerful in light of our experiences with the Holocaust and other incontrovertable examples of the reality of evil in our world. As noted, goodness and semi-intelligibility are minimally required by what Jonas

calls "Jewish norms" and that, together with the logical problems of omnipotence and the ultimate uncertainty due to human freedom, leads Jonas to reject omnipotence.[146]

If God is not omnipotent, then Jonas sees two theological alternatives -- dualism and "God's own self-limitation through creation from nothing." As discussed, Jonas prefers the latter, but his reasons for rejecting dualism are illuminating. One form of dualism, exemplified by the gnostics, posits an active force, or deity, who creates evil in a contest with a higher, beneficent deity. Jonas finds this "plainly unacceptable to Judaism,"[147] and, as discussed above, contrary to the potential unity of mind and body. A second form of dualism, dividing form and matter, is what Jonas calls the Platonic concept that a passive receptable is the source of all evil. Jonas finds this a possible response to "blind, natural causality," such as earthquakes, inadequately addresses his concern after Auschwitz with the evil inflicted by free human agents. Thus, Jonas posits a self-limitation by God, "for the sake of self-determined finitude."[148]

Such a limitation goes beyond the mere lack of omnipotence (see above in Section 2) and posits that God, for a time, forfeited "any power to interfere in the course of things." This concept of forfeiture is explicitly a direct response to Auschwitz, since to posit that God could have interfered but chose not to do so is to deny God's goodness.[149] The forfeiture also has a positive derivation, in that it is a consistent, although not necessary, deduction from Jonas' examination of human existence.

This is a positive approach in that unfettered human freedom can ultimately benefit the divine realm, although it might not. (Jonas does not explicitly discuss this derivation, but it is clearly implicit.) It is consistent in that if we are truly free agents, that is, if the acts we choose for our "selves" are transcendent and undetermined, and if our deeds are to have a significant impact on the transcendent realm, then God should not be able to interfere and cancel out our choices. Yet it is not a necessary deduction, for one could logically reconcile human freedom and potential divine interference by appealing to the total inscrutability of God's ways. "Mystery" may create other problems, as it does for Gersonides. It is mentioned here merely as one "logical," albeit not compelling, alternative to Jonas' God-concept.

One key consequence of God's self-forfeiture is that God is "becoming," that is, changing. God's image "emerges in time" and is not, at least not yet, the complete, perfect, immutable essence predicated by Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy and by that segment (a prevailing one) of Jewish and Christian theology which has incorporated this essence into its God-concept. To Jonas, "this Hellenic concept has never accorded well with the spirit and language of the Bible; and the concept of divine becoming can actually be better reconciled with it."[150]

A "becoming God" means a God who is "affected," that is, "altered, made different," by what happens in our world. Jonas argues that "if God is in any relation to the world -- which is a cardinal assumption of religion -- then by that token alone the

Eternal has 'temporalized' Himself and progressively becomes different through the actualizations of the world process."[151] This argument would not follow for Gersonides or for Aristotle, since to them, the "world process" does not lead to any change in God nor to any change in the essences (forms) of things in our world. Jonas, as discussed above, cannot accept such a static view of our world. On the other hand, a "becoming God" is contrary to the "unconditional temporality" of the existentialists (above), including Nietzsche's notion of a "ring by rings, the ring of eternal recurrence." Even if the continual flux of worldly events affects the divine realm, the change in that realm will resound to our realm, that is, God is not "dead." Thus, events in our world will not recur, since the eternal realm, neither dead nor indifferent, will retain a "memory" of past events and "grow with the accumulating harvest of time."[152]

A God who is not indifferent is "caring." A creator's concern for his creatures, Jonas notes, is "among the most familiar tenets of Jewish faith." Jonas focuses on "the less familiar aspect" that God, unlike a "sorcerer," does not "care" by determining the outcome of worldly events. We are free agents and thus, God is "endangered," at risk. Otherwise, our world would be immutably perfect, a state which Jonas denies, in contrast to Gersonides, who finds the world, on an essential level, to be perfect. God cares, but, for "unknowable reasons," does not guarantee the results.[153]

If God is concerned with and affected by what occurs to us, then God must "suffer." Jonas intends not the Christian concept of a one-time act of suffering for the purpose of saving humanity, but a suffering "from the moment of creation" along with God's creatures. Jonas finds such suffering to be only prima facie distinct from the biblical concept of "divine majesty." In numerous biblical encounters with humanity, God is "slighted and rejected" and experiences grief and disappointment.[154] While Jonas does not ask what God was doing during the Holocaust, he would undoubtedly answer that, at the least, God was "crying."

God's concern, Jonas speculates, extends beyond passive suffering. While God may not be able to respond "beyad chazakah uzeroah netuyah," God still responds "with the mutely insistent appeal of His unfulfilled aim." Jonas adds, "this I will not further elaborate,"[155] presumably because these comments are in an article responding to Auschwitz, and an elaboration would require an extended discourse about organic and human freedom and its positive possibilities. Such an optimistic analysis would be, to say the least, insensitive to the victims and to all his readers, whose suffering, even if vicarious, was so severe. Nevertheless, these God-endowed positive possibilities of freedom are fundamental to Jonas' myth, which postulates that God intentionally left good and evil in the control of human choice. God's risk was presumedly calculated and thus it may be deduced that Jonas implicitly presumes that the possibilities of

an ultimately good outcome, while certainly not assured, are better than the possibilities of a bad one.

Beyond endowing human beings with such potential, Jonas speculates on a type of interaction between God and humanity. The speculation arises in the context of Jonas' concern that his concept of an "immortality of deeds" in their impact on the transcendent realm may exclude the lives of "the children of Auschwitz" and others "whose lives were cut off before they had their chance" to "inscribe themselves in the Book of Life." Jonas "refuses to believe" that they are denied an immortality available to "their tormentors and murderers." Jonas would "like to believe" that in response to their deaths, "there was weeping in the heights at the waste and despoilment of humanity." The "shout" of earthly suffering was answered by a groan and with wrath, an expression of a wound to the eternal realm. This expression might be felt by us. Perhaps, "the secret sympathy that connects our being with the transcendent condition works both ways." In other words, not only do our deeds affect the divine realm but its deeds and feelings affect us. It must affect us, at least somewhat, or the previously discussed inner evidence of human transcendence and immortality would not exist. If so, we might feel a "resonance" of the divine realm's response to worldly events. We may "mostly not" feel the reverberations, yet sometimes we do feel them, at least in "the spiritual mood of men." That would explain the "profound distemper of the contemporary mind," in which happiness and meaning, so desperately needed, elude us.[156]

In the case of the slaughtered children, their "share in immortality" may be that on their account, others responded to the dark mood which pervades our world so that we might "gain for those after us a new chance of serenity [in this world] by restoring it to the invisible world."[157] Jonas stresses that this is not a justification for their deaths. He finds no justification for such unmitigated human evil. Jonas presumedly would say that such evil is a result of the possibilities of human freedom, but not an inevitable result and not a result intended by God to serve some "higher purpose." The reverberation merely illustrates an active aspect of divine concern for humanity.

9. Ethical Consequences of the Myth: The Role of Humanity

Jonas' mythic response to the problem of theodicy has ethical consequences, which may be, at least unconsciously, the reasons for the positing of this myth, which Jonas admits began as a "personal fantasy." These consequences round out his theodicy, which began with the examination of organic existence, especially human life, derived from that a concept of God who creates and cares for humanity, and now, in the sphere of ethics, concludes with the role of humanity in response to that God-concept. The most direct moral consequence is that our deeds have transcendent importance, as discussed above in Section 7. In effect, humanity was created "for" the image of God, rather than "in" the image, since God's image develops in response to "the terribly ambiguous

harvest of (human) deeds." "Our impact on eternity is for good and for evil." We may or may not desire such an impact, and it might be better to leave no transcendent trace, "but this is not granted."[158]

Also beyond our choice is our mortality, yet, as discussed above with regard to organic existence, finitude is the spear which leads to the use of our freedom. "Infinite duration would . . . rob occasion of its urgent call. Moreover, mortality is not a "blemish" on existence. "The [mere] fact of existence [is the] mystery of mysteries . . . [for there is] no necessity of there being a world at all." In granting us existence and the possibilities of freedom, God, by self-denial, gave us all that God could. Our duty is to give something back to God. One means of such giving is to assure that it not happen too often that "it repented the Lord" for having made the world.[159]

Our actions have at least a twofold impact, causing changes in our world, an effect which sooner or later dissipates, and affecting "the eternal realm, where it never dissipates." Since our ability accurately to foresee the complex workings of our world is limited, the first impact depends much on "luck and chance." The latter "goes by knowable norms [discussed below], which, in the Bible's words (Deut. 30:14), are not far from our hearts." A third type of impact might be found in the continual interaction between our deeds, the divine response, and the resultant prevailing mood of a generation. Whether or not such reverberation occurs or is perceived, to Jonas, "the first two are more than enough to summon us to our task."[160]

What are the "knowable norms" which can guide our deeds as to their transcendent effect? Jonas gives only two such norms, both of limited scope and both negative. The first is to heed the "prophecy of doom" and the second is not to gamble the existence of human possibility. In order to understand what Jonas means and why he posits these norms, a rather lengthy discussion of Jonas' view of ethical guidance in our modern world. Jonas responds to the modern notion that "reason, through science, has destroyed faith in revelation," at the same time that reason has "disqualified itself" from guiding our choices by having limited its objects of knowledge to the material realm, that is, the realm useful to science.[161] Jonas begins by looking at three factors which contributed to of this lost faith. His response to those factors forms the basis of his own ethical guidelines.

The first factor is the modern, "scientific" concept of a value-free nature. This notion denies any essential goodness in the created world, which is totally indifferent to humanity, and, as a result, denies that creation evidences a good and caring creator. "The heavens no longer tell the glory of God . . . what they inspire is not admiration, but dizziness." Our world has no purpose, no ends, except as determined by the arbitrary will of each individual.[162] Jonas finds this analysis faulty. Science has not and cannot establish the "death of transcendence." Some, in the name of science, have asserted that "the emperor has no clothes," but science uses spectacles which can see only nakedness, that is, only the mundane. The biblical propositions of a good, willing, caring, and revealing creator have never

been refuted by science. Science has uncovered a complex of natural laws, but that does not "logically affect the possibility that these very laws . . . may subserve a spiritual, creative will."[163]

The second determinant of the modern denial of revelations is the lowered status of humanity. Three factors underlie this lowering. Evolution, the first factor, has led some to deny that there is any eternal human image. Based on such an image, religious thinkers had posited models for ethical conduct, such as "Be holy for I (God) am holy." Rather, we are the random products of a particular stage of unending becoming, commanded merely to "be fruitful and multiply."[164] As discussed above, the theory of evolution may also lead in the other direction and provide a clue to finding a human essence, a hint that our transcendent freedom is prefigured in all organisms.[165] The second factor lowering human status is "historical revelation," which posits that the values of each generation are mere products of changing cultures, generated and imposed "as matters of fact, not of truth."[166] As noted above, this is only somewhat true. True historical understanding is only possible based on common underlying human traits, such as tool-making, image-making, and tomb-building.[167] The third factor is modern psychology, which posits that the highest human "spirit" is but a disguised form of our own base drives. Any moral imperatives that exist come not from God but from our superego.[168] This is also only somewhat true. We undoubtedly project some moral standards to suit our

own desires, but it does follow that we cannot find some transcendent guidance for our behavior. Jonas' rule, discussed below,[169] reflect such guidance.

At the same time as these factors have lowered the ontological status of human beings, the third determinant, modern technology, has increased human power. Nature no longer possesses necessary integrity, but is merely an object of knowledge and an indifferent force, about which we learn so that we can oppose it with greater force. In this contest, our will is guided by "sheer desire, of which there is no limit." Thus, at the time when we have lost all guidance, we have gained our greatest powers.[170]

The dangers of lowered ontological status and heightened power are illustrated in the field of genetic engineering. First, the sheer speed of development poses a serious risk. Natural evolution works by "accidents," that is, chance mutations, yet it operates so slowly, so incrementally, and over such a wide range of creatures that the changes "cease to be 'accident' in the outcome." In other words, so many safeguards exist that if there is an essential purpose or divine "plan" to the development, as Jonas believes there is, then that purpose will not be thwarted. In the human scientific process, nature's "slow working accidents . . . are replaced by the fast working accidents of man's hasty and biased decisions, not exposed to the long test of the ages."[171] In evolution, each change by natural selection is but a small part of the entire natural process, so that the effect of any "mistake," defined below, is minimal. In contrast, in human technological development, one mistake could end all possibility of human achievement. Also,

change occurs so quickly that the safeguards which accompany slow change are lost.[172] For example, a new industrial process which causes emission of unhealthy pollutants could be counteracted by control fo the emissions or of the effects of the emissions, as long as there is time to discover the danger and the cure. However, industrial process today tend to change so rapidly that before one source of pollution can be recognized and remedied, many more sources have been developed and implemented.

The risks of speed are magnified by the uncontrolled direction of development. Not even human choice, much less divine will, guides the next step, which tend to follow the previous development, whether or not that following step was intended by the human initiator of the preceding one.[173] The use of nuclear research is an obvious example of this loss of control, while genetic engineering is a potential illustration. As discussed above, science as a skill "begets its use by its own momentum, . . . (so that) the skill possesses its possessor," with little or no room left for the intervention of human judgment, wisdom, and freedom.[174]

The dangers from the speed and the self-propelling inertia of scientific developments such as genetic engineering are further compounded since they involve an attempt to determine a distant future according to "the desires and expediences of the present." What is determined is not merely "how [one] is to live," today and tomorrow, but "what in [one's] constitution one is to be," on an essential level, into the distant future.[174] Past ethical theories tacitly assumed that the distant future could be ignored, since

long term calculation was impossible. Such calculation remains impossible, but our developments can have such monumental future impact that we can no longer ignore the distant future in our ethical considerations.[176] Most crucially, we have the capability of eliminating all of the wide ranging possibilities of human achievement, either by so altering human essence by genetic engineering, or by so altering the environment by pollution or war that the preconditions for human freedom would disappear. Previous ethical theorists, such as Aristotle and Bacon, were concerned with "human good" and the "best life," that is, with what one ought to be. They presumed a continuing human essence, on which moral standards were built. Today's concern is less "to bring about a particular image of man [than] first of all keep open the horizon of possibilities."[177]

The consequences are irreversible, for the stakes have become "the image of creation itself," including humanity.[178] In this contrast, Jonas' response focuses on negative precepts, that is, what not to do. The potential evil is so overwhelming that "we need first of all criteria for rejection."[179] Jonas suggests looking to biblical propositions, particularly those related to willful creation, not for their truth, but for their counsel to our pressing needs. In effect, Jonas implicitly reasons that since we know the dangers of our present course, since we know that those dangers arise from the rejection of essence and purpose in our world, and since we know that such rejection is not necessary, we should look for guidance to a system which presupposes essence

and purpose. This requires a "modesty of listening," that is, a "modesty in estimating our own cleverness in relation to our forebears." At least, we should not rashly dismiss biblical views as "mere mythology" which we have "outgrown by our maturity." If Jonas and the Bible are correct, and we are willfully created by a good deity, then we are not "our own masters, but trustees of a heritage."[180]

In other words, if the nihilistic conclusions of modern science and existentialism are true, then our potential destruction by war, pollution, or genetic engineering may be meaningless. However, if those conclusions are wrong, as Jonas asserts they may well be, then such destruction would be catastrophic. Thus, even if we are not sure of the truth, caution is advisable, together with a sense of mystery and awe. We must consider that the doctrine of creation would lead us to a reverence for the intrinsic integrity of nature and of human beings and would counsel us to act as caretakers, exploiting nature, yet with respect and piety, using nature, but without reducing "the wealth of kinds."[181] Similarly, the idea of creation leads to a reverence for the wealth of possibility of achievements which human beings can be given their present ability to make free choices and carry them out. Thus, in "shaping" the human image, we must be careful to educate rather than genetically manipulate. Educational errors are redeemable, like the mistakes of evolution. Genetic errors may "fixate" our image "and thereby cut off the as yet unrevealed promises of the image of God." The fact that creation might be true should cause in us "an ultimate

metaphysical shudder," preventing us from meddling with the secrets of our essence.[182]

Jonas deduces an ethical rule, not as "the last word in the search for goodness . . . (but as) an extremely useful first word," that "the prophecy of doom is to be given greater heed than the prophecy of bliss." This derives from the above described dangers of our power to affect irreversibly the distant future, together with our inability to foresee those effects. As a postulate, we are not permitted to gamble the existence of human essence, despite the technological feasibility of such a gamble.[183]

This duty to maintain human existence implies a correlative duty, a feeling of responsibility, toward others. This contrasts with some modern theories that others are mere external objects, "more the occasion than the aim for [our] deed." Examples are Neitzsche's "will to will," Sartre's "authentic decision," and Heidegger's "resoluteness," in all of which sovereign power to make ethical decisions is granted to one's self. They deny "the idea of any objectively valid obligations toward" others of which the others themselves could be the source.[184] Again, Jonas is distinctive in positing a human essence which leads to an imperative "to preserve the possibility of responsible action in the future."[185]

Jonas cites two areas of responsibility, parental and political, in which the object has an intrinsic claim on our concern. The "ought" to care for a newborn is "uncontradictable," even if not "irresistable," as no "ought" can be. Moreover, the "ought" arises from the infant's intrinsic nature. As argued

above, the infant is an inward self, not a "mere conglomeration of cells." Our responsibility is implied in such a nature. The infant is "radically insufficient," that is, its life is "a suspension of helpless being over not being, which [gap] must be bridged by another causeway," that is, by the help of another person. The help is required until the infant fulfills its "immanent teleological promise of eventual self-sufficiency."[186] As such, an infant is an archetype of all human objects of responsibility, all of whom are insufficient, for existence is precarious, and all of whom have "immanent telelogical promise."

Parallel to responsibility to an infant is one's political responsibility to the community. In both cases, the objects are "radically dependent" on our care, and our responsibilities continue without pause. Most crucially, our decisions in carrying out the responsibility will respond to a particular current situation, but will have long-range effects, which effects are unknown, partly because future circumstances are unknown, but mostly because the objects, the child and the community, have their own spontaneity and freedom. Thus, the responsible agent must seek "not so much to determine as to enable."[187]

For the child, there is an "end point" to the responsibility, in that it becomes self-enabling and consequently capable of correcting some of the parental failures. But there is no end point for the community. There, the "causal reach" of our deeds will be vast, generally in excess of our prescience. Moreover, many of our acts are irrevocable and constrain the option of all

posterity, in unpredictable ways. All we know for certain is that, as a matter of principle, political spontaneity will continue, and events will never conform to any plan. That knowledge reinforces the imperative to preserve the possibilities of free choice, that is, not to prevent the further appearance of spontaneity.[188] While this imperative restricts our choice, it does not determine it. The element of freedom remains, and with it, risk. Once one takes on the responsibliity, then one must wager based on uncertain knowledge. On occasion, as with Churchill in the Second World War, the immediate stakes are the lives of others, yet, whatever the stakes, the wager is unavoidable.[189]

Even outside the political arena, each person's decisions and acts affect our mundane world, and, as discussed, impact on the transcendent realm. We cannot choose to avoid that impact, and must choose, even if by default, what impact to have. As God wagered by the art of self-forfeiture that permits our freedom, so we must wager by exercising that freedom. Jonas cautions that we must take care not at least to eliminate the preconditions for that freedom, an understandable caution in a world that has experienced Auschwitz and confronts the possibilities of nuclear, environmental, and even genetic disasters. As Jonas admits, this caution is only a "first word" in ethical guidance, albeit a most vital beginning, since it demonstrates the possibility of certainty in moral standards. Implicit throughout Jonas' philosophy is the possibility of many more "words" of guidance, since the potentialities of human freedom, granted by God's self-limitation, lead not only to caution

but to seemingly unlimited opportunity for transcendent good. Even without any specifics of "how to" achieve that good, Jonas' demonstrations of the possibility of achieving them should be comforting and reassuring to those of us who have been philosophically overwhelmed by talk of meaninglessness, randomness, and arbitrary will and power. "In our brief span [of life], we can serve our threatened mortal affairs and help the suffering immortal God."[190]

10. Evaluation

If Gersonides is "nothing if not consistent," then Jonas is "nothing if not persuasive," as far as he goes. Jonas' caution and thoroughness are commendable. He generally clarifies what is self-evident, what is empirical, what is logically established, what is speculation, and what is mere hope. Responding to a world which has lost faith in any transcendent base, Jonas constructs, from credible organic evidence, external and internal, a new philosophical basis for faith, while he simultaneously demonstrates that the theories which led to that loss of faith do not prove or disprove as much as some of their proponents have claimed.

Jonas does this masterfully, as far as he goes. That he only goes so far is his major shortcoming. In two vital areas, he stops short, and even though he does so explicitly and for good reasons, his theodicy may not be convincing or comforting to some, because of these gaps. The first area is ethics, that is, the ethical consequences of Jonas' concepts of God and creation. To present a complete theodicy, which Jonas does not purport to do,

Jonas must not only explain that God cares about us but that and also how God cares for us. Ethical guidance would thus be one aspect of providential care, that is, what God gives to us and does for us. (Other aspects will be discussed below).

The gap is not the absence of guidance. As explained in Section 9, Jonas finds some "negative" guidance to be "revealed" in the phenomenon of life and in the biblical propositions about creation. He does not state whether he believes that these biblical propositions were revealed by was a direct divine intervention in the lives of Moses or Israel or some redactor or redactors or whether the Biblical author or authors discovered them by examining the nature of ourselves and our world, much as Jonas proceeds. Presumedly, Jonas believes the latter, since a direct divine intervention would be contrary to God's "self-forfeiture for the sake of unprejudiced becoming,"[191] for it would introduce a major prejudice. Jonas does allow for the possibility of a type of "direct" revelation in speculating that the divine realm might communicate to us its reaction to our deeds on earth, which communication could be apprehended by us by understanding the pervasive mood of our generation.[192] However, it is difficult to imagein that the biblical propositions about creation derived from such a form of revelation. Most likely, the revelation was the creation itself, that is, the presentation to humanity of external (philosophical) evidence and internal (subjective, beyond rational, theological) evidence form which we can derive the propositions. Moreover, he does not even posit that these biblical propositions concerning

creation are true. Although his deductions from the phenomenon of life coincide with these propositions and thus one might infer that Jonas holds them to be at least more probably true than others, his ethical guidelines derive from the mere fact that they might be true. Thus some "divine" guidance exists, despite its uncertainty and its indirect route in reaching us.

The gap is the absence of positive guidance. Jonas is conscious of this gap and explains it. He persuasively argues that today's most pressing ethical concerns are no longer the finding of "human good" or the "best life," but with "its precondition, namely, the existence of mankind in a sufficient natural environment." The concern is not "what man ought to be . . . (but) that he should be - indeed, as a human being." Jonas' negative guidelines succeed in responding to that concern. They fit their design not to bring about a particular image of the human being, "but first of all to keep open the horizon of possibilities."[193] What is lacking is a description of what we should do, assuming we succeed in keeping that horizon open. Most importantly, what is lacking in terms of theodicy is an explanation of how, if at all, God guides us about what to do and how such guidance justifies the claim that God is good and caring.

The second gap, which is also conceded by Jonas, is a failure explicitly to explain why God permits human suffering from natural evils, such as earthquakes and disease. The "Job" problem, which so engaged Gersonides, is not directly dealt with by Jonas. He accurately notes that "Jewish theology has to contend at this

hour [with] . . . the fact and success of [humanly chosen] evil rather than the inflictions of blind, natural causalty."[194] Nevertheless, a theodicy which does not contend with such evil is seriously inadequate. Perhaps a response can be inferred from Jonas' response to humanly initiated suffering. Some naturally caused suffering would be and is explained by Jonas as the necessary counterpart of organic freedom. The mediacy of animal life leads to the possibility not only of enjoyment, but of suffering, since "both (are) wedded to the effort." Suffering does not detract from enjoyment, but is "its necessary complement." However, this applies only to "intrinsic suffering," such as want or fear, not to pain, which is only "occasional."[193] Yet it is pain which leads to the problem of theodicy. Similarly, Jonas explains mortality as necessary to the wide range of human possibilities, since a life of assured permanence would lack the urgency and the adventure to stimulate great achievements.[196] For that purpose, mortality means not only a life of a limited member of years, but a life which may end at any moment. Yet the problem of theodicy arises not from the mere precariousness of life nor from the intrinsic fact of suffering, but from the at least apparently unnecessary loss of lives, particularly young lives and good lives, due to disease, earthquakes and other natural causes. Perhaps some of these "natural" causes are ultimately humanly caused, or at least humanly avoidable (as Gersonides argues), but Jonas does not discuss this. Even if Jonas were to so argue, he would have to explain those, if any, which were not avoidable, and why those

which were caused by humans needed to occur in order for human freedom to exist. As to those latter events, Jonas' explanation of the Holocaust should apply, that is, they are necessarily potential consequences of human freedom, if it is to be "unprejudiced," although they are neither necessary nor God-intended consequences.

Beyond these two "gaps," a basic question arises about Jonas' theodicy: does he really "get God off the hook"? Jonas' theodicy explains how a Holocaust could occur despite the fact that our world was willfully created by a good and caring God; however, Jonas does not fully exculpate God. While Jonas does not discuss it, his myth implies that God "caused" the Holocaust, albeit indirectly and unintentionally, since God's self-limitation at creation included an intentional taking of a risk, which was presumedly calculated, that events like a Holocaust might result. Even if God miscalculated, God set in motion all the forces and created all the human and environmental participants in the Holocaust. This implies that God is not only not all powerful, but God is also not all-wise. Jonas would not necessarily dispute these implications of his myth. He might qualify them by repating that the reasons for creations are "unknowable,"[197] but Jonas rejects a theodicy which asserts that God is totally unintelligible.[198] Thus, he conceives of a God who took a risk in creation, as "an act of either inscrutable wisdom or love or whatever else the divine motive may have been."[199] God is at least partly responsible for the results of that risk. In American legal terminology, God can be seen as both the "but for" cause, that is, but for the creation, there would

have been no Holocaust, and the "proximate cause," in that God can "reasonably" be expected to have foreseen, at the time of creation, an intervening cause, human abuse of God-granted freedom, would arise. One is legally responsible (and liable for civil damages) for an injury (the Holocaust) if a reasonable person (or, in this case, "a reasonable deity") in one's position would have known that there was a significant possibility, even if not necessary a probability, that the injury would occur. If one could foresee that an intervening cause, such as human chosen evil, would directly cause the injury, then one is liable, as is those who intervened a proximate cause. There may be more than one person who is so liable for one particular injury.

Jonas might counter that the intervening human abuse was not reasonably foreseeable at the time of creation. Until the development of human beings, with our ability to abstract and thus choose good or evil, the divine "gamble" was not at risk, since pre-human development of our world, despite organic "freedom," could only enhance the variety of existence for the overall benefit of the world. With the arrival of humans, the risk began.[200] The positive side of the risk was and remains the potential benefits of "unprejudiced becoming." If creation were so structured that God could foresee that is, predict, the results, then becoming would be so prejudiced that human choice would not be free and the potential benefits could not be derived. This response would not necessarily be a question of legal liability, God could be culpable even if, at the time of creation, God could not predict events such as the

Holocaust, as long as God knew, at that time, that such an event was a reasonably likely consequence of the act of creation. Perhaps Jonas concedes God's legal liability for damages, since God "suffers", both in the sense of disappointment at the acts of God's creatures and in the sense of an ultimate loss to the transcendent balance. Jonas could nevertheless argue that while legally responsible, was not and is not morally wrong in creating our world.

The question, as an issue of theodicy, is: was it worth the risk? Jonas seems to say that it was. This does not mean that Jonas believes that after the Holocaust, God would, or should, take the same risk again. Jonas does believe that the risk was taken, that the commitment was irrevocable, and that we, the stakes of the gamble, have no choice to withdraw. Jonas further believes that our choice is not whether or not to impact the transcendent realm, but whether to do so for good or for evil. Jonas develops these beliefs from credible, appealing presuppositions and by careful deductions and examination of their consequences in comparison to alternative views. The result may not be a "complete" theodicy, but it is an explanation of human life which can be most appealing and comforting to one living in today's world of disillusionment and meaninglessness.

CHAPTER THREE - FOOTNOTES

1 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 207.

2 As in the Gersonides Chapter, when philosophic views are discussed, the views are as interpreted by Jonas. No attempt is made to determine the actual views of the philosophers. With respect to existentialism, see: Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1963) pp. 320-340, which is also the Ninth Essay in Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 211-234.

3 See discussion below concerning the Eighth Essay in Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 188-210.

4 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 16.

5 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 26-28.

6 Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God After Auschwitz," in Out of the Whirlwind, edited by Albert H. Friedlander (New York, N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1976) p. 468.

7 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 471.

8 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 472.

9 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 472.

10 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 7-11.

11 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 12-14.

12 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 17.

13 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 20-21.

14 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 36.

15 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 22-23.

16 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 28.

17 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 33, 23.

18 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 34-37.

19 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 25.

20 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 37.

21 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 48.

22 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 41-43.

23 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 45.

24 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 45, 50.

25 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 53-58.

26 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 75-79. A similar account may be found in Hans Jonas, Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technilogical Man (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974) pp. 190-191.

27 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 190.

28 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 79.

29 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 79; Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 191.

30 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 80.

31 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 185-187.

32 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 194.

33 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 82.

34 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 83-85.

35 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 86.

36 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 197, 187.

37 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 192.

38 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 192-194.

39 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 86-87.

40 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 88.

41 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 88-90.

42 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 58-63.

43 Hans Jonas, "On the Power of Impotence of Subjectivity," in Philosophical Dimensions of Neuro-Medical Sciences, edited by Stuart F. Spiches and H. Tristam Engelhardt, Jr. (Dorbrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1976) p. 143.

44 Jonas, "Power of Subjectivity," pp. 144-145.

45 Jonas, "Power of Subjectivity," pp. 154-156.

46 Jonas, "Power of Subjectivity," pp. 157-159.

47 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 17.

48 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 4-5.

49 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 1.

50 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 99-100.

51 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 101.

52 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 102.

53 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 104-105.

54 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 105-106.

55 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 198-201.

56 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 201, 204.

57 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 107.

58 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 205; Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 107.

59 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 152.

60 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 136-139.

61 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 142.

62 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 139.

63 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 143-145.

64 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 152.

65 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 145-146.

66 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 147.

67 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 152.

68 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 147-149.

69 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 149-152.

70 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," pp. 466-467, quoted in Section 2 as part of the myth of creation.

71 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 157.

72 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 159-165.

73 A beholder is one who could possibly make the image and a maker is one who could possibly behold it. Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 165.

74 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 165-167.

75 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 168-170.

76 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 170-172.

77 See Chapter 6.

78 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 176-181.

79 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 172.

80 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 172-173.

81 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 173.

82 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 185-186.

83 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 186.

84 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 187.

85 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 191.

86 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 189-190.

87 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 190.

88 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 189-191.

89 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 192-193.

90 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 201.

91 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 195-196.

92 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 202.

93 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 204.

94 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 207.

95 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 208.

96 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 208-209.

97 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 209.

98 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 210.

99 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 322-324.

100 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 325-329.

101 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, p. 330.

102 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 248-249.

103 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 331-332.

104 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 333-334.

105 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 336-338.

106 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 338-339.

107 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 237-238.

108 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 240.

109 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 243.

110 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 240.

111 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 243-244.

112 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 244-246.

113 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 245-248.

114 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 251-253.

115 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 257.

116 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 239-240.

117 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 263.

118 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 263-266.

119 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 266-267.

120 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 267.

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123 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 270.

124 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 270.

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126 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 271-272.

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128 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 271-272.

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130 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, pp. 259-260 (Emphasis in original).

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133 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 465.

134 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 29.

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143 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," pp. 465-469.

144 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," pp. 470-471.

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146 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 473.

147 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 473.

148 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 472.

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154 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 472.

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164 See above at notes 22-25.

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184 Jonas, "The Concept of Responsibility," p. 188.

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189 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 476.

190 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 466.

191 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," pp. 475-476.

192 Jonas, "Responsibility Today," p. 81 (emphasis in original).

193 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 473.

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195 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 106.

196 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz," p. 465.

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CHAPTER FOUR: Distinctions Between the Medieval and the Modern Mind

The first chapter of this thesis focused on general similarities in the responses of Gersonides and Hans Jonas to the problem of theodicy. The second and third chapters analyzed in detail and evaluated their respective responses. This chapter will focus on the differences between those responses. Specifically, it will attempt to extract from their theodicies those aspects which appear to be a function of the cultural context of the thinkers, that is, the non-timeless aspects, which might have varied had Gersonides or Jonas lived in another culture. There will be no attempt to project how Jonas might respond to Gersonides, or vice versa, nor to set forth in a comprehensive manner the areas of agreement and disagreement. Moreover, in terms of culturally determined differences, I have not researched and will not speculate about what existed in the cultural contexts of fourteenth century Provence that influenced the thought of Gersonides nor in twentieth century America that influenced the thought of Jonas. The distinctions discussed in this chapter are derived from the theodicies themselves and not from biographical or historical information about the thinkers. These distinctions could be useful in either of two ways, both of which are beyond the scope of this thesis. The distinctions might contribute to a comparison of Gersonides and/or Jonas with the rest of their culture, or the distinctions might be used as the basis for attempting a reconciliation of the theodicies of Jonas and Gersonides. Such a reconciliation would need to show that, despite the culturally

determined aspects of their theodicies, the thinkers are similar in their underlying premises, arguments, and conclusions. However, it is possible that once these culturally determined aspects has been abstracted, the remaining aspects would not be sufficient for a complete theodicy and, thus, such a reconciliation might be impossible.

This chapter will focus on an underlying distinction between Gersonides and Jonas, namely Gersonides' presupposition that the nature of God, the essence of the world, and the essence of human beings are permanent, stable and immutable, in opposition to Jonas' presupposition that all of these are subject to continuous flux and risk. This distinction is most evident in the following areas: (1) the nature of human existence, particularly -- the contrast beween certainty and risk, the contrast between dualism (the split between essence and matter) and monism, the contrast in approaches to immortality and to happiness in our world, and the contrast in the impact of free human choice; (2) distinctions in their understanding of the extent of human knowledge, including both the process by which we know and the objective validity of what we know; (3) differences concerning the nature of God, the nature of divine knowledge and providence, and the process of creation; and (4) some methodological differences, particularly whether one begins with divine nature or with human nature and whether one focuses upon individual suffering or upon the suffering of a group. Throughout the discussion of these aspects of their theodicies, the focus will be upon what each thinker deems self-evident, as to presuppositions,

as to a valid process of argumentation, and as to the cogency of their conclusions.

1. The Nature of Human Existence

The nature of the underlying distinction between permanence and flux is most apparent in the different understandings of Jonas and Gersonides of the nature of human existence. Their understanding varies as to: whether our lives are potentially predictable or inevitably uncertain; whether we can find happiness and immortality in conception or in action; and how our free choice functions in causing both evil and good. Each of these distinctions will be discussed in detail below. In sum, Jonas' theodicy is based upon the risk, adventure, and freedom which he finds through an examination of organic, particularly human, existence. For Gersonides, the essence of human existence is stable and unchanging. The world is maintained in a fundamental equilibrium, and human essence is immutable. The uncertainty and disorder which we find in our lives results from the material, nonessential aspects of our world, including the material aspects of our nature. Ironically, Gersonides' presupposition of immutability of essence leads him not to a coherent, unified view of our world, but to a form of dualism between essence, which for human beings is our incorporeal intellect, and matter. In contrast, Jonas assumes that human existence is fundamentally disordered and unpredictable and yet finds a unity of mind and body. A key consequence of these distinctive views on human existence is the difference in their views on what constitutes happiness in this world

and immortality. Gersonides' static, albeit dualistic, view of human life leads him to a concepting of immortality as the result of proper apprehension of the essences. Similarly, one finds true happiness in this world as the result of such apprehension. In Jonas' world of freedom and adventure, immortality results not from cognition but from action, that is, from decisions and deeds. Similarly, happiness in our world is not found in pure abstract thought, but in the application of such thought by making good decisions and performing good acts.

Both Gersonides and Jonas posit free human choice as an essential requirement for understanding why God permits injustice, yet free choice plays a different role for each thinker. In Gersonides' static world, free human choice is the cause of some, but certainly not all evil. Free choice also serves vital positive functions. It provides us with an opportunity to escape evil, by actualizing our intellect to obtain foreknowledge of impending harm. More significantly, such acqualization, that is, the proper apprehension of the essences, is the means by which we obtain true happiness in this world and continued existence after this world, that is, immortality. In Jonas' world of flux, free choice is the cause of the most significant suffering in our world, particularly the actual suffering caused by human decisions, such as the Holocaust, and the potential suffering which humans could bring about, such as destruction of human existence as we know it through pollution, nuclear war, or genetic engineering. As noted in the evaluation of Jonas, he understandably asserts that naturally caused evils, such as

earthquakes and disease, are not the essential concerns of our time. To this extent, his theodicy is consciously incomplete. Yet, as far as he goes, free choice plays a positive role. It is the "justification" for God's permitting the existence of evil, since the risk of such evil is considered by Jonas to be a necessary concomitant to the possible good results of free, "unprejudiced" choice, which can lead to the expansion and the betterment of our world and the transcendent realm.

This summary of the differing views of Gersonides and Jonas concerning the nature of human existence requires elaboration. The first area to be discussed is the distinction between certainty and risk. Underlying this distinction is a similarity in both theodicies, that is, both conclude that our lives in this world have meaning and a purpose, freely chosen and given to us by the creator God who is responsible for our existence. Both responses also hold that the purpose is intelligible to us, at least somewhat. Section 2 of this chapter will discuss the extent of that intelligibility. Here the discussion will focus upon the purposes which Gersonides and Jonas find, particularly how those purposes reflect the respective presuppositions of permanence and flux.

For Gersonides, the purpose of our existence is, in effect, to "play one's part." The overall order, cosmos, is good; at least, it is the best possible, and therefore, we should adapt to it. The world's goodness is stable. On an essential level, it is perfectly good and immutable. On this level, with respect

to the well-being of the soul, good and evil "proceed without exception in accordance with order and justice."[1] Gersonides seems to find such goodness to be self-evident. He also finds empirical support for this presupposition. For example, he notes that peoples predispositions are so diverse that one would expect them to be "constantly engaged in strife and quarrels so that they would kill one another," were there not some divinely imposed order which prevented it. What Gersonides finds is that although the wicked "are numerous and try with all their strength (and ingenuity) to do evil to others . . . the misfortunes which befall men through them are found to be few."[2] This order and goodness on an essential level is reflected in an overall equilibrium between the forces in the world.[3] This balance is designed primarily for the benefit of humanity.[4] Moreover, not only is the order good, balanced, and designed primarily for our benefit, but it assures that the world is indestructible.[5] Gersonides is thus clearly distinct from Jonas, whose theodicy and morality are very much a response to the possibility of destruction of the world as we know it by nuclear war, pollution, or genetic engineering.

Arthur Lovejoy, in The Great Chain of Being, notes that some thinkers are susceptible to an "eternalistic pathos," which seems to fit Gersonides. Such a pathos is described by Lovejoy as "the aesthetic pleasure which the bare abstract idea of immutability gives us." Whether or not Gersonides holds immutability itself to be self-evident or empirically derived, he clearly holds that its goodness is self-evident. Lovejoy notes (on the contrary) that

"it is not self-evident that remaining forever unchanged should be regarded as an excellence."[6] The significance of eternality to Gersonides is underscored by his understanding of Gehennom, or hell, which he describes as "the subjugation to the process of coming to be and passing away to which all material things are subject."[7] Gersonides' overall sense of order and equilibrium also seems to reflect what Lovejoy terms an "organismic" motive, that is, a methodological assumption that one can never understand any element in a complex apart from its relation to all other components in the system.[8] Such a methodological assumption is no more necessarily self-evident than Gersonides' preference for immutability, although both are clearly self-evident to Gersonides.

Nevertheless, Gersonides need not be seen as reflecting a purely static world. In fact, Kellner classifies many of Gersonides' ideas as "post-medieval," particularly his understanding of human existence. Kellner contrasts what he terms the medieval view that each generation of humanity declines in intellectual and moral value from the previous generation to Gersonides' "modern" view that humanity continually progresses.[9] A similar understanding of Gersonides is expressed by Nema Adlerblum, who notes that while, to Gersonides, "history is more or less of a static absolute," that is, it is the concretization of the Active Intellect into individual events, human beings "progressively" gain a better understanding of the Active Intellect.[10] Thus, human understanding is not static. Still, the basic world order remains the same. What people need to do with their lives is to adapt to that order, that is, to actualize their intellect.

Gersonides' concept of the universal order and our role in it is analogous to that which Jonas ascribes to the Stoics. Jonas might be seen as analogous to what he describes as the Gnostic response to the Stoics, which parallels the modern existentialist response to medieval and other philosophic claims that the world is stable.[11] Jonas, like the existentialist, cannot accept our world order as either stable or as the "best possible". As discussed above, each moment brings about a new order, and all is subject to what Nietzsche termed "sovereign becoming."[12] Thus, even if one particular moment might contain the best possible order, that order would change in the next moment. Moreover, to Jonas, living in the wake of the Holocaust, the world is not even close to the best possible order. Jonas finds the existence of flux in life not merely on the basis of the arguments of Nietzsche and other existentialists but from Jonas' own investigation of life. As discussed above, he holds that the essence of organism is freedom and that human beings possess the greatest amount of freedom, since they have the ability to make images, which enables them to abstract and to choose between good and evil. As a result, the world is subject to "unprejudiced becoming," which Jonas, in his myth, attributes to God as an intentional gamble. While Jonas argues with existentialism in emphasizing constant change in the world, he nonetheless uncovers a consistent human essence in the flux. Jonas responds to Heidegger's claim that there is never any meaningful "present" by finding, in internal experience, a "present" during moments in which ultimate decisions are made. Jonas finds, paradoxically, that in

these most fleeting, most temporal segments of our existence, we sense a tie to eternity. From this, Jonas abstracts his notion of immortality, discussed below. Similarly, while Jonas accepts the existentialists' rejection of many earlier understandings of transcendent order in the universe, Jonas rejects the conclusion reached by Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, and others, that human freedom is absolute. Rather, Jonas seeks a base, a mooring, which gives our lives nomos, meaning, and direction. This rejection is analogous to Lovejoy's characterization of the reaction of nineteenth century Romanticism to the eighteenth century Enlightenment view of a God who "geometrized" the world, parallel to the gardeners of that age who created precise, formal, patterned structures. The Romantics preferred the wild, flowing "English garden", which was "partly, no doubt, the expression of a natural revulsion of taste from an overdose of the formal gardening of the eighteenth century." As a result, the "God of Romanticism was one whose universe grew wild and without trimming and in all the rich diversity of their natural shapes." In other words, the Romantics responded with "a preference for a irregularity."[13] A similar preference is found in the existentialism to which Jonas reacts (although there is no necessary historical link between it and Romanticism). The existentialists rejected all standards, all ultimate meaning, all transcendence in human existence. Jonas reacts to that extreme rejection. He does not completely contradict the existentialists. Jonas agrees that the possibility of not-being is so basic to our existence that "life's being is essentially a hovering over the

abyss (of non-being)."[14] Jonas thus reflects what Lovejoy termed a "voluntaristic pathos", a type of "fighting blood" in which humans demand their freedom. However, Jonas was not take this freedom to the nihilistic excesses which he attributes to the existentialist. Rather, Jonas asserts that there is transcendent purpose, even within our hovering over the abyss, a purpose of actualizing, as much as we can, the good possibilities which our human freedom permits us to accomplish.

Moreover, within all the flux, Jonas finds a unity to human existence. As discussed in Section 3 of Chapter 3, Jonas seeks a monistic explanation of human life, including both mind and body, without rejecting any aspect of existence. Just as the key to transcendence was discovered by Jonas within the most fleeting time, the moment of decision, so the key to organic unity of mind and body and to underlying essence, that is, the freedom of a conscious self, was found by Jonas to be implied in the flux of evolution. In contrast, Gersonides begins with a stable universe, from which one might expect a unified view of human existence. Yet, the unyielding unity of essence, emanated from the absolutely unified divine essence, leads Gersonides (as it did Plato and others) to a dualism of essence or form and matter. Thus, for Gersonides, God's oneness leads to a duality of life on earth. The chaotic aspect of life is unavoidably apparent to Gersonides from his empirical observation of our world and of history. Something must account for this disorder. That something could not be God nor the divinely produced forms, since a perfect deity can only

produce order and good. Thus, dualism becomes necessary to uphold Gersonides' conception of monotheism, which follows the medieval Aristotelian view of a "perfect" God. Nevertheless, Gersonides differs from others who posit such an immutable God in his deductions concerning God's knowledge and providence. While this difference could be considered here as part of Gersonides' views on human existence, it will be discussed below concerning Gersonides' views on the nature of God.

The distinction between Jonas' monistic and Gersonides' dualistic perspectives on human life may not be as stark as they appear. For Gersonides, the form of any living thing, which determines the essence of that living thing, is the thing's "capacity, through which it originates different operations". This form, or capacity, is also called the "soul". One aspect of the soul is the "material intellect", which is the capacity of the soul to receive the universal forms of material things. This capacity is actualized with the assistance of Active Intellect, which permits the abstracting of the essences from the material things as they are initially perceived by our senses.[16] This intellectual process is most parallel to Jonas' description of image-making, which is the faculty of the human self that most distinguishes humans from other animals.[17] For both Jonas and Gersonides, the essential aspect of human existence is thus that aspect, either intellect or self, which controls decision-making, does so by will, and is not physically determined, but rather, determines what the physical will do. Jonas calls this "eidetic" control of the physical, both

over the physical intellect concerning making decisions and over the physical body concerning moving, that is carrying out decisions. While parallel to Gersonides' description of the human psyche, Jonas' description is somewhat distinct. Jonas asserts that humans conceive, that is, form and behold images, through internal processes, while, for Gersonides, the external Active Intellect is required to abstract form from material substance. The consequences of this distinction will be discussed in section 2, concerning human knowledge.

While the distinction between monism and dualism may not be as stark as it first appeared, it is nevertheless significant. Gersonides reflects what Lovejoy calls an "other-worldliness", that is, "the belief that both the genuinely 'real' and the truly good are radically antithetic in their essential characteristics to anything to be found . . . in the ordinary course of human existence."[18] Gersonides exemplifies this other-worldliness in his stress upon the need for a higher, transcendent realm, external to the human being, which is necessary to enable us to find any ultimate good. To Jonas, in contrast, we may find "the chief value of existence within the process and struggle in time."[19] This distinction is underscored by the focus of Gersonides upon conception, that is thought, as the basic prerequisite for happiness in this world and immortality, while Jonas focuses on the ultimate significance of deeds as the key to our immortality. Neither Gersonides nor Jonas rejects the other realm, but their emphases clearly differ.

A crucial consequence of the distinction between permanence and flux is the difference in the two thinkers' views on immortality. In Gersonides' static world, we achieve immortality by actualizing our intellect, that is, properly apprehending the forms. While, as discussed below, this is not a mystical obliteration of the self into an eternal oneness, and thus immortality is to some degree individual, our immortal apprehensions effect no change in the eternal, heavenly realm. This lack of impact on the transcendent realm is unacceptable to Jonas, who lives in a world of constant flux. Jonas speculates that it might be better not to have any impact, since, particularly in the wake of the Holocaust, the possibility of a negative rather than a positive impact is quite great. However, this choice is not available. Whatever we do, we make our mark in the "book of life" and we play a role in determining the status of the "transcendent image".[20] In other words, whatever we do changes the overall system, which is constantly changing on its own. In effect, the transcendent is an immanent part of our world. In contrast, for Gersonides, the cosmic system is immutable, and our only role is to fit into the system. These distinctions are equally clear in Gersonides notion of finding happiness in this world, which depends primarily upon proper apprehension of essences. Deeds are not irrelevant, but they are necessary only to avoid the interference of the material aspects of our existence with our proper contemplation of the forms. Jonas never specifically discusses what constitutes ultimate human happiness. However, it may be inferred that such happiness derives

from a combination of actions, which will assure our immortality, and contemplation, which will provide us with the transcendent standards by which to guide our actions.

Underlying these distinctions in the approaches of Gersonides and Jonas to human existence in this world and beyond is the similar presupposition of free human choice. For each, this is essential to an understanding of why God permits injustice in our world, although free choice plays a different role in their respective theodicies. In terms of cultural context, neither finds free choice to be "self-evident". Rather, both derive it from their different perspectives on the world, which reflect the self-evident presuppositions of permanence and flux. Gersonides derives free choice from the relation between an immutable God, who produces an immutable universal order, and contingent events in our world. However, as discussed below, this is not a necessary deduction. Gersonides could reject free human choice in exchange for conceding God's knowledge of particulars as particulars. He does not do so, and thus, to some extent, he sees free human choice to be self-evident. For Jonas, free choice is derived from the nature of human existence, which reveals both organic freedom of motility, perception, and emotion, as well as the human freedom of image-making.[21] What is self-evident to Jonas is uncertainty and risk, that is, flux. From this, free choice follows.

Whether or not self-evident, free choice plays different roles in their theodicies, which roles again reflect the distinction between permanence and flux. For Gersonides, our ability to

choose was caused by God, who endowed us with a soul, that is an intellectual potential, and who produced the Active Intellect, which enables us to actualize that potential. Our choice is free, that is, not determined by these endowments, since it depends upon contingent aspects of our world. Thus, our choices are not necessarily good ones. These contingent aspects are both the incomplete nature of our intellect, that is its potential rather than actual status, and the material, that is, disorderly, aspects of our nature. As a result, God is not responsible for the bad choices which we make. Our freedom leads to our bad choices, yet it also leads to good choices. The good choices result from the proper actualization of our intellect, which both results in the foreknowledge to help us avoid inevitable suffering in our material world and also provides us with our immortality.

For Jonas, free choice is also caused by God, but not as a necessary consequence of God's nature. Rather, free choice was a willful decision at the time of creation, when God forfeited total control over the events in our world in order to permit the possibility of an improvement in the transcendent realm through the unprejudiced good choices of human beings. As noted in the evaluation, this implies that God is responsible for all the consequences of free choice, including the bad choices. On this level, Gersonides and Jonas clearly contrast. Jonas (unlike Gersonides) undoubtedly acknowledges God's ultimate responsibility. However, he stresses that the ultimate outcome depends upon human actions, not upon divine actions. Thus, as for Gersonides, free choice plays a vital

role in enabling human beings to live a good life in this world and to have a good "existence" beyond this world.

Both Gersonides and Jonas are thus hold the initiative in the divine-human interaction to be human, and they find the effect to be determined by human choice. God sets the ground work, that is, creates the possibilities which we either take advantage of or ignore. While this focus on the significant role of human beings is not surprising for Jonas in the modern context, it is not necessarily typically "medieval" attitude for Gersonides. As Kellner notes, one of Gersonides' "post-medieval" ideas is his emphasis upon "the importance and power of man, . . . (in contrast to) to scholastic claim of man's insignificance."[22]

Kellner finds the prime example of this "post-medieval" attitude to be Gersonides' opting for human freedom over God's knowledge of particulars.[23] Gersonides could have decided that God is aware of all events which occur in our world, even their contingent aspects, as long as God determined all of those aspects. This was Ibn Sina's solution to the problem of future contingents. Gersonides' rejection of this solution depends upon his refusal to concede the existence of real options, that is the autonomy of human free choice. Thus, Gersonides solves the problem of future contingents by denying God's knowledge of particulars as particulars.[24] Moreover, unlike modern humanists, Gersonides' solution does not deny God's perfection and immutability.

Gersonides views freedom of choice as an aspect of divine providence. Through emanation, God provided human beings with the

intellectual capacity to use free choice in order to avoid those evils which inevitably result of the material substrate. Moreover, the heavenly-endowed order which governs our world may sometimes prevent evils which the misuse of human choice might have caused. Thus, "life at the human level . . . is the best possible result of the positive tension between these two factors (that is, free choice and heavenly order), through which divine grace is rationally administered."[25] Human free choice may be seen as a "power of possibility", which, in the words of Adlerblum, "is allowed in the order of perfection (as understood by Gersonides) so that everything should finally come back to the unifying perfection which unites all into the one."[26] In other words, human free choice supplements the heavenly-endowed order to permit the best possible life in this world. Fee choice enables human beings to adapt to the cosmic order. As discussed above, since Jonas finds no immutable order to which we might adapt, and since Jonas therefore could not accept Gersonides' notion that the order of the world is the "best possible" one, Jonas deems it inevitable and probably desirable that human beings are able not merely to adapt to the universal order but to change it through autonomously chosen deeds.

The value which both Jonas and Gersonides assign to the choices of individuals points to another important aspect of their theodicies. Peter Berger The Sacred Canopy finds an element of "masochism" in every theodicy, that is a "certain denial of the individual self and its needs, anxieties and problems." By denying the value or reality of one's self, one can thus transcend

individual suffering "to the point where the individual not only finds these experiences bearable but even welcomes them." Underlying this self-denial is the universal need, discussed in Chapter One, to find meaning and explanation for one's suffering, a need that is more basic than avoiding suffering. The "masochistic surrender" allows an escape from meaninglessness and also an escape from loneliness, since the individual surrenders his or her identity to some other entity.[27] Arthur Lovejoy notes a similar attempt to escape one's individuality in seeking to become "part of the universal Oneness." He cites a sonnet by Santayana beginning "I would I might forget that I am I" as an expression of the need to escape the burden of individual existence.[28]

A certain degree of self denial is evident in both Gersonides and Jonas, perhaps more so in Gersonides, yet both resolutely uphold the separate value of the individual. Gersonides denies any value to the material aspect of the individual, yet he finds tremendous value in the soul, that is the form of the individual. Suffering for the individual, even on a material level, is by no means welcome. Rather, it is something to be avoided by the application of one's intellectual abilities to obtain foreknowledge of impending harm. What Berger calls "masochism" involves a passive enduring of one's own suffering for the sake of a greater good. Gersonides counsels that we actively work to avoid any suffering, not to surrender to it. Moreover, Gersonides' notion of immortality, as well as happiness in this world, does not involve a denial of the self by a union with the Active Intellect.

Rather, one's material intellect conceives the forms to the greatest extent possible, that is the forms as they exist in material substances. This is different from the Active Intellect, which conceives the forms in their separate, immutable, eternal existence. Thus, as noted above, Gersonides does not advocate an obliteration of the self in a form of mystical union, but maintains that both happiness in this world and immortality are achieved by an individual as an individual.[29]

Jonas' theodicy is even further from any notion of self-annihilation in order to make one's own suffering meaningful. Jonas views suffering, that is, the occasional suffering, or pain, which gives rise to the problem of theodicy, as an undesirable result of improper choice, not as a necessary result of freedom. It is a necessary possibility as a result of the risk which God took in the divine self-forfeiture, which made the existence of freedom in our world possible. Yet it is not inevitable nor unavoidable. Jonas finds the value of the individual's decisions and deeds to be quite significant, that is, they determine the ultimate fate of the transcendent realm. There is little "masochism" in this view. Moreover, Jonas does not adopt another aspect of the masochism discussed by Berger, the notion of a suffering God. The suffering deity which Berger discusses is the Christian deity. Quoting Albert Camus, Berger notes that "only the most abject suffering by God could assuage man's agony. If everything, without exception, in heaven and earth is doomed to pain and suffering, then a strange form of human happines is possible." In other words, the suffering

of Jesus on the cross justifies all of the human suffering as necessary.[30] Whether or not this is actually true of Christianity, it is not true of the suffering God which Jonas depicts. The suffering which Jonas discusses is not a means of atoning for human sin. In other words, there is no redemptive purpose to the suffering. Rather, it is a mere consequence of God's disappointment in the use to which humans have put the freedom which God granted us. Such suffering is not even much of a mitigation of human suffering, much less a justification of it.

The lack of masochism in both Gersonides and Jonas reflects their parallel beliefs that human beings should operate within the limits of human existence and can find both happiness and immortality within that limited realm. They find no need to deny our finitude in order to justify our existence, even the evil and injustice within our existence. Jonas concedes that this justification is anthropomorphic, a term that has also been applied to Gersonides. Both uphold that, despite human limits, there is much that we can do to avoid suffering. Moreover, we are, at least to some extent, capable of understanding the nature of the universe and of God, from which this suffering derives. This leads to a fundamentally similar, albeit distinct, aspect of their theodicies, their concepts of the nature and extent of human knowledge.

2. Distinctions Regarding Epistemology

Two aspects of epistemology merit consideration. The first is the process of knowing, that is, how we know and what

we know. The second is the sources of our knowledge, that is, conflicts between philosophy and theology and between reason and revelation/Torah. In each of these areas, the distinction between Gersonides' world of permanence and Jonas' world of flux is apparent.

With respect to the process of knowing, the permanence of Gersonides' world, at least with respect to essences, appears to allow us to obtain true, objective knowledge about ourselves, our world, and God. In contrast, the perpetual flux in the world which Jonas describes implies that all of our knowledge is fundamentally subjective. However, Jonas nevertheless concludes that humans can know enough to communicate with each other and can even have relatively objective, that is, intersubjective knowledge about their world and even about themselves and God.

The two thinkers' descriptions of the process of knowing appear to be similar. Jonas begins with our initial perception of an object in a sensuous encounter with the object. By various steps of abstraction, discussed above, we attempt to cancel out the object's "affectedness," that is, the change in the object caused by our encounter with it, in order to perceive the object's eidos.[31] Similarly, Gersonides holds that after our initial sense perception of an object, we cancel out the material aspects of the object, that is, we abstract the essential aspects of the object. One distinction between the two thinkers is that, for Gersonides, the essence/eidos exists objectively within the object. Thus, if two individual subjects both correctly perceive the object, they will abstract the same essence. The essence is "objective", since it derives from

the form which emanated from the Active Intellect.[32] For Jonas, the individual subject, or percipient, "remakes" the object by imagination, particularly memory, in the process of making an image of that object. Thus each percipient subjectively selects the eidos from the concrete reality. What is form and what is matter thus depends upon the perspective of the percipient.

Jonas and Gersonides are also similar, although distinct, with respect to the relationship between the knowing subject and the known object. For Jonas, one knows an object as the agent, or "remaker" of the object, since what one knows is not the object as it exists in concrete reality but the image of that object which one constructs. To Gersonides, we are not the agent of the objects that we know. We can know only the form of the object which is not made by us, but by the object's efficient cause. Now, this agent, which is also the final cause of that form, is the Active Intellect. This distinction between Gersonides and Jonas is not as great as it might seem. While Jonas holds that we are the agent of what we know, we know only the image, not the object itself. This is similar to Gersonides' notion of pros hen equivocation, in which we know only the copy, not the original. In both cases, our knowledge of the original object is limited. In effect, both thinkers find that human beings can never gain complete objective knowledge of any object, including our world, ourselves, and God. For Gersonides our knowledge of things in our world, including ourselves, is only knowledge of things in their multiplicity, that is, we know their

forms only as they exist within the material substrate. This contrasts with the knowledge of the Active Intellect, and of God, both of which know the forms as they exist separately and know all of the forms as a unit. Human knowledge is quite significant, since we "can gain a progressively better conception of the way in which lower existent things are interrelated in the providential governance which overflows from the Active Intellect; (however, the human intellect) can never know that nomos (divinely emanated order) as its cause knows it."[33] Our knowledge is always somewhat ambiguous. Gersonides uses the analogy that we are merely viewers of a building, so that we may know it from various perspectives, but our perspective is always different from that of the architect, God, since God conceived the model of which the building is an effect.[34] Still, as Jacob Staub speculates, Gersonides might add that our relatively objective knowledge from pros hen equivocation may be supplemented by what we derive from other human faculties, that is perception, imagination, and memory, and thus lead us to "reasonably certain" knowledge. Staub finds this epistemology to be a major strength of Gersonides' philosophy, praising Gersonides' "consistent refusal to concede that anything at all is absolutely beyond human conception . . . even as he maintains the relative ignorance which even the most highly developed human intellects necessarily have with regard to such issues as the divine nature, the intelligible and supralunar world, creation, and even the state of affairs in the sublunar world."[35]

For Jonas, there is no external endower or arbiter of objectivity, such as an Active Intellect. Thus the question arises, how can one person tell if the image which he or she makes is the same image which another person beholds. Jonas answers that subjects can understand each other's images, because they share numerous common traits.[36] Thus, the knower and the image known are in some sense alike. Gersonides similarly posits that "in the act of knowing, the knower and the known are in some sense one."[37] However, for Gersonides, the object which is known, that is, the essence of the object, exists as a separate entity from the knower. Jonas does not find this to be so, and thus no knowledge, at least by a human being, can be fully objective.

As a result, Jonas does not assert that his beliefs, particularly his theological beliefs, are necessarily true. With reference to his myth of creation, the core of his theodicy, he calls it a "tenative myth which I would like to believe 'true'". He realizes that we can have no necessarily valid truth of God or creation and that any depiction of them is inevitably an "anthropomorphic" image. Such an image might be misinterpreted, but is the only means of communicating about the subjects, particularly "in the great pause of metaphysics in which we are."[38] Thus, Jonas' response to theodicy is merely a "response", not a complete solution, and not intended to be such. He notes in the introduction to the Phenomenon of Life that while his "essays range over (various) subjects, (they) do not offer a finished theory of them."[39]

In contrast, Gersonides' response at least appears to be a "solution." It carries with it the sound of certainty and the appearance of an exhaustive and coherent structure, although Gersonides' epistemology does not permit him to make such an extreme assertion. Jonas appears more characteristically modern in that his uncertainty and subjectivity are explicit. Nevertheless, unlike some of the modern philosophers to whom he explicitly responds, Jonas does not end his philosophic search at the finding of a lack of certainty. Rather, he continues to seek meaning, even if it is only reasonably certain. His theodicy is acceptable to him and convincing to this author, at leat as far as it goes, since while making no claim to necessary truth, it is not in conflict with the external evidence and it consistently conforms to the internal evidence of human existence.

More clearly distinct than their positions concerning the nature and extent of human knowledge are their respective positions concerning the sources of true knowledge. Again, the distinction between an ontology of permanence and an ontology of flux is evidence, particularly in the conflict between philosophy and theology and the conflict of reason and revelation/Torah. This is illustrated by their contrasting methods of argumentation. Gersonides' approach may be expressed in five steps: (1) he presents the views of his predecessors; (2) he critically analyzes them to determine what is valid and what is invalid; (3) he presents his own views; (4) he shows that none of the arguments raised with respect to the views of others lead to any valid objections against his views; and

(5) he shows that his own views agree with a proper interpretation of the Torah.[40] Jonas generally follows the same first four steps, but differs after that point. While this thesis does not describe or evaluate how Gersonides reconciles his philosophic views with an interpretation of Torah, it should be noted that Gersonides holds that "the Law (Torah) cannot prevent us from considering to be true that which our reason urges us to believe."[41] Despite this, Gersonides holds that Torah and philosophy, or science, that is, the theoretical explanation of the world according to reason, will always reveal the same truth as Torah, albeit in a different form of expression. If any conflict appears between Torah and philosophy, "the fault lies in our understanding."[42]

Gersonides' reconciliation of philosophy and Torah is made possible by his "medieval" view of both philosophy and Torah. He views Torah as an example of speculative philosophy and he views philosophy, in the words of Leo Strauss, as merely "an instrument or a department of human self-realization," rather than the classical Greek approach to philosophy "as a way of life."[43] As a way of life, classical philosophy posits that one must live as a philosopher, that is constantly engage in a "quest for knowledge", which quest is never fully satisfied. In fact, the impossibility of a certain solution, particularly concerning the right way of life, is what makes the quest for knowledge the right way of life for philosophers. This type of approach is irreconcilable with the biblical approach which posits that the divinely revealed guidelines give us a certainty as to the proper way of life. Gersonides,

like many medievals, pursues philosophy primarily as an instrument and not as an ultimate way of life. As Strauss notes, philosophy so understood is "compatible with every thought of life and therefore also with the biblical way of life."[44]

As mentioned, Jonas essentially follows the same first four steps. Beyond that, he occasionally refers to Torah and on such occasions claims to agree with a reasonable interpretation of Torah, but, unlike Gersonides, he is not concerned that he totally agree with Torah, since he apparently does not accept Torah as literal or absolutely authoritative revelation. He does show a great deal of respect for the potential wisdom to be derived from the Bible, as noted in his reliance upon the possible validity of biblical propositions concerning creation.[45] However, Jonas' "fifth" step in his argumentation is a move into theology, that is, a step beyond reason into the realm of explanation of faith. For him, this takes the form of speculation through the vehicle of a myth. He also takes a further step by analyzing the consequences of his myth. Section 4 will discuss the functioning of a religious myth in one's life.

As discussed above[46] Jonas finds that philosophic discourse is limited, since it is based upon reason. As such philosophy, which may be termed a "scientific perspective" must operate within "self-imposed limitations," in the words of Clifford Geertz.[47] In contrast, Geertz notes, "a religious perspective" requires commitment instead of detachment, encounter instead of analysis. What is necessary is true belief, not merely hypothetical truth. This is similar to what

Jonas holds to be a failing of the scientific perspective, that is, its abstractness, its "visual" orientation, and thus its inability to consider the evidence of our encounters with the concrete reality of other things in the world and our internal concrete enounter with ourselves.[48] Geertz notes that the religious perspective "questions the realities of everyday life not out of an institutionalized skepticism which dissolves the world's givenness into a swirl of probablistic hypotheses, but in terms of what it takes to be wider, nonhypothetical truths."[49] From this view, Gersonides also speaks from a religious perspective in his search for nonhypothetical truth, although Gersonides will not accept that philosophic investigation is unable to reach the same truth. Nevertheless, Gersonides, like Jonas, reflects what Geertz terms "the basic axiom underlying . . . 'the religious perspective' . . .: he who would know must first believe."[50] Leo Strauss adds that belief underlies not only religion but philosophy itself. Since philosophy admits the possibility that revelation may be true, then philosophy itself is not necessarily "the right way of life." The choice of philosophy as a way of life is thus based not upon philosophy, but on faith. "In other words, the quest for evident knowledge rests itself on an unevident premise."[51] Jonas agrees and notes that "all philosophers reflect the presuppositions of their faith." Jonas adds that while different faiths may produce different philosophies and different theologies, there is a pressing problem in today's world which underlies all faith, that is, the necessity to keep alive the possibility of exploring one's faith,

theology, and philosophy.[52] This underlies much of Jonas' theodicy and morality.

3. The Nature and Attributes of God

The distinction between Gersonides' world of permanence and Jonas' world of flux is most clear in their respective discussions of the nature and attributes of God. Even when considering the fundamental similarity of their theodicies, that is, the lack of complete control by God over events in our world, this distinction is evident. Jonas simply rejects God's omnipotence. On one level, this is a response to the Holocaust, in that Jonas cannot conceive of an omnipotent God, who is also good and at least somewhat intelligible, who would permit such unmitigated evil to occur in our world. On another level, Jonas questions whether the concept of "omnipotence" can ever have any validity, since power requires a relationship to something over which it is exercised. Thus, the possessor of power is always limited by the mere existence of the other entity over which the power is exercised.[53] Gersonides also posits that God cannot control all of the events in our world. However, God is still "omnipotent," in that God can do all that is logically possible. Since it is not logically possible for a perfect, that is, immutable God to have knowledge of, or control over particulars as particulars, God's lack of such control is not a limit on God's omnipotence.[54] Thus, while both thinkers conclude that God's control is limited, they reach that conclusion through different routes, Gersonides beginning with God's absolute perfection and Jonas attributing it to God's chosen self-limitation.

Underlying Gersonides' concept of God's perfection is the (for him) self-evident presupposition that perfect goodness consists in self-sufficiency, that is, absolute independence from any other entity. For Gersonides, God would exist and be precisely the same being, whether or not the rest of the universe, either the corporeal or incorporeal aspects of the universe, existed.[55] Arthur Lovejoy describes this self-sufficiency as an implication of the Platonic "Idea of the Good", (not necessarily Plato's view). "The fullness of good is attained once for all in God; and 'the creatures' add nothing to it. They have from the divine point of view no value; if they were not, the universe would be none the worse."[56] Gersonides also holds God to be self-sufficient, maintaining that God is completely actualized, in contrast to human beings, who, with respect to their essence or soul, are merely potential. Jonas differs by positing that God forfeited any self-sufficiency at the time of creation "for the sake of unprejudiced becoming." Jonas does not discuss whether or not God was absolutely self-sufficient before the time of creation, even in mythical representation. Rather, the fundamental uncertainty in our world leads Jonas to posit a similar uncertainty in the transcendent realm.[57]

Gersonides' assumption of God's self-sufficiency contains at least two presuppositions which are apparently self-evident to him. The first, for which Abravanel criticizes Gersonides, presupposes that uniform, uninterrupted action is more perfect than sporadic activity. In other words, a God who perpetually performs the sole act of self-contemplation is more perfect than a God who

knows about the changing events in our world and responds to them by intervening on behalf of deserving people.[58] The second assumption also relates to immutability. Gersonides assumes that the "laws of logic are universal and eternal . . . (and therefore) God could not maintain as true that which man knows to be absurd." From this assumption, Gersonides assumes that the laws of causality, including what God could cause, apply with equal force before the time of creation as they do in our created world. Thus, unlike Maimonides, Gersonides argues that his proofs of creation, based upon God's nature, are not merely probable, but absolutely demonstrated.[59] This same assumption that the laws of logic apply in all realms and at all times underlies Gersonides' notion that God can only do what is logically possible, which, of course, is fundamental to Gersonides' theodicy.

The distinctions concerning God's nature determine the distinctions concerning the divine attributes of knowledge and providence. For Gersonides, since God is immutable, God cannot know particular events in our world as particulars. As a result, divine providence assists human beings in specific instances only in response to humanly initiated action, that is, our actualizing of our intellect to obtain foreknowledge. God provided the faculties which enable us to obtain such foreknowledge, as well as to obtain happiness in this world and immortality. However, God will not intevene in the underlying natural order, including the established essence of humankind, to assist us. What ultimately occurs depends upon our choice. Thus when Gersonides

states that God "takes care" of human beings, he means that "what is actual (that is, the understanding of God) . . . helps bring (that which is only potential, that is, the understanding of human beings) into actuality." Despite God's inability to intervene, God has not forsaken righteous individuals, but has provided them with the means to escape evil, to obtain happiness, and to obtain immortality.[60]

In contrast, Jonas sees no limit on God's knowledge, including knowledge of changing events in our world, since, for Jonas God not only can change, but intentionally subjected Himself to the effects of events in our world. However, God can no longer intervene in those events, since the self-limitation which subjected God to those events included forfeiting the power to intervene in them, at least directly. A type of intervention is described by Jonas in terms of the resonance in the transcendent realm of pervasive disappointment at actions within our world. However, this is a rather attenuated form of "intervention", since the resonated mood only applies to general generational concerns and since, beyond that, it may not be perceived by human beings. As with Gersonides, divine providence consists in the providing of possibilities for a life of happiness, for an avoidance of suffering, and for immortality, rather than in the direct action of God providing those results. The distinction lies in the presuppositions concerning God's nature, as discussed above.

A further significant implication of these presuppositions for the theodicies of Gersonides and Jonas is evident in

their descriptions of creation. As noted, Gersonides maintains what Arthur Lovejoy calls a Platonic notion of God's self-sufficiency. However, Gersonides does not agree with what Lovejoy terms the "implicit theodicy" in Platonism, particularly in medieval Neoplatonism. Such theodicy assumes not only God's self-sufficiency but what Lovejoy terms the principle of "plenitude." This principle responds to the question of why the world need exist at all, if God is self-sufficient. According to Lovejoy, Plotinus responded that the creator possesses no envy whatsoever, and thus desires all to be as much like Himself as possible. Thus, even the created world is relatively "good", that is, relatively self-sufficient. In effect, the creator cannot be complete or fully good without producing others, that is, without creating the lower world. Thus the greater the variety that exists in the lower world, the more complete it is. Since the world must contain all conceivable forms, it must also have all evils, that is all privations of good. The result will necessarily be good for the entire universe, despite a "perpetual war" between the variety of the parts.[61]

Gersonides would probably disagree with this implicit theodicy, since he would find that it implies that evil derives from God. Moreover, Gersonides maintains that God's completeness does not require the variety of the lower realm, since its defective, that is material, aspects would not add to God's completeness, but would detract from the completeness that is the integrated oneness of the perfect deity. Thus Gersonides would reject the principle of plenitude and the theodicy implicit in it. Rather,

Gersonides posits that while God has no envy, God also has no need for our world. As discussed above, creation would not have taken place unless the material receptacle became prepared to accept the forms. If that had not occurred, God would have been none the worse for it.[62]

For Jonas, God does not necessarily need the world. Rather, God chose to create it, for the sake of unprejudiced becoming. This is a form of plenitude, since God, according to Jonas, benefits from the variety of the world, at least until the appearance of humanity. Once human beings exist and can freely choose between good and evil, variety no longer necessarily benefits the transcendent realm, but could possibly harm that realm, since humans can make bad choices. Thus, God took a risk in creation.[63] Again, the contrast with Gersonides derives from their differing conceptions of the divine nature. To Jonas, God can benefit from events in our world and thus God is not full, perfect and complete to begin with.

A further distinction concerning creation is that Gersonides rejects creation ex nihilo, while Jonas supports such a concept. Gersonides' rejection derives from his presupposition that "like produces like," that is, an incorporeal deity could not create corporeal substance without material elements as a substratum.[64] While Jonas does not discuss it, one may assume that he finds creation ex nihilo to be logically possible, even if not necessarily true, because the laws of causation in our world do not necessarily apply to the time before creation. Gersonides

holds that creation ex nihilo is logically impossible. Jonas reaches his position that God created ex nihilo not from logical necessity but on account of the consequences of such creation, that is, that it leads to God's knoweldge about and caring for individuals.[65] Gersonides would argue that God can know "individuals," although God cannot know them as particulars. God's providence is limited to the class to which the individual belongs, which might possibly, but never necessarily, consist of only one individual.[66] Thus, the distinction concerning whether creation or not was ex nihilo derives from the distinction concerning divine immutability.

4. Distinctions Concerning Methodology

Two aspects of methodology also reflect the distinction between Gersonides' world of permanence and Jonas' world of flux. The first concerns whether one begins one's inquiry with the nature of human life or begins with the nature of God; and the second concerns whether one focuses upon the questions of humanly-caused suffering or "naturally"-caused suffering. With respect to the first aspect of methodology, Gersonides notes that one might begin by studying the "order of existent things" in this world. From this, one would learn of the essential perfect order of the world, including the limitations upon the prosperity of the wicked and the ultimate prosperity of the righteous, as well as the overall beneficial order. From this, one could deduce the fact of a perfect, divine creator. One's knowledge of the original would only

be knowledge deduced from the copy, that is by pros hen equivocal knowledge. Nevertheless, one could thereby obtain knowledge of God.[67] Moreover, the proper perception of the order of lower existent things will lead one's soul to long "to conceive them truly in their oneness," that is, the soul will be thereby motivated "to fulfill its function of true conception."[68] However, while Gersonides argues that one might proceed in this fashion, Gersonides himself derives conclusions concerning existent things from the presuppositions concerning God's nature, rather than proceeding initially from an empirical study of our world. As discussed above, the notions of God's perfection and immutability lead to the perfection of the essence of all things, with the result that any disorder, evil, or injustice must result from material rather than essential aspects of things.

For Jonas, it is impossible to begin with any presuppositions about divine nature, both because the world gives overwhelming evidence of flux and, at least implicitly, because Jonas knows that Kant has shown the logical impossibility of demonstrating the existence of God, much less the nature of God. Jonas begins with studying the phenomenon of life, particularly human existence. Underlying any organic existence is uncertainty and freedom, which reaches its highest state in the human being as image maker and beholder. From this, Jonas derives his conceptions of immortality and of God. Jonas accepts that this understanding is subjective and anthropomorphic, since it is based upon internal evidence, as well as on subjective image-making and beholding

concerning external evidence. As a result, Jonas represents his conclusions in a myth. As discussed, Jonas does not propose that this myth is absolutely true, but that it is a reflection of his underlying faith. Moreover, while the myth presupposes a subjective belief, the existence of the myth also influences one's belief. In other words, the myth is an "externalization of an inner principle," which later is internalized into our life.[69] Thus the myth for Jonas is part of what Berger calls "the dialecticity between religious activity and religious ideation." In other words, religion arises from beliefs which reflect our concerns of everyday life. It is then formalized into religious ideas, such as Jonas' myth. These are reinternalized into our life, which gives rise to new concerns giving rise to new religious ideas.[70] Clifford Geertz expresses a similar thought by noting that cultural patterns, including religious conceptualizations such as Jonas' myth, are both models "of reality" and models "for reality"; "they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves."[71] Such an interaction between religious conceptions and religious beliefs is inconceivable to Gersonides, for whom proper conception is as immutable as ultimate reality.

The second difference in stance involves Jonas' limitation to a consideration of evil caused by human beings, rather than evil caused by natural forces, such as earthquake or disease. Since other modern theodicies do deal with this issue, this is

less a cultural distinction than a specific response to Jonas' particular situation, that is, his concern with the Holocaust. As noted, it is unclear how Jonas' theodicy might deal with evil caused by natural forces. Gersonides, of course, deals with both human evil and natural evil, and responds to them similarly. Both are reflections of the material aspects, respectively, of human beings and of our world, since evil could not result from essential aspects, which emanate from God. This distinction might be seen as cultural in that Jonas is concerned with the human potential to destroy the world as we know it and thus to make moot problems such as theodicy. For Gersonides, the world is indestructible and such questions are inevitable.

Conclusion

Gersonides and Hans Jonas are products of two different cultures, with results in their producing two theodicies which sound very different. Perhaps these theodicies are irreconcilable, since they deal with different conceptions of deity, different worlds, and different purposes for human life. Gersonides finds that an immutable God produces immutable forms which adhere in things in our world and create a generally good order. However, things have a material or disordered aspect, from which all evil derives. The meaning and purpose of human life is to fit in or adapt to the essentially good and immutable cosmic order. In contrast, Jonas begins with a world of flux, which gives evidence of organic freedom, particularly human freedom. From that, he

derives the notion of unprejudiced becoming, which, as expressed by his myth, resulted from God's self-forfeiture. God is thus unable directly to intervene in the events in our world. The purpose and meaning of human existence are both to keep alive the possibilities of freedom and to choose and perform good deeds, which impact upon both this world and the transcendent realm.

Nevertheless, despite these apparently stark distinctions, the parallels between Gersonides and Hans Jonas remain intriguing. Both address the problem of theodicy by limiting God's control over the events in this world. Moreover, both uphold the value of each individual human being, despite our finitude. Both stress that we have free choice and that the nature of our choice is quite significant. For Gersonides, our choice will determine our individual immortality and the happiness of ourselves and others in this world. For Jonas it also matters concerning the ultimate status of the transcendent realm. Moreover, both ascribe value to individuals because of their ability to know, at least somewhat, the true nature of themselves, the world, and God. Thus both provide theodicies which are effective according to the criteria discussed in the introduction. Theodicies are not designed primarily to help us avoid suffering, although they may do so. Rather, the function of a theodicy is to explain suffering, that is, to give meaning to our lives despite inevitable suffering. The theodicies of both Gersonides and Hans Jonas posit a coherent order to our lives in relation to the universe and to God, which can give us a sense of security to continue our existence. Moreover, both provide more

than mere security. They give us a great deal of hope: a hope that we can avoid much suffering; a hope that we can find transcendent guidance about to how to live; and a hope that we can, despite some inevitable suffering, live lives which are happy, meaningful, and even immortal.

CHAPTER FOUR - FOOTNOTES

1 Bleich, Providence, p. 75.

2 Bleich, Providence, p. 75; See also, Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 67.

3 Bleich, Providence, p. 60.

4 Feldman, "Creation," p. 222.

5 Feldman, "Platonic Themes," pp. 396-397.

6 Arthur J. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961) pp. 11-12.

7 Staub, Creation, pp. 308-309, n.270-271.

8 Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 10.

9 Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 78.

10 Adlerblum, Gersonides, pp. 115-116.

11 Jonas, Gnostic Religion, pp. 248-249.

12 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 216.

13 Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, pp. 15-16.

14 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 4.

15 Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 43.

16 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 106-107, and 60-63.

17 See Chapter 3 at notes 71-78.

18 Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 25.

19 Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 25.

20 See Chapter 3 at notes 127-129.

21 See Chapter 3 at notes 50-52 and 127-129.

22 Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 78.

23 Kellner, "Prophecy," p. 78.

24 Samuelson, Knowledge, pp. 73-74, 166.

25 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 298.

26 Adlerblum, Gersonides, p. 69.

27 Berger, Sacred Canopy, pp. 55-56.

28 Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 13.

29 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," pp. 120-121

30 Berger, Sacred Canopy, pp. 76-77.

31 See Chapter 3 at notes 76-77.

32 See Chapter 2 at notes 150-151.

33 Feldman, "Agent Intellect," p. 355.

34 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 76-79.

35 Staub, Creation, pp. 126-127, 117-118.

36 See Chapter 3 at notes 111-116.

37 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 12.

38 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 278.

39 Jonas, Phenomenon of Life, p. 6.

40 Samuelson, Knowledge, p. 4.

41 Brody, Jewish Encyclopedia, p. 29, quoting Introduction to Milhamot Hashem.

42 Alderblum, Gersonides, pp. 114, 118.

43 Leo Strauss, "The Mutual Inference of Theology and Philosophy," Iyyun Hebrew Philosophical Quarterly, (Jerusalem), Vol. V. No. 1, January, 1954, p. 113-114, English translation in The Independent Journal of Philosophy, Vol. III, 1979, p. 113-114.

44 Strauss, "Theology and Philosophy," p. 113.

45 See Chapter 3 at notes 180-182.

46 See Chapter 3 at note 117.

47 Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, p. 123.

48 See Chapter 3 at notes 88-97.

49 Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, p. 112.

50 Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, p. 110.

51 Strauss, "Theology and Philosophy," p. 118.

52 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 24.

53 See Chapter 3 at note 145.

54 See Chapter 2 at notes 21-23.

55 See Chapter 2 at note 20.

56 Lovejoy, Great Chain of Being, p. 43.

57 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz", pp. 466-470.

58 Kellner, "Arama and Abravanel," p. 281.

59 Silverman, "Prophecy," p. 104.

60 Lassen, Commentary on Job, pp. 232-233.

61 Lovejoy, Great Chain of Being, pp. 47-52, 64-65.

62 See Chapter 2 at note 20.

63 Jonas, "God After Auschwitz", p. 469.

64 Feldman, "Platonic Themes," p. 386.

65 See Chapter 3 at notes 141-142.

66 See Chapter 2 at note 91.

67 See Chapter 2 at note 174.

68 Staub, Creation, p. 371, n.531.

69 Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 291-293.

70 Berger, Sacred Canopy, p. 39-41.

71 Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, p. 93.

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