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Maimonides' Theodicy

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[1913]

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Introduction

The object of my thesis is to present Maimonides theory of the problem of theodacy. Theodacy is a theory that attempts to justify Divine providence by reconciling the existence of evil with the goodness and sovereignty of God. The term "theodacy" was first used by Leibnitz, but the problem was treated at a much earlier period by other thinkers, and must have occupied the mind of the religious man since the time he began to think. But more particularly does this problem occupied the minds of Jewish thinkers, because in Judaism God is primarily an ethical Being. In fact, all the prophets dwelled on the idea of God's justice; they felt that God can not be but just, and, therefore, whenever evil befell the people, they regarded it as a deserved punishment for the sins of the people. Jeremiah, however, entertained some doubt with regard to this explanation, and timidly asked the question: "Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked are prosperous." In Biblical

literature, the book of Job is a lengthy treatise on the same problem. In Rabbinical literature, many Rabbis discuss this problem. Among Jewish thinkers of a later period, Saadiah attempts to solve it. Maimonides treats this problem systematically in his Moreh Nebochim, while in his other works he occasionally touches it. The problem of theodicy is the problem of providence, and involves the problems of Omniscience, omnipotence, retribution, free will, and the origin of evil. All these, except the last, are closely connected with the theory of Divine attributes. Maimonides differs radically from other Jewish philosophers with regard to the theory of attributes. His theory concerning theodicy may be much better understood when viewed in the light of his theory of attributes. Therefore I deemed it advisable to introduce my subject with a brief presentation of Maimonides theory of attributes.

I Maimonides' Theory of Attributes

According to Maimonides, we believe that God is the Primal Cause, one, incorporeal, free from emotion and privation, and incomparable with any of His creatures, therefore any attributes which contradict, either directly or indirectly, this creed should not be applied to God. Maimonides enumerates four classes of attributes which can not be applied to God, because they imply corporeality and plurality. First, those attributes which contain a definition of God's essence. These attributes can not be applied to God, because God is the Primal Cause, therefore His essence can not be described. Secondly, those attributes which contain a definition of a part of His essence. These attributes imply composition, and are therefore inadmissible in reference to God. Thirdly, those attributes which contain a description of His qualities. These, too, imply plurality, and are therefore inappropriate in reference to God. Fourthly, those attributes which describe a relation to other beings or to time and space. These attributes must also be rejected, because they imply corporeality and comparison. The only class of positive attributes to which Maimonides does not object are those which describe actions. By actions Maimonides does not mean the capacity for a

certain work, such as is expressed in "carpenter" or "smith", for these belong to qualities which can not be ascribed to God. By actions Maimonides means works an agent has performed, and which do not imply different elements in the agent, but are contained in his essence. According to Maimonides, all attributes that are found in the Scripture belong to this class. They are to be regarded as a description of the works of God. When, for instance, the Scripture ascribes to God will, power, or wisdom, the Scripture wants to say that God's works manifest these qualities. (Similarly, the terms existing, one, etc. denote something else when applied to God. As attributes of God they are identical with His essence; while as attributes of man they are something distinct from his essence. God exists, knows, lives, is wise, without possessing the attributes of existence, knowledge, life, and wisdom. Maimonides says that our knowledge of God is of a negative character, that only the negative attributes are the true attributes of God; while the positive attributes imply polytheism and are inadequate. He shows that an approximate knowledge of a thing can be attained by mere negations. Such a knowledge increases with the number of negations. The negative attributes do not imply plurality and corporeality, and convey the highest possible knowledge of God. Positive attributes, however,

whatever perfection they may denote according to our conception, imply defects in reference to God, when applied to Him in the same sense as they are used in reference to some other being. Therefore, when an attribute is intended to convey some idea of the Divine Being, and not of His actions, negative attributes should be used. According to Maimonides, all we can understand of God is the fact that He is one, that He is incomparable with any other being, that He is never too feeble to produce other beings, and that He rules the universe, gives it duration, and preserves its necessary order.

I Evil Is Not the Product of God

We have seen that according to Maimonides we know that God created the universe, rules it, and maintains it. Though we can know nothing else about God, we infer from His works that He rules the universe according to a certain order. Now the question arises does this rule and order in the universe manifest justice? How shall we reconcile the evils existing in the world with the justice of God.[2] Maimonides endeavors to prove that God does not create evil. He achieves this by proving that evils are negative properties, or non-exis-

tence, and non-existence can not be considered the work of God. Evil is not a positive principle, but it is non-existence; accordingly non-existence is the cause of evil, and this can not be regarded as the work of God. According to Maimonides, when evils are mentioned in the Scripture, the Scriptural expressions must not be taken in their literal sense. Maimonides rejects the theory of the Mutakalemim with regard to the meaning of the term non-existence. The Mutakalemim apply the term non-existence only to absolute non-existence, but they consider a property and the absence of that property as two opposites, that is, as two positive principles. They treat blindness and sight, death and life in the same way as heat and cold. Although the Mutakalemim hold that non-existence does not require an agent, they hold, in accordance with their principle, that a negative property is a positive principle, that God causes blindness, deafness, and gives rest to anything that moves etc. Maimonides rejects this theary. He holds that the absence of a property is not a positive

principle, consequently negative properties belong to non-existing things. The action of an agent, however, can not be directly connected with a thing that does not exist; (only indirectly) only indirectly can non-existence be considered as the result of the action of an agent. According to this explanation, evils are only evils in relation to certain things, that is, they are evils only in so far as they imply the negation of a certain property or of existence in respect to a certain thing. Having established that evils in reference to a certain thing either include the absence of some of its properties or non existence, Maimonides lays down the proposition that all evils are negations. He illustrates this proposition in the following way. Death is for a man an evil; death is non-existence. Similarly, sickness poverty ignorance are evils for man; all these are merely privations of certain properties. Maimonides says that this ~~proposition~~ holds true in every case. Only those do not acknowledge this truth who do not make any distinction between nega-

tive and positive properties, or who do not know the nature of things; who, for instance, do not know that health in general denotes a certain equilibrium and is a relative term. The absence of that equilibrium is illness; death is the absence of life. The destruction of other things is likewise nothing but the absence of their forms. It is obvious that it can not be said of God that He directly creates evil, or has the intention to produce evil. He only produces existence, and all existence is good; while evils are of a negative character, and can not be ascribed to God. He creates evil only in so far as He produces the corporeal element which is always connected with negatives, and is on that account the source of all destruction. Those beings who do not possess the corporeal element are not subject to destruction. Even those evils which man inflict upon each other because of differences of religious opinions, and other beliefs, and desires are also due to non-existence; for they spring from ignorance, which is the absence of wisdom. Just as a blind man, who has no guide stumbles constantly because he can not see, and through that causes injury to himself and others, so the

various classes of men cause injuries to themselves and to other members of their species. If men would possess wisdom, they would not harm themselves and others, for the Knowledge of truth removes hatred and strife.

III Matter and Form and their Relation to Evil

According to Maimonides, everything that God created may be divided in three classes: (1) To the first class belong all creatures that are composed of matter and form, and are subject to genesis and destruction, such as men, animals and plants etc. (2) To the second class belong those creatures which are composed of matter and form, but are not subject to genesis and destruction or to any change. The spheres belong to this class. (3) To the third class belong the angels who possess only form, and are not subject to genesis and destruction or to any change. In the sublunary world, everything is composed of matter and form; matter is composed of the four elements, of fire, water, wind and earth; each of these four elements is composed of matter and form. the character

of a body is determined by the preponderance of any of the four elements. A body receives the characteristic of that element of which it contains most. Every thing that is composed of the four elements resolves in the end. Its elements separate, and return to their respective elements; water returns to water, fire to fire, and so on. Then the elements combine again and form another body. This process repeats itself ad infinitum. The combination and dissolution of the elements are the cause of all changes in the sublunary world. The elements themselves are subject to being transformed from one element into another. Destruction and origination are transitions from one form of existence into another. In the sublunary world matter can not exist without form, nor can form exist without matter. Form is the soul of animate beings. Man has a form which can comprehend form without matter. This form is reason. Reason is the form of the soul, and is not connected with the elements, as the soul is connected with the body. The form of the soul does not depend upon the body; it does not depend on the soul, therfore it does not perish with the body. Everything existing and endowed with form owes its existence to its form, and when

that form is destroyed, its whole existence terminates and is obliterated. Form can only be destroyed on account of its connection with matter, which has always a disposition to receive form; and for this reason no form remains permanently in a body (matter) & constant change is taking place. Whatever form matter has, it is always disposed to receive another form; it is constantly (constantly) casting off the form it has in order to receive another. All destruction and corruption comes from matter. All defects, and deformities originate in transient matter. Living beings die (through) through the matter of their body, not through their form. Even all man's shortcomings and sins are due to the matter of the body and not to its form, while all his merits are exclusively due to his form. The Knowledge of God the formation of ideas, the control over desire and passion, the distinction between good and bad, all these man owes to his form, while eating drinking, passion, in short, all vices have their origin in the matter of the body. Since it

was necessary that the form of man should be connected with matter, because no matter can exist without form, or any of the forms of the bodies without matter, God gave power to the form of man to rule over its matter. The form of man has the power to subdue its matter, and to refuse the fulfilment of its desires, and to reduce the desires to a proper measure. Intelligent persons should reduce their physical wants as much as possible and retain of them only as much as is indispensable for the maintenance of the body, because the station of a person is determined by the exercise of this power. Man must emancipate himself from the tyranny of the body; he should disregard its craving, and strive to choose that which is noble. Intelligent persons should be engaged in the formation of ideas, and the acquisition of true knowledge about every thing. The best and sublimest of ideas is that which man forms about God, angels, and the universe. If a man has control over his bodily wants, he will possess a sound body which will

facilitate

the rule of the soul over the body. Excessive indulgence in eating and drinking ruins the physical constitution of man, and disturbs the equilibrium in him. According to Maimonides, the corporeal element in man prevents him from attaining perfection; it is a partition that prevents him from perfectly perceiving abstract ideas. However great the desire and exertion of our mind may be to comprehend the Divine Being, we find a screen and partition between Him and ourselves on account of the corporeal element in us.

IV The Various Kinds of Evils.

Having shown that the source of evil is the material element in man, Maimonides enumerates the various kinds of evils that befall mankind. He says that the opinion prevails that there is more evil in the universe than good. Not only ignorant people hold this opinion but even educated men. People who hold this opinion imagine that a good that a good thing is seldom found, while evil things are numerous and lasting. Maimonides says that this is a mistake. He ascribes this error to the fact that people

judge the whole universe by examining a single case. People think that the whole universe was created for their sake. If they would consider what an insignificant part of the universe they are, they would not fall into this error. Those who ~~what~~ find much evil in the world do not find it among the angels, the stars, the elements, and in all that which is formed of the elements, but only among some individuals of the human species. Maimonides holds that mankind and all species of animals form a very insignificant part of the universe. The rank of man is very low, when compared with the higher portions of the universe, that is, with the spheres, the stars and angels. The universe exists because it is the will of God, but not for man's sake. Man is the highest of all beings formed of the four elements, and his existence is a great gift. The numerous evils which befall individual persons are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. They suffer from evils which they inflict upon themselves, and then ascribe the evils to God. According to Maimonides, the evils that befall men may be divided in three classes. (1) The first class of evils is that

which is caused to man by the circumstance that he is subject to genesis and destruction, or that he possesses a body. For it is on account of the body that some persons happen to be inflicted with deformities and other diseases. These evils may be parts of the natural constitution of a man, or may have been acquired later by changes in the elements, that is, through bad air, or thunderstorms, or landslips. These evils are necessary for the perpetuation of the species, for genesis can only take place through destruction. Without the destruction of the individual members of the species, the species themselves could not exist permanently. If man were never subject to change, there could be no generation; there would be one single being, but no individuals forming a species. Whatever is formed of any matter receives the most perfect form possible in that kind of matter, and in each individual case the defects are in accordance with the defects of that individual matter. It is therefore impossible that man should be free from this kind of evil. Besides this, the evils which the forces

of nature inflict upon man are very few and rare, for we find countries which have never been flooded or burned for thousands of years. There are thousands of men in good health; deformed individuals are exceptional. (2) The second class of evils comprises all evils which people cause to each other, such as war etc. These evils are more numerous than those of the ~~first~~ first class. They originate in ourselves, though the sufferer can not avert them. This kind of evil is neverthe-less not wide-spread in the world. (3) The third class of evils comprises all evils which every man causes to himself by his actions. These evils are far more numerous than the second class. These evils originate in man's vices, such as excessive desire for eating, drinking, and ~~lust~~ love / indulgence in these things in an undue measure, or eating bad food. The suffering of the body as a result of these evils are well known; while the suffering of the soul is tow-fold. - First, such sufferings as are the necessary consequences of changes in the body in so far the soul is connected with the body. Secondly,

those evils which spring from the appetitive faculty of the soul. When the soul gets accustomed to superfluous things, it acquires a strong habit of desiring things which are neither necessary for the preservation of the individual, nor for that of the species

I. The Human Soul, its Faculties, its Diseases, and its Cure.

Maimonides says that the human soul is one, but has many diversified functions. These functions are called faculties or parts. The improvement of the moral qualities is brought about by curing the soul and its activities. Therefore, if we want to cure the soul, wishing thereby to improve our moral qualities, we must have a knowledge of the soul and its functions=parts. The soul has five faculties; (1) the nutritive, (2) the imaginative, (3) the appetitive, (4) the sensitive, (5) and the rational faculty. Man is sustained by the nutritive faculty of the soul. The nutritive faculty consists of the power (a) of receiving nourishment, (b) of the retention of the same, (c) its digestion, (d) the repulsion of superfluities

Waste

(e) growth, (f) procreation, (g) the differentiation of the nutritive juices which are necessary for the sustenance of the body from those which are to be eliminated. The faculty of sensation consists of the five senses, of hearing, tasting, seeing, smelling, and feeling. Imagination is the faculty which retains the impressions of things perceived by the mind, after they have ceased to affect directly the senses which perceived them. This faculty has the power to combine impressions or separate one from the other, and thus it constructs ideas which it could not possibly have perceived. —. The appetitive faculty is that by which a man desires or detests a thing, and which gives rise to the following activities: inclination or avoidance anger and affection, fear and courage and many other similar activities. The fifth faculty, reasoning, is peculiar to man and enables him to understand, to reflect, to acquire knowledge, and to discriminate between what is proper or improper. Its function is partly practical and partly speculative The ~~[illegible]~~ practical is either mechanical or intellectual. Through the speculative

faculty

man knows things as they really are, and which are not subject to change. The mechanical power is that by which the arts, such as agriculture, architecture, medicine, and navigation are acquired. The intellectual power is that by which a man, when he intends to do an act, reflects upon what he has premeditated, considers the possibility of performing it, and, if he thinks it possible, decides how it should be done. The soul may be compared to matter in that it has likewise a form; this form of the soul is reason. According to Maimonides, vices and virtues (Maimonides says instead of virtues and vices "observance and transgressions" of the Law: שמונה פרקים Ch II) originate in the sensitive and the appetitive faculty. The faculties of nutrition and imagination are not connected with virtues and vices, for neither of these faculties gives rise to a conscious and voluntary act. A man can not consciously and voluntarily suspend their function, as it is proved by the fact that the functions of the nutritive and imaginative faculty continue to be

active even when man is asleep, while the other faculties are inactive. Cfs to the rational faculty, Maimonides holds that virtues and vices originate in this faculty only in so far as one believes in a true or false doctrine. Virtues are either intellectual or moral. Similarly, vices are intellectual, as ignorance, stupidity etc.; or they are moral. The health of the soul depends upon its virtues, while the illness of the soul is caused by its vices. Virtues are psychic conditions which are the mid-way between two extremes, one of which is characterized by exaggeration, the other by deficiency. To illustrate abstemiousness is a disposition which adopts the midcourse between inordinate passion and total insensibility to pleasure. Abstemiousness then is the proper rule of conduct, and the psychic disposition which gives rise to it is an ethical quality; but inordinate passion the extreme of excess, and total insensibility, the extreme of deficiency, are both absolutely pernicious. The psychic disposition from which these two extremes, inordinate passion and total insensibility spring, must be classed among moral imperfections. Similarly, liberality is the midcourse between sordidness

Dissipation

and extravagance; courage between recklessness and cowardice; humility between arrogance and self-abasement, etc. Every one should adhere to the medium course, for this is the best course. Moral qualities or defects can not be acquired or implanted in the soul except by means of frequent repetition of acts ~~resulting~~ resulting from these qualities, which, if practiced during a long period, accustom us to them. If these acts are good, then we gain virtues, but if they are bad we shall have acquired vices. If a man will direct his actions to the medium course and maintain an exact ballance between the two extremes, he will attain the highest degree of perfection possible to a human being, and will thereby approach God. Having shown the way which leads to perfect health of the soul, Maimonides advises that man should constantly fix his attention to one goal. He shall endeavor to acquire the the knoledge of God as far as it is possible for mortal man to know him. For this purpose man shall so adjust his conduct that all his actions should promote this end. Gratification of all physical wants should

serve the purpose of keeping the body in good health, so that the soul may be in a sound and perfect condition. This will enable man to acquire wisdom, and to gain intellectual an moral virtues. The study of medicine is of help for the acquisition of virtues and the knowledge of God. From this point of view, the study of medicine may be regarded an important religious activity. Similarly, all other sciences tend, directly or indirectly, toward the goal of attaining the knowledge of God; for they sharpen the mind and train the mental faculties, whereby man acquires intellectual ability, which enables him to comprehend the true essence of God. If a man exerts the faculties of his soul, and directs them toward the sole ideal of comprehending God; if he uses all the powers of his mind and body for the attainment of that which leads directly or indirectly to virtue, his rank is as high a that of the prophets. Intellectual and moral vices are a partition that seperate man from God. No prophet received the gift of prophecy unless he possessed all intellectual virtues

and a great majority of the most important moral ones. Man's fate is to a great extent in his own hands. By striving to attain virtues he can raise himself to the rank of a prophet; but by indulging in vicious habits he sinks to the state of an animal.

VI Retribution

The purpose of the Divine Law is to teach us how to attain moral and intellectual perfections, which promote the well-being of man's soul and body. Since mans welfare depends upon the observance of the Divine laws it is his duty to repent when he has committed a sin. If he repents, his sins are forgiven; because when a man repents and changes his conduct he is not any more the same man he was before. There is no perfect man in this world; every man has merits and sins. If his sins are more numerous than his merits, he must perish. The same holds true with regard to a nation or country. According to Maimonides, there are various kinds of punishments. Sometimes God punishes the sinner only in this world, sometimes in the world hereafter, and sometimes in

both, in this world and in the wold to come. His punishment in this world consists sometimes in physical suffering, sometime in pecuniary loss, sometimes his children die as a punishment for his sins, and sometimes punishment consists in all three at one time. Sometimes God punishes a man by withholding his ability to use his free will for the purpose of repentance, so that it never occurs to him to repent, and he perishes in his wickedness. We can not know, says Maimonides, why God inflicts such a punishment upon the sinner because we can not fathom the wisdom of God. It is sufficient for us to know that God is just in all his ways, that he punishes the sinner according to his sins, and rewards the righteous according to his righteousness. The reward of the righteous is life hereafter, and the punishment of the wicked is forfeiture of the life hereafter. The life hereafter is the highest reward that exists, and the greatest punishment is to forfeit that life. According to Maimonides, the punishments enumerated in the Scripture, such as war, famine etc, will occur, if

the people will not obey the commandments of the Divine Law. However, reward and punishment in this world is not the final end; it is merely a means to an end. If a man will obey the Law and devote his life to study, then all obstacles, such as want and sickness etc., which hinder him to attain perfection and to live according to the Divine Law, will be removed. He will enjoy rest and peace and will have every thing he needs. This will enable him to attain moral perfection and to acquire Knowledge, whereby he will earn life hereafter. But if he will disobey the commandments of the Law and pursue worldly pleasures, above mentiand evils will befall him which will hinder him to attain moral perfection and to acquire Knowledge; and through this will forfeit his claim to life hereafter. The world hereafter is a spiritual world. There is no corporeality in that world. Life and happiness in the future world are permanent, while both are transitory in this world. There exists no relationship between the future world and this world. In this world we can not comprehend the life and happiness of the world

hereafter. The pleasures in the future world can not be described nor compared with any thing in this world. Happiness and pleasure in the future world will be of a spiritual character, which is far superior to the pleasures in this world. In the world hereafter the soul will find its happiness in the true Knoledge of God; and he who chooses sensous pleasures, despises truth, and likes falsehood will not attain it, but will remain matter and mortal.

VII Free Will

According to Maimonides, man is not born with either virtues or vices, just as he is not born skilled in any labor or art. He may be naturally so constituted as to have a propensity for a particular virtue or vice. Otherwise, his conduct is entirely in his own power. He is not constrained by any external influence to be either virtuous or vicious, except in as much as he may be so constituted by nature as to find it easy or hard to do a certain thing. Punishment and reward demand that man shall be free to do whatever he wants. If man's actions were preordained so that he could not be free to act according to his own inclination and wisdom, then

all commandments and prohibitions of the Law would be of no use, and the Law would be false; for he would have no freedom of choice in his actions. If man were predestined, it would be useless for him to study or to learn anything, because it would be impossible for him to acquire any knowledge. Reward and punishment would be an injustice. If a man were predestined to do a good deed, why should he receive a reward for an act which he was compelled to do. If, under such conditions, a man would commit a crime why should he be punished. Since he was predestined to commit a crime, why should God or men punish him for an act which he was compelled to do, and which he could not avoid. If man were predestined, all precautionary measures, such as building homes, fleeing from danger etc., would be absolutely useless, because that which was preordained must necessarily happen. For these reasons Maimonides holds that man has full control over his actions,

that there is no external force to compel him to do an act or to leave it undone. Yet Maimanides believes that the statement of the Rabbis, "Every thing is in the power of God except the fear of God," is true, and is consistent with free will. He says that by "יסר" the Rabbis wanted to say that man has no power over the forces of nature, that man is subject to the laws of nature. These have no connection with his conduct. Similarly, the sayings of the Rabbis, which is also found in the prophetical writings, that man's sitting and rising, and all his movements are governed by the will of God are true only in one respect, namely, that man is subject to the laws of nature, and that he can not change by his will these laws. But the obedience or disobedience of man with regard to the Divine Law (תורה) does not depend upon the power or will of God. The commandments and prohibitions of the Law refer only to those actions with regard to which man has absolute free choice to do, or to refrain from doing. Only by the laws of nature is man's free

will restricted, and these are in accordance with the will of God.

VIII Divine Providence

Maimanides introduces this subject by stating that the problem of Divine providence has led some philosophers to adopt wrong views concerning God's omniscience. There are several reasons which led the philosophers to adopt wrong views concerning God's omniscience. The main reason is the apparent absence of order and system in the management of human affairs. Therefore they argued as follows: We see that that some pious and righteous men suffer, while some wicked prosper and are happy. On account of this they assumed as possible one of the following cases: either God is ignorant of the individual and particular things on earth, or He knows them. If God knows all individual things on earth one of the following three cases must be assumed. (1) God manages and arranges human affairs well and faultlessly. (2) He is overcome by obstacles which make Him powerless to manage human affairs. (3) God knows everything and has the power to manage human

will

affairs, but He does not take notice of them and abandons them because they are too insignificant and not worthy of His notice. The philosophers decided that the last two of these three cases, that is, lack of power and absence of will are inadmissible with regard to God, because they imply evil disposition and weakness. Consequently there remains the alternative that God does not know human affairs, or that He knows them and manages them well. Since we, however, notice absence of order in the human affairs, we must assume that God has no knowledge of them. The philosophers further object to the theory of God's omniscience on the ground that the individual members of the species can only be perceived by the senses and not by reason, while God does not perceive by senses. They give more reasons for the rejection of the theory of Divine omniscience. Some of them hold that God has only a knowledge of the species, but not of the individuals; others say that He knows nothing beside Himself. Having shown the close connection between the problem of omniscience and that of providence, Maimonides

enumerates five different theories concerning Divine providence, and then presents his own views about this problem. (1) The first theory is that there is no providence; there is no being that governs the universe; every thing owes its origin to chance and is subject to chance. This is the theory of Epicurus, who holds that the universe consists of atoms, and that the atoms have combined by chance and have received their various forms by mere chance. Aristotle refuted this theory, and proved that the whole universe could not have originated by chance. (2) The second theory is that only a part of the universe is governed by Divine providence, while the rest is left to chance. Aristotle holds that everything which is permanent and does not change its properties, as, for instance the spheres, the species, and such individual beings which possess the power of perpetuating their species, as for instance, the stars, is governed by Divine providence; while the rest, that is, the sublunary world is subject to chance and is not governed by Divine providence. This view of Aristotle is closely connected with his theory

of the eternity of the universe, and with his theory that every thing on earth is subject to the laws of nature. (3) The third theory is that every thing is predetermined; every thing is the result of Godes will. This is the theary of the Asharian. This theary implies many absurdities. According to this theary revealed Law is inconceivable, and all precepts are useless, because those to whom the Law was given are unable to obey it. They can neither do what they are commanded nor abstain from what they are forbidden. According to this theary it is even possible that we may suffer punishment for obeying a commandment and receive reward for disobeying it. When a person is born blind or when a righteous man suffers, the Asharian say it is the will of God, and no injustice can be ascribed to God. (4) The fourth theary is that man possesses free will; all acts of God are due to wisdom, and no injustice can be ascribed to Him. According to this theary all creatures are governed by providence according to their merits. Even the lowest animals, if innocently killed, will be compensated in a

future life. This is the theory of the Mutazilah. The free will as assumed by the Mutazila is not absolute, for they hold that man's will and power is constantly reproduced by God. According to Maimonides, this theory implies the following absurdities. First, according to this theory, the evils that befall man are ascribed to the wisdom of God. Secondly, according to this theory, God afflicts the pious in this world in order to increase their reward in the future world. Maimonides says that the authors of the above mentioned theories concerning Divine providence were induced to accept their theories by weighty considerations. Aristotle was guided by that which appears to be the nature of things. The Shariah did not want to ascribe to God ignorance; therefore they preferred to admit the above mentioned absurdities. The Mutazila refused to ascribe injustice to God on the one hand; on the other, they would not contradict common sense. They likewise preferred the above mentioned absurdities. Their theory

is also inconsistent, for they believe on the one hand that God knows every thing, and on the other, that man has free will. (5) The fifth theory is that of the Jewish belief. According to this theory, all living beings are endowed with free will; God is just, and the destiny of man depends upon his merits. Wrong can not be ascribed to God in any way whatever. All evils and afflictions as well as happiness are meted out according to strict justice, and are the result of strict judgement that admits no wrong whatever. "Even when a person suffers pain from a thorn that has entered into his hand, this too, is a punishment that has been inflicted upon him for some sin; and the least pleasure that he enjoys is a reward for some good action. Maimonides quotes passages from the Scriptures and sayings of the Rabbis to substantiate his opinion about the Jewish belief concerning Divine providence. Among others he quotes the following passages. "There is no death without sin, and no suffering without transgression." (Babyl. talm. Sabbath p 55a) The same idea is expressed in the following.

"The merits of a man are meted out to him in the same measure which he uses" (Mishna Sota I 7). Another saying is this. "God does not deprive man of his full reward." (Babyl. Talm., Beracim 118a; Baba Kama 38b) In another place our sages say the following: "He who says that God remits part of punishment, will be severely punimished; He is long suffering but enacts payment." (Babyl. Talm., Baba Kama 50a) Maimonides denies the existence of trials inflicted by Divine love (חסדים של הקב"ה) which we find mentioned in the Talmud. According to this theory, afflictions befall man, not as punishment for sin, but to procure for him a higher reward in the future world. This view is also held by the Mutazilat. Maimonides holds that God does not punish unless it is absolutely necessary and deserved. He says that the Biblical accounts, according to which God tries men in order to know what is in their hearts, must not be taken in their literal sense; they merely state that God made the virtues of certain people known to their fellowmen in order that

their example should be followed. Maimonides view concerning Divine providence is as follows. In the sublunary portion of the universe providence does not extend to the individual members of the species except to the individuals of the human species. He agrees with Aristotle with regard to all other creatures, for he does not believe that it is through Divine interference that a certain leaf drops from a tree, or that God decrees that a certain spider should catch a certain fly at a certain time. He says that he adopted this view concerning providence because it is far less open to objections than any other mentioned above. He says that his theory is not based on demonstrative proof, but on his conception of the spirit of the Divine Law and on the writings of the prophets. According to Maimonides, it may be a mere chance that a ship goes down with all its contents, or the roof of a house falls upon those who are within; but it is not due to chance that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance. It is due to the will of God, and is in accordance with the justice of His judgement the

method of which our mind is unable to comprehend. If we ask, why did God select man as the object of his providence? Maimonides answers, because of all species of living beings man alone is endowed with intellect. And if we ask, why should man alone be endowed with intellect? Maimonides answers, because it is the will of God, it is the decree of His wisdom, or it is in accordance with the laws of nature. According to Maimonides, Divine providence is confined to the individual of the human species only, because it is related and closely connected with intellect, and can only proceed from an intellectual Being, from a Being that is the most perfect Intellect; therefore only ... those creatures which are endowed with intellect are subject to the influence of Divine providence. This theory, Maimonides says, is in accordance with reason and the teaching of Scripture, while the other theories either exaggerate Divine providence or detract from it. Exaggeration of Divine providence contradicts reason and common sense, and leads to nonsense and absurdities; while total denial of providence tends to disturb social order, and

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destroys all moral and intellectual virtues of man. If we admit that providence acts only upon intellect, the specific characteristic of human beings, we must also admit that the benefit which human beings derive from providence, is proportional to the intellectual perfection of each person. The greater the human perfection a person has attained, the greater the benefit he derives from Divine providence; while persons who are ignorant and deficient in that respect, equal irrational beings which are not affected by the influence of the active Intellect. It must further be admitted that providence acts upon the intellect of individual persons, because the species has no real existence, except in our mind. Species are merely ideas formed in our mind; while the individual members of the species have actual existence, and are endowed with intellect, therfore Divine providence acts upon individual persons

X Omniscience

Providence implies omniscience; for, if God takes notice of man, he must know all doings of man. In addition to that, the conception that God is perfect in every respect implies that God can

not be ignorant of anything, for ignorance is a deficiency. Maimonides endeavors to reconcile the theory of God's omniscience with the belief that God is one and immutable. He refutes the objections of some thinkers who hold that God can not include in His knowledge a multitude of things, or changeable things, or things that do not yet exist, or things the number of which is infinite, because such a knowledge is inconsistent with our conception of His unity and immutability. These objections, Maimonides says, are based on the error of supposing that God's knowledge is similar to man's knowledge. God's knowledge can not be compared with man's knowledge It is identical with His essence, and just as we can not comprehend His essence, so we can not comprehend His knowledge. Maimonides says that according to every revealed religion God's knowledge is distinguished from man's knowledge in the following five points: (1) first, His knowledge is one, and yet comprises many different kinds of objects. (2) Secondly, it includes even such things that do not yet exist. (3) Thirdly, it includes things

which are infinite in number. (4) Fourthly, it remains unchanged, though it comprises the Knoledge of changeable things (5) Fifthly, God's Knoledge of one of two eventualities does not determine it, no matter, how certain that Knoledge may be concerning the future occurrence of the one eventuality. In fact, Knoledge, providence, and intention are not the same when ascribed to God as when ascribed to man. These terms are homonymously used when predicated of God, and have not the same meaning as when applied to man. Maimonides says that this theory, however difficult it may appear to human understanding, is based on the words of Isaiah: "Your ways are not my ways". (55:8) According to Maimonides, the difficulty to understand God's Knoledge may be explained by the fact that He is the Creator of everything, and His Knoledge of things does not depend upon their existence; while the Knoledge which man has depends altogether upon the objects which he knows. There is a difference between the Knoledge of a person who produced a thing and the Knoledge of a person who derived its Knoledge from the same thing.

When a thing is produced in accordance with the Knoledge of its producer, the producer is guided by his Knoledge in the act of producing the thing; while other persons who acquire a Knoledge of that thing depend for that Knoledge on the thing itself. Maimonides illustrates this distinction by the following simile. "An artisan makes a clock in which weights move with the running of the water, and thus indicate how many hours have passed of the day and of the night. The whole quantity of water that is to run out, the different ways in which it runs, every thread that is drawn and every little nut that descends, - all this is fully perceived by him who makes the clock; and his Knoledge is not the result of observing the movements as they are actually going on; but, on the contrary, the movements are produced in accordance with his Knoledge. But another person who looks at that instrument will receive fresh Knoledge at every movement he perceives; the longer he looks on the more Knoledge does he acquire; he will graduallly increase his Knoledge, till he fully understands the machinery. If an infinite number of movements were assumed for this instrument,

he would never be able to complete his Knoledge. Besides, he can not Know any of the movements before they take place, since he only Knows them from their actual occurrence." The same is the case with every object and its relation to our Knoledge and God's Knoledge. Man's Knoledge is derived from observation, and for this reason it is impossible for him to know what will occur in the future, or to comprehend the infinite. Mans Knoledge must agree with the objects which he Knows, because it is derived from these objects; while the opposite is the case with regard to God's Knoledge. «All things emanated from him, therefore every thig must be in accordance with His Knoledge. God's Knoledge is identical with His essence; He Knows His essence, and thereby Knows every thing that results from any of His acts. If we could understand God's Knoledge, then our Knoledge would be identical with His Knoledge, and we could comprehend His essence; for we would then possess that intellect by which such a Knoledge can be acquired. But such an intellect does not exist except ~~in~~ God. Maimonides view concerning

V Either at the end of ch. VII
we have the problem of Jesus' self
in its two aspects, namely
in its contradictions to God's
Omnipotence and to his
His Omniscience and to be
be treated explicitly.

The two chapters will both
to be combined under one.

N.

God's knoledge may be summed up in the following words. It is absolutely perfect; it has none of the limitations of human knoledge or of that of any other being; it is beyond human comprehension!

X Maimonides' Interpretation of the Book of Job

Maimonides holds that the book of Job treats the problem of Divine justice, and illustrates the above mentioned theories concerning Divine providence. Acarding to Maimonides, Job and his friends agree that it was God who caused Job's suffering, and that no injustice can be ascribed to Him. Satan represents the material element in man, and is the cause of Job's suffering. Job at first believed that wealth children and health constitute man's happiness; and after he had been deprived of these sources of happiness, he adopted the view that Providence is indifferent to ... man's fate. Job represents the theary of Aristotle. Eliphaz holds the oview of the Scripture that all misfortunes are punishments for past sins. Bildad's opinion is identical with that of the Mutazilah who hold that afflictions

are decreed by Divine wisdom in order that the sufferer may be apt to receive a greater reward. Zophar represents the theory of the Asharidh who hold that every thing is predestined, and that every thing is the will of God. These were, according to Maimonides, the ancient views of Providence. Later a new theory was set forth, and Elihu is the representative of this theory. For this reason he is placed above the others and described as younger in years, but greater in wisdom. Elihu says that such evils as befell Job may be remedied sometimes, but not always. He says, we are unable to comprehend the ways of God; we can not compare the way in which God governs and manages his creatures, with the way in which we manage certain beings. We must believe that nothing is hidden from God. When God rules over His creatures He does not the same as when we rule over beings. Just as there is a difference between the works of nature and the works of man, so there is a difference between God's rule, providence, and intention with regard to all natural forces, and our rule, providence and intention with regard to the objects of our rule. According to Maimonides, this lesson is the principal object of the book of Job. The

~~future world. This is the theory of the~~

This is not perfect, especially since he writes did not compare M. with his former predecessors

N.

book recommends us to have faith and to contend ourselves with acquiring a knowledge of God through the study of nature. Such study will lead us to the conviction that we are unable to comprehend the wisdom of Divine providence. And when we know all this, we shall be able to bear easier every thing that may befall us, misfortune will not arouse doubt in us concerning God, no matter, whether He provides for us or not.

Maimonides did not come nearer the solution of this problem than any other thinker. The fact is that this problem can not be solved until we will perfectly understand the universe and the laws by which it is governed.

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