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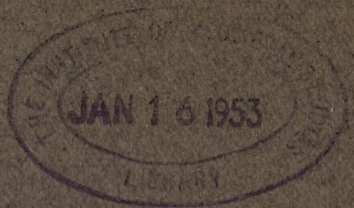
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MAIMONIDES AND HALEVI

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MAIMONIDES AND HALEVI

A STUDY IN TYPICAL JEWISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS GREEK
PHILOSOPHY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

BY HARRY WOLFSON, Cambridge, Mass.

I

WHAT most characteristically distinguishes Jews and Greeks, is their respective views of life. That of the former was ethical, that of the latter was cosmological. Of course, neither was exclusive. In the process of the development of their respective ideas, Jews became interested in cosmology and Greeks in ethics. Rabbis of the Mishnic era assiduously cultivated cosmological studies (מעשה בראשית), and Greek philosophy ever since Socrates was for the most part ethical. Yet the emphasis has always been laid on the point of view with which they started. Jewish cosmology has always been ethical, while Greek ethics has always been cosmological.

The Jews beheld nature subjectively, and based their view of life on the inner experience, taken as produced by the response of their selves to the external world rather than on the flat observation of the external world itself. The flux of nature, sweeping over their spirit, stirred its chords to feelings pleasant or unpleasant, and out of these notes, registering the impact, they constructed their life-view. Thunder, lightning, and death were not for them merely physical events; nor was it the tremendous noise,

the flashing light, and the sudden disappearance of life that they dwelt upon. Their concern was the shocking, dazzling, and terrifying effects of these phenomena upon their minds. All natural phenomena appeared to them as either physically good or bad, pleasing or painful. But things appeared to them not merely as physically good or bad but also as morally good or bad. Death, they recognized, is bad, and life is good; but why, they also asked, is murder more terrible than natural death, and why is the saving of another's life a pleasure to the saver? By putting this question, they realized the existence of moral good and evil, and began to judge things in these terms. So by means of introspection rather than inspection, from *their* version of the world rather than its own version of itself, the Jews developed their organized ethical view of life.¹

The Greeks, on the other hand, beheld life objectively. They beheld things as they are, without their relation to man and his visions, fears and pleasures. True, the external world produces images in man's mind, stirs up his passions, rouses in him sadness and joy, but these are merely transitory moods and feelings, discovered only by introspection, by absorption in one's self, by digging into one's own nature—acts essentially alien to the spirit of Hellas. The Greek liked to observe the external world rather than to pour forth his soul. There was much in the nature of his country, in its skies and soil, to attract his attention to the world around him. What he saw in the world was a variety of forms with a common background. Life was a chain of interlacing links. Things were necessarily regenerations, producing other things, and events were leading,

¹ See D. Neumark, השקפת העולם והשקפת החיים, in השלח, XI.

according to law, to other events. This objective appreciation of orderly process gave rise to Hellenic cosmology.

The different points of view, from which Jews and Greeks beheld the world, involved a difference in their conception of reality. What is real, the stable or the changeful, the constant or the flux? The Jews who beheld life subjectively, as it had reflected itself in their own consciousness, saw in it only change and instability, for consciousness is a stream, and the pulse of life is never at rest. Furthermore, their feelings, moods, and states of mind, i. e. their inner reflection of the external world, are a chaotic disorder, capriciously changing without warning. Hence, reality, their consciousness of the world, was conceived by them as in flux. The Greeks, on the contrary, beholding the world objectively, saw the law and order existing in it, the principles governing natural phenomena, the perfect arrangement of the parts of the universe and their harmonic unity of interadaptation. Hence, reality was for them that observable unity, order, and stability of the world. These opposing conceptions of reality have been well summarized by Dr. H. M. Kallen in a recent paper on the subject. "For the Greeks, change is unreal and evil; for the Hebrews the essence of reality is change. The Greek view of reality is static and structural; the Hebrew view is dynamic and functional. The Hebrew saw the world as a history. For them the inwardness of reality lay in the movement of events. The Greeks saw the world as an immutable hierarchy of forms; for them the reality was the inert order of being."

A primary implication of these contrasting conceptions of reality, is the contrast in the conceived nature of divinity. When the Jews began to think of God, asking: "Would

you suppose that the palace has no master?"² they inferred that "there must be an eye that sees and an ear that listens,"³ and that the seeing eye and the hearing ear is God. This God moreover, is neither outside the world nor the world itself. God is the dynamic essence of the world, life, reality, *natura naturans*. God is reality, and as reality consists in the change of events, so God is changeful. And He is not changed by His own will but by the will and actions of men. "Said the God of Israel, I rule over men, who rules over Me?—The righteous; for I issue a decree, and the righteous man cancels it."⁴ God's anger is kindled at the evil doings of men, but He regrets the evil He intended to bring upon them, as soon as they improve their ways. The relation between God and man is personal and mutual. "Return to Me and I will return to you."⁵ God appears to man under different forms. He appeared "on the Red Sea as a warrior making war, at Sinai as a Scribe teaching the Law, in the days of Solomon as a young man, and in the days of Daniel as an old man full of mercy."⁶ But above all God is the heavenly father. "Go and tell them: 'If you come to me, are you not coming to your heavenly father?'"⁷

The conception of God among the Greeks was of quite a different nature. With the exception of Socrates, whose

² תאמר שהבירה הזו בלא מנהיג, Gen. r., c. 39.

³ יש עין רואה ואזן שומעת, Abot. 2. 1.

⁴ אני מושל באדם מי מושל בי צדיק שאני גוזר גזרה והוא מבטלה, Moed kaṭan 16b.

⁵ Mal. 3. 7.

⁶ לפי שנראה להם הקב"ה ביום כגבור עושה מלחמה ובסיני כסופר מלמד חורה, ונראה להם בימי שלמה כבחור ובימי דניאל כזקן מלא רחמים וכו' יתרו, Tanḥuma.

⁷ לך אמור להם, אם אתם באים לא אצל אביכם שבשמים אתם באים, Pesikṭa derabbi Kahana, 25.

theology was independent of his philosophy, all Greek philosophers identify God with some logical or metaphysical term. To Plato God is identical with the Good, a mere term of discourse, without life and personality. If Plato did not explicitly deny the personality of God, as did Spinoza, it was because he never raised that question; he took it as a matter of fact.⁸ The God of Aristotle again, does not come into contact with the sublunary world. "God is the *primum mobile* only in so far as he is the absolute end of the world, the governor, as it were, whose will all obey, but who never sets his own hand to the work."⁹ In fact, the relation of Aristotle's God to the world constitutes for scholarship one of the problems of his metaphysics. It is, however, clear that the nature of Aristotle's deity consists of unceasing sleepless contemplation and absolutely perfect activity, an activity that cannot alter, since to a perfect being alteration would involve a loss of perfection.¹⁰ "Evidently then, it thinks that which is most divine and precious, and it does not change; for change would be change for the worse, and this would be already a movement."¹¹ "Therefore it must be itself that thought thinks, and its thinking is a thinking on thinking."¹² Thus by confirming the function of the Divine Reason to a monotonous self-contemplation, not quickened into life by any change or development, Aristotle merges the notion of personality in a mere abstraction.¹³

The original diversity between the Hebraic and the Hellenic views of being becomes still more patent in their

⁸ Zeller, *Outline of the Hist. of Greek Phil.*, Eng. Tr., § 49.

⁹ Zeller, *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics*, Eng. Tr., I, 405.

¹⁰ Zeller, *ibid.*, 397.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Metaphys.*, XII, 9.

¹² Aristotle, *ibid.*

¹³ Zeller, *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripat.*, I, 402.

ideals of conduct and the end of life. The Jews who had a theory of creation as opposed to the Greek philosophical doctrine of the eternity of matter, the Highest Good was not that to which all things aim to reach but that for the sake of which all things had been created. Now, the purpose of creation has indisputably been declared to be the Torah (תורה). "But for the Torah, heaven and earth would not have existed."¹⁴ Everything in the world was created according to the prescriptions of the Torah. "The Holy One looked in the Torah while creating the world."¹⁵ Hence the Torah is the most adequate guide for human life, for it is the most relevant to human nature. Since "the Laws have been given for the purpose of refining men through them,"¹⁶ and since these laws can be realized only in a social organization, the perfect organization of society, based on the precepts of the Torah, is the Highest Good. The task of the individual is to adjust himself to such a social status, to obey the Torah, and thereby to contribute his share to the collectively integrated righteous society. But mere obedience, mere formality, mere practicing of virtue is not sufficient. The individual is not perfect unless the divine virtues, the formal code of ethics, become the acts of his inmost conscience, the spontaneous expression of his nature. "What God wants is the heart."¹⁷ and "when a man performs his duties he shall perform them with a joyful heart."¹⁸ The test of individual perfection is the perfect harmony or coincidence of his con-

¹⁴ אלמלא תורה לא נתקומו שמים וארץ, *Pesahim* 65b.

¹⁵ הקב"ה היה מביט בתורה ובורא העולם, *Gen. r.*, c. i.

¹⁶ לא נתנו מצות אלא לצרף בהן את הבריות, *Gen. r.*, c. 47; *Tanḥuma*, שמיני.

¹⁷ הקב"ה לבא בעי, *Sanhedrin* 106b.

¹⁸ כשיהא אדם עשה מצוה יהא עושה כלב שבוה, *Levit. r.*, c. 34.

science with his deeds and the residing joy therein. "Whenever a man is satisfied with his own right conduct, it is a good omen for him; whenever a man is not satisfied with his own conduct, it is a bad omen for him."¹⁹ The perfect man is the "*Beautiful Soul*," beautiful because his instinct and righteousness coincide.

To the Greeks, on the other hand, the Highest Good resides in the individual, in the perfection of all his mental and physical qualities and in the attainment of the supreme good of rationality. The state is, of course, necessary, for the faculties essential to the excellence of the individual have in the state their only opportunity of development. But the state as such is not an end but an instrument. "It is perhaps better for the wise man in his speculation to have fellow-workers; but nevertheless he is in the highest degree self-sufficient."²⁰ And virtues are also merely means of conducing to happiness, in themselves neither good nor bad. "Thus, in place of a series of hard and fast rules, a rigid and uncompromising distinction of acts and affections into good and bad, the former to be absolutely chosen and the latter absolutely eschewed, Aristotle presents us with the general type of a subtle and shifting problem, the solution of which must be worked out afresh by each individual in each particular case."²¹ The highest individual perfection is speculative wisdom, the excellence of that purely intellectual part called reason.²²

¹⁹ כל שרוח עצמו נוחה בשלו סימן יפה לו; אין רוח עצמו נוחה בשלו סימן רע לו. Tosefta Berakot 3, 4.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Ethics*, X, 7.

²¹ Dickinson, *Greek View of Life*, 136.

²² Comp. Aristotle, *Ethics*, I, 6.

"The speculative is the only activity which is loved for its own sake as it has no result except speculation."²³

These, then, present the most obvious distinctions between the Jewish and the Greek insight. In the first place there was the distinction in their idea of God, who, according to the Jews, was the living One, personally related to man, and who, according to the Greek philosophers, was the Prime Mover, existing outside the world. Then, there was the distinction in their ethical system. To the Jew the aim of life was to live happily as a member of the total polity. To the Greek the essence of man is to be rational. Virtues are good in so far as they conduce to the highest good; and society likewise is merely a means to facilitate man's reaching the Highest Good.

The struggle between these two views of life, which began with the Jews' coming in contact with Greek civilization and resulted on the one hand in Philo's Neo-Platonism and on the other hand in Pauline Christianity, was renewed in the tenth century among the Jews of the Mohammedan countries. The intrusion of Greek philosophical ideas into Jewish thought, chiefly through Arabic channels, gave rise to the need of a new reconciliation between Judaism and Hellenism. The attempt to satisfy that need resulted in the creation of a religious philosophy which, though different from Philo's in content, was very much like it in spirit and general outlook. Like Philo, the philosophers of the Middle Ages aimed at reconciling Jewish religion with Greek philosophy, by recasting the substance of the former in the form of the latter. The principles upon which they worked were (1) that the practical religious organization of Jewish life must be pre-

²³ *Ibid.*, X, 7.

served, but (2) that they must be justified and defended in accordance with the principles of Greek philosophy. Thus Hellenic theory was to bolster Hebraic dogma, and Greek speculation became the basis for Jewish conduct. The carrying out of this programme, therefore, unlike that of Pauline Christianity, involved neither change in the practice of the religion, nor abrogation of the Law. There was simply a shifting of emphasis from the practical to the speculative element of religion. Philo and the mediæval philosophers continued to worship God in the Jewish fashion, but their conception of God became de-Judaized. They continued to commend the observation of the Law, but this observation lost caste and became less worthy than the "theoretic life." Practice and theory fell apart logically; instead there arose an artificial parallelism of theoretic with practical obligations.

As against this tendency to subordinate Judaism to Hellenic speculation, there arose a counter-movement in mediæval Jewish philosophy which aimed to find in Judaism itself satisfaction for the theoretical as well as the practical interest. This movement developed a school which, though appreciative of the virtues of Aristotelianism, still saw their difference in temper and attitude toward life and considered any attempt at reconciliation as a mere dallying with meanings distorted by abstraction from their contexts. As this school aimed to justify Judaism by its own principles, it sought to indicate its characteristic features, and to assert its right to autonomous intellectual existence, the peer of Hellenism, because of its very diversity therefrom. Consequently, the work of this school has a double character. It had, on the one hand, to criticise Greek philosophy and undermine the common belief of its contemporaries in

its absolute truth, and, on the other hand, it had to differentiate and define the Jewish position.

Of the Hellenizers in Judaism, the most typical representative is Moses Maimonides (1135-1204); of the Hebraizers, Judah Halevi (1085?-1140?). These two men represent the opposite poles of Jewish thought in the Middle Ages. Maimonides is a true convert to Aristotelian philosophy. To him the thorough understanding of Aristotle is the highest achievement to which man can attain. Halevi, on the contrary, is full of doubts about the truth of Aristotle's theories, "which can be established by arguments which are partially satisfactory, and still much less capable of being proved."²⁴ Maimonides is ruled by reason, nothing is true which is not rational, his interest is mainly logical. Halevi is ruled by feeling and sentiment, full of scepticism as to the validity of reason, and he is chiefly interested in ethics. Maimonides' chief philosophic work, "Moreh Nebukim (מורה נבוכים)" ²⁵ is a formal, impersonal treatment of his philosophy. Halevi's "Kuzari" (כוזרי) ²⁶ is written in dialogue and its problems are attacked not *more scholastico* but in the more spontaneous literary and intense fashion of Job. Maimonides' chief contribution besides his "Moreh" was the codification of the talmudic Law; Halevi's chief work besides the "Kuzari," was the composition of synagogal hymns of highly lyrical quality.

In point of time, Halevi preceded Maimonides. Yet in comparing them we must treat Halevi as the critic of the tendency which Maimonides represented, the tendency

²⁴ Kuzari I, 13.

²⁵ Guide of the Perplexed, Eng. Tr. by Friedländer.

²⁶ Translated into English by Hirschfeld under title of "Kitab al Khazari."

which began long before Halevi and reached its climax in Maimonides. Maimonides may be considered as swimming with the stream, he was the expression of his age; Halevi was swimming against the stream, he was the insurgent, the utterer of paradoxes. Halevi does not criticise any specific system of philosophy. The system portrayed in the opening of the "Kuzari," is a medley of distorted views of Aristotle and Neo-Platonism. But the "Kuzari" is a criticism of philosophy in general, of the philosophic method and temper of Halevi's time, and especially of the universal attempt to identify it with theology and religion.

II

In the introduction to the "Moreh Nebukim" Maimonides describes the book's aim. He intends it "to afford a guide for the perplexed, to thinkers whose studies have brought them into collision with religion, who have studied philosophy and have acquired sound knowledge, and who, while firm in religious matters, are perplexed and bewildered on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the holy writings." He does not, however, examine the views of the philosophers with the object of supporting the Jewish traditional interpretation of religious principles. His aim is solely to show that Scriptures and Talmud, correctly interpreted, strictly harmonize with the philosophical writings of Aristotle.

Starting with Aristotle's metaphysics, Maimonides attempts to demonstrate that the scriptural "God" does not differ from the "Prime Cause" of the philosophers. But here he encounters a great difficulty. It had been held by the conservative theologians of Maimonides' time, that the conception of God as Cause necessitates the belief in

the eternity of matter, for if we were to say that God is the Cause, the co-existence of the Cause with that which was produced by that Cause would necessarily be implied; this again involves the belief that the universe is eternal, and that it is inseparable from God."²⁷ On the other hand, when we say that God is *agens*, the co-existence of the *agens* with its product is not implied, for the *agens* may exist anterior to its product. Maimonides who rejected Aristotle's doctrine of the eternity of matter on purely dialectical grounds, wishing, however, to identify "God" with the "Cause," had to show that the latter view does not necessarily imply the former. His argument is this. If you take terms "cause" and "*agens*" in the sense of reality, then both terms must necessarily imply the co-existence of the world with God, for God would be called neither "*agens*" nor "cause" in reality before the actual making of the world began. On the other hand, if you take terms "cause" and "*agens*" in the sense of a mere potentiality, then in both cases God preceded the world, for God was potentially both the Cause and the *agens* of the world even before it came into being. Therefore the term "cause" and "*agens*" are identical. The reason why Aristotle calls God "the Cause," says Maimonides, is to be sought not in his belief that the universe is eternal, but in another motive; it is "in order to express that God unites in Himself three of the four causes, viz., that He is the *agens*, the form, and the final cause of the universe."²⁸

Maimonides adds to his adaptation of Aristotle's conception of God, also an adaptation of Aristotelian cosmological and logical proofs of God's existence. The unso-

²⁷ *Moreh Neb.* I, 69.

²⁸ *Moreh Neb.*, I, 69, and comp. translator's note about the application of the material cause to God.

phisticated Jews, to whom God was the power and the behavior of the universe, felt no need of proof that He exists. To them His existence was self-evident, for His power manifested itself in all the works of nature. "God said to Moses: Do you want to know My name?—I am designated by My actions."²⁰ But when Maimonides conceived God as a metaphysical, transcendent entity, proofs of His existence became necessary. Divine actions, according to Maimonides, are merely names used to symbolize God's nature, the only instruments of description that are available. They do not signify His existence in *propria persona*; that must be proved logically and cosmologically. The arguments, moreover, must demonstrate not only that God exists, but also that it is impossible that He should not exist.

God's existence is demonstrated in the proof of the necessity for a Prime Mover. But another difficulty comes. The Bible contains many anthropomorphisms which describe the mode of action of the Divine Being. The question arises whether they are applied to the Deity and to other things in one and the same sense, or equivocally. Maimonides accepts the latter view and seeks carefully to define the meaning of each term taken as an attribute of God, and to give it a transcendental, or metaphysical significance. Maimonides is very strict in this respect. He does not admit the propriety of assigning attributes to God. God is absolute, His existence, His life, and His knowledge are absolute, and there can never be new elements in Him. Consequently, God exists, lives, and knows without possessing the attributes of existence, life, and knowledge. The only way of defining Him is by negative attributes.

²⁰ שמוי אתה חפץ לידע לפי מעשי אני נקרא Exod. i., c. 3.

You can tell what He is not, but you cannot tell what He is. All we can discover about God is that He is. "In the contemplation of His Essence, our comprehension and knowledge prove insufficient; in the examination of His works, how they necessarily result from His will, our knowledge proves to be ignorance, and in the endeavor to extol Him in words, all our efforts in speech are mere weakness and failure."³⁰

With this, however, Maimonides' idea of God comes to a vanishing point. The highest that a man can obtain of the true essence of God is to know that He is unknowable. And the more conscious one becomes of his ignorance of God, the nearer to God he draws, "for just as each additional attribute renders objects more concrete, and brings them nearer the true apprehension of the observer, so each additional negative attribute advances you to the knowledge of God. By its means you are nearer this knowledge than he who does not negate in reference to God, those qualities, which you are convinced by proofs must be negated."³¹ God cannot be the object of human apprehension, none but Himself comprehends what He is; hence men should not indulge in excessive prayer to God. "It is more becoming to be silent, and to be content with intellectual reflection, as has been recommended by men of highest culture, in the words, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still (Ps. 4, 4),"³² "We cannot approve of those foolish persons who are extravagant in praise, fluent and prolix in the prayers they compose and in the hymns they make in their desire to approach the Creator."³³

³⁰ *Moreh Neb.*, I, 69.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Moreh Neb.*, I, 69.

An Aristotelian, though with limitations, in metaphysics, Maimonides is also an Aristotelian in ethics. Though Maimonides accepts the theory of creation *ex nihilo*, he nevertheless agrees with Aristotle that there is no occasion to inquire into the purpose of the existence of the universe.³⁴ He considers the question of cosmic purpose as futile. No adequate answer, he argues, can be adduced. Even if we admit that the universe exists for man's sake and man exists for the purpose of serving God, the question remains, What is the end of serving God? God does not become more perfect; and if the service of God is intended for our own perfection, then the question might be repeated, What is the object of being perfect? The question must, therefore, be left unanswered, for "we must in continuing the inquiry as to the purpose of the creation at last arrive at the answer, It was the will of God, or His wisdom decreed it."³⁵

But within the limits of the universe as it exists now, the immediate purpose of all things is man, for we notice that in the "course of genesis and destruction" every individual thing strives to reach "its greatest possible perfection," and since "it is clear that man is the most perfect being formed of matter," "in this respect it can hardly be said that all earthly things exist for man."³⁶

We may, however, still ask: What is the end of man? Whereto Maimonides replies, with Aristotle, that the end of man is the perfection of his specific form. But there are four varieties of perfection.³⁶ The earliest in the order of excellence, is perfection in respect of worldly possess-

³⁴ *Moreh Neb.*, III, 13.

³⁵ *Moreh Neb.*, III, 13.

³⁶ *Moreh Neb.*, III, 64.

ions; the next is perfection in respect of physical beauty and well-being. The third is moral perfection, the highest degree of excellence in character. None of these is the ultimate perfection of man, for ultimate perfection is complete self-sufficiency. How clearly Maimonides here follows the Hellenic tradition is obvious. He takes the individual as unit of supreme excellence, self-sufficient both with regard to other values and with regard to other men. None of these three orders of moral adequacy are self-sufficient with regard to both relations. The first and second perfections are self-sufficient with regard to other persons, for they would exist even if the universe contained only one man, but they are insufficient as regards other values, for when a man has wealth and health, they become merely means conducing to other values. Even moral perfection, virtue, is not self-sufficient, for all principles of conduct concern the relation of man to his neighbor. "Imagine a person being alone, and having no connection whatever with any other person, all his good moral principles are at rest, they are not required, and contribute to man no perfection whatever."⁸⁷ They are, therefore, only necessary and useful when man comes into relation with others. Hence self-sufficiency is external to all these, for it must involve no external conditions; it must depend upon nothing but itself. It is to be found in the perfection of the intellect, the development of the loftiest intellectual faculties, the possession of such notions which lead to true metaphysical opinions about God. "With this perception (the right view of God) man has obtained his final object; it gives him true human perception; it remains

⁸⁷ *Moreh Neb.*, III, 60.

to him alone; it gives him immortality; and on its account he is called man."³⁸

Thus the highest perfection of man consists in his becoming an "actually intelligent being." The acts conducing to that are the virtues. Acts are, therefore, in themselves neither good nor bad; their moral value is determined by their furthering or preventing the Highest Perfection. Hence there is no virtue in doing righteousness for its own sake. "The multitude who observe the divine commandments, but are ignorant, never enter the royal palace."³⁹ Not only are virtues for their own sake unimportant, but they are not even the best means of reaching the Highest Perfection. Speculation and knowledge will lead to it sooner than practice and right conduct. "Of these two ways—knowledge and conduct—the one, the communication of correct opinions, comes undoubtedly first in rank."⁴⁰ "For the Highest Perfection certainly does not include any action or good conduct, but only knowledge, which is arrived at by speculation, or established by research."⁴¹

"But one cannot procure all this; it is impossible for a single man to obtain this comfort; it is only possible in society, since man, as it is well known, is by nature social."⁴² Hence the object of society is to provide the conditions favorable to the production of "actually intelligent men." All mankind live only for the few who can reach the Highest Perfection, just as all earthly beings exist for men. "Common men exist for two reasons; first.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Moreh Neb.*, III, 51.

⁴⁰ *Moreh Neb.*, III, 27.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

to do the work that is needed in the state in order that the actually intelligent man should be provided with all his wants and be able to pursue his studies; second, to accompany the wise lest they feel lonely, since the number of wise men is small."⁴⁸

It is on the basis of this ethical system that Maimonides evaluates the Jewish Law. In its speculative part the Law contains Aristotle's metaphysics couched in language suitable for the intelligence of the common people. In its practical part, it is a scheme of a social organization planned to produce "actually intelligent beings." That the practice of the Law will not alone conduce to the Highest Perfection, we have already seen. That must be reached by reason. But Maimonides argues that such practice is meant to prepare the environment favorable to the attainment of the perfection of self-sufficiency. Hence religion and tradition are not superior to reason, for God who endowed man with reason, so that he might reach the Highest Perfection, would not demand of him deeds contrary to this God-given reason. No man, hence, must believe in anything contrary to reason, even though he may see miracles, "for reason that denies the testimony is more reliable than his eye that witnesses the miracles."⁴⁸

Such a view, it is clear, could hardly be more Hellenic and still save even a semblance of Judaism. Maimonides was not a rabbi employing Greek logic and categories of thought in order to interpret Jewish religion; he was rather a true mediæval Aristotelian, using Jewish religion as an illustration of the Stagirite's metaphysical supremacy. Maimonides adheres staunchly to the Law, or course, but

⁴⁸ Introduction to סדר זרעים; see also אחר העם, שלטון השכל, in השלח, xv.

his adherence is not the logical consequence of his system. It has its basis in his heredity and practical interests; it is not the logical implication of his philosophy. Judaism designated the established social order of life, in which Maimonides lived and moved and had his being; and it was logically as remote from his intellectual interests as he was historically remote from Aristotle. That, naturally, he was unaware of the dualism must be clear. Indeed, he thought he had made a synthesis, and had given scientific demonstrations of poetic conceptions. Therein he was like the Italian priest and astronomer Angelo Secchi, who, while performing his religious services, dropped Copernican astronomy, and, while in the observatory, dropped his church doctrines. Maimonides really saw no incompatibility between his Judaism and his philosophy; he was a Jew in letter and philosopher in spirit throughout his life. As a rationalist he could not but consider that religion and philosophy, both of which seemed reasonable to him, were identical. No doubt it was Moses ben Maimon whom Joseph ben Shem Tob had in mind when he wrote that in spite of the identification by Jewish philosophers, of the contemplative life with the obedience of the Law, that obedience was still assigned as the road to salvation of the common people, while contemplation was reserved for the select theorizers.⁴⁴

אמר יוסף ומפני שראו חכמי עמנו אשר עינו בפילוסופיא כי ההצלה האחרונה היא בהשלמת האדם במעלות המדות ובמעלות השכליות וראו מופת אריסטו שהמדות בעבור השכליות כמו שהתבאר וחשבו שהשגת ההשארות הוא בהצלה וההצלה התבארה בפילוסופיא ושהתורה תיעד יעוד רוחני כמו שהתפרש מעניינה וקבלו שהמביא אל ההצלה אי אפשר בדרכים מתחלפים כמין ובמותות ושחשבו שדרכי התורה ודרכי הפילוסופיה אחדות כמין ויתחלפו בענין הלמוד כי התורה להיותה לרבים והם עמי הארץ אשר לא ידעו משפט המושכלות ולא נתפרדו מהמות היה מחויב שתהיה למורה למוד כולל כל עדת האנשים והסתרים רמוזים בה

III

Diametrically opposed to Maimonides, in insight, in conception of life and destiny, is Judah Halevi. In his discussion of God, His existence, His nature and His relation to the world, Halevi displays, for his time, a remarkable freshness and originality of view. In a period when Hellenic thought dominated Jewish and Arabic intellect, he was, though as familiar with it as the closest student of the Greeks, remarkably free of its influence. He sees clearly, in contradistinction to most Jewish thinkers of his time, the essential differences between the Jewish and the Greek ideas of God, of conduct and of human destiny. From Philo to Maimonides, Jewish dialecticians were intent upon thinning the concrete formalism of the biblical God to the abstract and tenuous formalism of the Aristotelian Prime Mover. They reduced differences, so far as they could, to expression and terminology, and sought to eliminate whatever more fundamental diversity there remained by explaining it away. They failed to note the tremendous scope of the diversity, how it reached down into the very nature and temperaments of people and spread to the unbounded cosmos itself. Halevi alone among the philosophizing rabbis recognized the ineradicable reality of the difference, and pointed out with unmistakable clearness the essential distinctions between the Prime Mover of the Greeks and God of the Jews.

The Kuzari, a dialogue between the King of the Chazars and a rabbi, in which these views of Halevi's are developed, is not a systematic philosophical work. Its order is conversational rather than structural, and it is less allied

והפלוסופיא למוד מסוגל למורגלים בהשגת הדברים הבלתי מבווארים בתחלה הרעה.

Joseph b. Shemṭob. כבוד אלהים, Ferrara 1555.

to Plato than to Job. The ideas suggest more than they express; they carry the conviction of insight rather the force of demonstration. Halevi is less explicit than Maimonides, less careful about making manifest implication of his system. He needs more interpretation than the other. He and those who think like him are genuinely Hebraic. They repudiate the Hellenizing tendency which, to them, vitiates Jewish thought, and they do so often with a critical acumen that anticipates the controversy between the eternalists and the temporalists of our times.

For the Jews, Halevi argues, God is an efficient cause; for the Greeks He is a final cause. Hellenism accepts God as the inert and excellent form of reality; Judaism demands an efficacious relation between man and the personal ground of the Universe. "The philosopher only seeks Him that he may be able to describe Him accurately in detail, as he would describe the earth, explaining that it is in the center of the great sphere, but not in that of the zodiac."⁴⁵ The religionist seeks God "not only for the sake of knowing Him, but also for the great benefits which they derive therefrom,"⁴⁵ for to them God is a personal, spiritual *guide* in the world. To the philosopher, "ignorance of God would be more injurious than would ignorance concerning the earth be injurious to those who consider it flat;"⁴⁵ God has no pragmatic significance for them; He makes no difference in their life and action. To the religionist, ignorance of God implies a difference in one's life. To the philosopher God is merely a logical necessity, a final link, arbitrarily chosen to terminate the otherwise endless chain of potentiality and actuality. "We cannot blame philosophers for missing the mark, since they only arrived at this

⁴⁵ Kuzari IV, 13.

knowledge by way of speculation, and the result could not have been different."⁴⁵ To the religionist, God is the satisfying object, an inner need, without whom man cannot dwell upon the earth. When the religionist begins to doubt the existence of God, there is a sudden disruption of all of life's values, and there ensues a state of suspense in which any positive action is impossible. The God of religion is not arrived at by dialectic procedures and the operations of logic. Knowledge of Him is empirical and uncriticised personal and human experience. Judah Halevi further expounds the distinction by the different uses of the two divine names, **אלהים** and **יהוה**. So early as in the talmudic times, rabbis had distinguished between the meanings of these two names. **אלהים**, they held, expresses the quality of justice (**דין**), the unchangeable laws of nature, while **יהוה** expresses God's quality of mercy (**רחמים**), the God who stands in personal relations with man.⁴⁶ Halevi, probably drawing on this ancient commentary, elaborates its intent, by using **אלהים** to designate the philosophical idea of God, and by **יהוה** the religious. "The meaning of **אלהים** can be grasped by way of speculation, because a Guide and a Manager of the world is a postulate of reason. The meaning of **יהוה**, however, cannot be grasped by speculation, but only by that intuition and prophetic vision which separates man from his kind and brings him into contact with angelic beings, imbuing him with a new spirit."⁴⁷

The philosophic God, being merely a *postulate of reason*, is not as inspiring to, as influential in, human action as is the God of a living religion. Truly, the philosopher after

Gen. בכל מקום שנאמר ה' מדת הרחמים בכ"מ שנאמר אלהים מדת הדין
r., c. 33.

⁴⁷ Kuzari IV, 14.

ascertaining by speculation the existence of an absolute, remote God, acquires a veneration for that absolute Being of his. Rigid dialectic may be merely the starting point, but having once left that starting point, the philosopher may be as full of veneration for his God as the religionist for his. In the opening of the *Kuzari*, the philosopher speaks about his "veneration of the Prime Cause."⁴⁸ Yet, there exists a wide difference between philosophical and religious veneration. The philosopher's veneration is merely an attitude, having no real object for its content. It is merely a psychological phenomenon, akin to the love of the artist toward his handiwork. The veneration of the religionist is directed toward a specific object; it has its source in something external to man; it is the love of the creature to its creator.⁴⁹ "Now, I understand how far the God of Abraham is different from that of Aristotle."⁵⁰ "Man yearns for the Jewish God as a matter of taste and conviction," hence the religious attitude is native and inherent in man, whilst attachment to אלהים is the result of speculation,⁵⁰ and the attitudinal quality is merely acquired. The religionist's veneration for his God, being innate is of lifelong duration, it is a part of his constitution, he lives for his God. To the philosopher, feeling for the divine is a temporal interest which lives besides other interests, but is not in spite of them; it disappears as soon as it becomes discordant with other interests. "A feeling of the former kind (i. e. the constitutional) invites its votaries to give their life for His sake, and to prefer death to His absence. Speculation, however, makes veneration only a necessity as

⁴⁸ I, 1.

⁴⁹ אבל זאת האהבה היא אהבת העשוי לעושהו, Joseph b. Shemtob, 'ה כבוד ה'.

⁵⁰ *Kuzari* IV, 16.

long as it entails no harm, but bears no pain for its sake.⁵¹ There is also a difference in the vital function of these diverse apprehensions of divinity. Since the religious attitude arises from inner vision, it is active, it determines man's life, it shapes his deeds, it moulds his destiny. The veneration of theory, on the contrary, is passive, it is led and shaped by the residual man, it has no efficacy, and is attached to no efficacious object. Indeed, it is, perhaps, ignorant of virtue and is certainly no justification for it. "I would excuse Aristotle," Halevi makes the rabbi say, "for thinking lightly about the observation of the Law, since he doubts whether God has any cognizance thereof."⁵²

Such then are the differences between God of philosophy and God of positive religion, and the attitudes they evoke. But practice may be based on illusion, and inactivity may yet be truth. Which, then, of these opposed conceptions has the greater stronghold in truth? For which, asks Halevi, is there more evidence? His answer is empirical and pragmatic. The truer is that which is warranted by the experience of the many and which serves human purposes most adequately. The conception of a transcendent Deity is intelligible only to a few, to select ones, to those who are trained in the art of metaphysical speculation. The mass of the people do not understand such a God, they do not understand Him in spite of all the eloquence, all the ratiocination of philosophers. If the latter reply, "What of that? Truth has its own justification, regardless of its intelligibility or unintelligibility to the common masses," they must recall that one of the proofs they themselves offer of God's existence is its universal acknowledgment by men. They claim that the existence of God is deduced from

⁵¹ Kuzari IV, 16.

reflection upon self-revealing traces of the divine nature in the presentiments of the soul, in the conscience of the human mind.⁵² But these presentiments are against the philosophers. The presentiments of the soul are not of the existence of a Prime Mover, of a God who, having once started the motion of the world, has left it to its own fate. They are indications of the existence of a God who is guiding the world, who is taking active part in its machinery. Men call Him "God of the land, because he possesses a special power in its air, soil and climate, which in connexion with the tilling of the ground, assists in improving the species."⁵³ This is what all mankind have a presentiment of, and for this reason they are so obedient to religious teachers. "The soul finds satisfaction in their teachings in spite of the simplicity of their speech and ruggedness of their similes,"⁵³ while philosophers have never been able to attract the attention of the people. "With their eloquence and fine teachings, however great the impressiveness of their arguments, the masses of the people do not follow them, because the human soul has a presentiment of the truth, as it is said: 'The words of truth will be recognized.'"⁵³

As dialectic is a perversion of inner experience coming immediately and empirically, so the argument from design is a perversion of empirical fact. The world has beauty and its parts are harmoniously connected. This points, according to the philosophers, to a Being placed far above the world, from whom alone its simple movement and admirable coördination proceed.⁵⁴ Halevi denies the total allegation. The philosophers are mistaken in their descrip-

⁵² See Zeller, *Aristotle and the Earlier Perip.*, I, 300, and notes.

⁵³ *Kuzari* IV, 17.

⁵⁴ See Zeller, *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics*, I, 391, and note 2.

tion of the world. The world is not one and harmonious, and its parts do not hang together according to fixed and eternal laws. The world is a chaos, whose sole and miraculous unifying principle is a supreme Will, which is itself unstable and capriciously changing. The world is full of "miracles and the changing of ordinary, things newly arising, or changing one into another."⁵⁵ The philosophers fail to observe the irreversible flux and change which permeates nature, because they project their own mental traits therein, and unify the natural diversity through the instrumentality of their intellects. "And this abstract speculation which made for eternity prevailed, and he found no need to inquire into the chronology or derivation of those who lived before him."⁵⁶ Thus the unified nature which philosophers speak of is merely an artifact, the result of conceiving it in analogy with the soul. And this speculative nature has been substituted by philosophers for nature as she is.

Moreover, the argument from design is no proof for the existence of God. The order of the universe, if there is any, need not be a created order. Harmony, beauty and unity, the teleologic architectonic need no explanation. They are necessarily self-explaining, for they contain nothing problematic. If the possibility of change and the creation of *new* things in nature be not granted, then "thy opponent and thou might agree that a vine e. g. grew in this place because a seed happens to have fallen here."⁵⁷ If there were no changes in nature, if the world presented no difficult situations, man would never think of God. What rouses questions in our mind, what needs explana-

⁵⁵ Kuzari I, 67.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁷ Kuzari V, 7.

tions, is the discord and change in nature. These cannot be explained but by the presupposition of a Supreme Guide, for whom "evidence is found in changes of nature."⁵⁷ "It is these that prove the existence of a creator of the world who can accomplish everything."⁵⁸

In addition to the evidence of novelty, i. e. spontaneity in nature, Judah Halevi presents another proof for the existence of God; this is the history of human experience. Like Socrates, Halevi considers that real science is not physics but ethics. He regards personality and the relation of persons to one another as the essence of reality. But he goes further than Socrates; he takes as the basis of his science not the conduct of individuals but the conduct of humanity in history. He accuses the Greeks of lacking historic sense, of considering the history of each man as beginning with himself.⁵⁹ Therein he is quite the antithesis of the Greek philosophers. The latter reflected upon the purposiveness of nature but saw no teleology in the flux of history; Halevi, on the other hand, denies the purposiveness of nature, but asserts the onward march of history to a clearly-defined end. "Generations come and generations go," and yet history seems to have a purpose; human destiny seems to be guided by some pre-defined plan. God is not the God of the universe only; He is the God of human destiny. This view is stated quaintly, chiefly by use of illustrations drawn from the Bible. "Moses said to Pharaoh: 'The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,' but he did not say: 'The God of heaven and earth,' nor 'My creator

⁵⁸ Kuzari I, 67.

⁵⁹ Comp. Kuzari I, 63.

and thine sent me.'"⁶⁰ "In the same way God commenced His speech to the assembled people of Israel: 'I am the God whom you worship, who led you out of the land of Egypt,' but He did not say: 'I am the creator of the world and your creator.'"⁶⁰ A review of the experiences of the human race reveals enough empirical evidence to prove the existence of a Supreme Being guiding human actions.

The experience of the race would be sufficient, but private experience, Halevi thinks, also reveals the existence of God. The use of private religious experience as proof was, of course, in vogue among the Arabic philosophers of Halevi's time. Arisen among the mystic sect of the Sufis, it had been rendered by the powerful arguments of Ghazali the accepted proof of Moslem theology. Halevi makes use of the term personal experience in a sense somewhat different and wider than that given it by Moslem divines. He does not mean the personal experience of the individual generated by certain conditions of mind and body. He means personal experience as revelation or intuition. It is objectively perceptive and contains nothing "mystical." Thus the revelation on Mount Sinai was nothing more or less than the personal experience of the entire Jewish congregation. Not all other religions, hence, are in true sense revealed religions, because the revelation was not to the whole people, severally and collectively. The other religions depend chiefly on the veracity and authority of a single individual whose experience has been conceded as true and regulative. Judaism, on the contrary, is based on the personal experience of each and all of the people. Hence, "the revelation on Sinai, this grand and

⁶⁰ Kuzari I, 25.

lofty spectacle, cannot be denied."⁶¹ "Every one who was present at that time became convinced that the matter proceeded from God direct."⁶² And the witnesses transmitted their experience to succeeding generations by an unbroken chain of tradition. "Thus all Israel know these things, first, from personal experience, and afterwards through uninterrupted tradition which is equal to the former."⁶³ "The first man would never have known God, if he had not addressed, rewarded, and punished him."⁶⁴ "Cain and Abel were made acquainted with the nature of His being by communication of their father as well as by prophetic intuition."⁶⁴

The empiricism is extraordinarily bold, even for our time. For Halevi's position is tantamount to asserting that unless men perceived God, meeting Him face to face, they cannot know Him at all. Thus the knowledge of God is *natural* knowledge. He appears to individuals and to masses, He speaks, He rewards, He punishes. He is known as other beings are known, by prophetic intuition, and by derived evidence, i. e. by tradition.

Now prophetic intuition and tradition, were lacking to the Greek philosophers. "These things, which cannot be approached by speculation, have been rejected by Greek philosophers because speculation denies everything the like of which it has not seen."⁶⁵ "Had the Greek philosophers seen them (the prophets) when they prophesied and performed miracles, they would have acknowledged them, and sought by speculative means to discover how to achieve such things."⁶⁵ The implication is that observation or intuition is

⁶¹ Kuzari I, 88.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I, 91.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I, 25.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 3.

⁶⁵ Kuzari IV, 3.

prior to reason, that reason elaborates but does not discover, that the true is what is *perceived*, not what is reasoned. Indeed, on this not very clear notion, Haeivi develops a complete theory of race psychology, in which the *dominant* instruments of explanation are notions concerning *perceived environment*—the soil, the climate, etc. Reason is merely the tool which manipulates these perceived objects and it is they that are potent in the psychology of race.

The best application of this doctrine is perhaps to be seen in Halevi's discussion of the efficacy of prayer and the use of anthropomorphic terminology. His explanation of the latter is psychological. Using as his text the talmudic saying "The Torah spoke in the language of man,"⁶⁶ he points out that man cannot grasp metaphysical problems by means of abstract intellect alone, without the assistance of anything that can be conceived or seen, such as words, writing, or any visible or imaginary form.⁶⁷ Man shows fear whenever he meets with anything terrible, but not at the mere report of such a thing; he is likewise attracted by a beautiful form which strikes his eye, but not so much by one that is only spoken of. That the prophets should picture God by visible images is, then, inevitable.⁶⁸ How very different is this from the Maimonidean identification of anthropomorphisms with metaphysical terms!⁶⁹

Prayer, again, is likewise a psychological necessity. Prayer is not a means of approaching God, to rouse His mercy and assuage His anger, but it is the spontaneous expression of the individual at moments of strong emotions. Jewish metaphysicians have mistaken the prime object of

⁶⁶ דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם, Berakot 31b.

⁶⁷ Kuzari IV, 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Comp. Friedländer's analysis of the "Guide of the Perplexed," p. xiv.

prayer and had therefore split hair over such questions as: How is it possible to change God's mind by prayer? Can we praise God sufficiently? The result was Maimonides' condemnation of excessive prayer. According to Halevi, prayer can never be excessive. So long as man feels the need of praying, of pouring forth his accumulated passions and feeling, he cannot be restrained by external barriers. Prayer is the art of self-expression just as are music, dance, and song which often accompany it. It occupies in the Jewish life the same position that music and athletic games used to hold in Greek life. It is a catharsis of the pent-up energies. It is primarily not a petition to God but a voluntary exercise of the soul. The perception or thought of God merely excites prayer, just as the sight of beauty calls forth the practice of other arts. "Prayer is for the soul what nourishment is for the body. During prayer a man purges his soul from all that passed over it, and prepares for the future."⁷⁰

To an empiric and intuitionist like Halevi, the residual problems of the metaphysicians had to seem empty. Denying the absoluteness of design, the adequacy of reason, the unity of the world, insisting on acts, facts, observation, his treatment of the typical problems of Jewish metaphysicians was rather superior and high-handed. There was, for example, the problem of the eternity of matter. We have seen how Maimonides has treated it. No Jewish theologian save RaLBaG⁷¹ ventured to agree with Aristotle in the doctrine of the eternity of matter. Halevi, however, dismisses the whole problem as futile. If the doctrine merely asserts the existence of an eternal matter, it may be accepted or

⁷⁰ Kuzari III, 5.

⁷¹ Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (d. about 1344).

rejected without making any difference in one's view of life. It is primarily a question of observation not of logic or religion, and it must be solved by experimental evidence. And if anybody has proved to his own satisfaction that an eternal non-divine element does exist, what of it? Does it alter his conduct or view of life? What is really of practical importance is whether the historic movement of the world is real or not. The world exists for us in so far as we know it, and do we know it *sub specie aeternitatis* or *sub specie generationis*? Assuredly our earliest records of the past date from a certain period, and everything before that period is wrapt in a mist. We may infer what had happened before that time, but that is merely "abstract speculations which *make* eternity." It is not actual proof. As far as our knowledge goes, we must assume that the world was created in time, though by abstract speculations we may infer that the world is eternal. Hence, "if, after all, a believer of the Law finds himself compelled to admit an eternal matter and the existence of many worlds prior to this one, this would not impair his belief that this world was created at a certain epoch, and that Adam and Noah were the first human beings."⁷²

But the philosophers trust that their inferences are as true as the records of events. They say that science is not merely hypothesis, but a true description of things. Halevi proceeds to criticise contemporary science. His criticism, which was undoubtedly inspired by Ghazali's "The Destruction of Philosophy," is mainly a criticism of the scientific method of his time not for the purpose of substituting a new, improved method, but to discredit science. His criticism, therefore, was not like that of

⁷² Kuzari I, 67.

Bacon's, but rather like that of modern religionists who try to prove the truth of religion by the limitation of science.

The science of the philosophers, he argues, is based on logic rather than on experience. The laws of nature do not really describe the nature of things, but are merely rules of action. Take for example the theory of the four elements which is entirely hypothetical, for we have never seen elementary fire, earth, air, or water.⁷³ Their real existence can be verified neither by a synthetic nor by an analytic process. "Where have we ever witnessed an igneous or atmospheric substance entering into the substance of the plant or animal, and asserted that it was composed of all four elements?"⁷⁴ "Or when did we ever see things dissolve into the four real elements?"⁷⁵ Science, it is true, forces us to accept the theory that cold, moisture and dryness are primary qualities, the influence of which nobody can escape; this is, however, only conception and nomenclature; it does not mean that they can emerge from mere theory into reality, and produce, by combination, all existing things.⁷⁶

Had the philosophers merely recorded facts and not undertaken to explain their cause and origin, there would be no objection against them. The philosophers, however, go further than that; they conceive the classified facts as metaphysical abstractions which produce these very facts. They call these abstractions or powers by the name of Nature, and ascribe all the phenomena of the universe to the actions of nature. But "what is Nature?"⁷⁴ The common people think it is a certain power which is known only to the philosophers.⁷⁵ But "the philosophers know as

⁷³ Kuzari V, 14.

⁷⁴ Kuzari I, 71.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 72.

much as we do. Aristotle defined it as the beginning and primary cause through which a thing moves or rests, not by accidents, but on account of its innate essence."⁷⁶ Though these words "astonish those who hear them, nothing else springs from the knowledge of nature."⁷⁷ All we notice in the world is things in motion and in rest, which we call by the general name Nature, but the philosophers "mislead us by names, and cause us to place another being on par with God, if we say that nature is wise and active."⁷⁸ To be sure, the elements, sun, moon, and stars, have power such as warming, cooling, moistening, and drying, "but these are merely functions." "There is no harm in calling the power which arranges matter by means of heat and cooling, 'Nature,' but all intelligence must be denied to them."⁷⁹

Science being disposed of, the right conception of God and the universe defined, we may turn to Halevi's ethical doctrines. Here, too, he begins with polemic. The real difficulty with science lies in the fact that philosophers' interest in the world is theoretical rather than practical. They consider the knowledge of handling things inferior to the knowledge of "describing things in a fitting manner."⁸⁰ And they extend this preference of speculation to action even in the fields of ethics. The highest good, according to the philosopher, is the "Pleasure of God,"⁸⁰ which is obtained when one "becomes like the active intellect in finding the truth, in describing everything in a fitting manner, and in rightly recognizing its basis."⁸⁰ The way of reaching

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 73; comp. also Arist., Phys., II, 1.

⁷⁷ Kuzari, I, 75.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 76.

⁷⁹ Kuzari I, 77.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 1.

it is not by action nor is it prescribed. The philosophers say, "Fashion thy religion according to the laws of reason set up by philosophers, and be not concerned about the word or language or actions thou employest."⁸¹

In criticising this ethical system Halevi and his followers try to prove that reason is unreliable both as a guide in life and as a means of knowing things, that virtues are inefficient if they possess no intrinsic values, that man can never become like the "Active Intellect," and that the "Active Intellect" cannot be the highest happiness.

To begin with, intellect can not be a guide of life. If all men were to follow their own intellects they would be led to different points, never coming to an agreement. "Why do Christian and Moslem who divide the inhabited world between them fight with one another?"⁸² They do not fight over matters of practice, for in their ethics and worship of God they differ very little, "both serve God with pure intention, living either as monks or hermits, fasting and praying."⁸² They fight only over speculative creeds and doctrines. It is that speculative element in religion that breeds all kinds of differences of opinion, that causes schisms and dissensions. If men did not rely on their intellect and admitted the fallibility of reason, difference of opinion would be recognized as inevitable, and no man would attempt to force his views upon others. In fact, it is better for the progress of humanity that there exists diversity of opinion.⁸³ In short, intellects must differ, and therefore should not determine action.

But not only does reason fail to be a guide of life, it is also fallible as a way of getting a true understanding of

⁸¹ Kuzari I, 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, I, 2.

⁸³ Comp. Kuzari I, 102, 103.

things. There are things in heaven and things in earth that one cannot get by mere reasoning. The unsophisticated person, who does not set the universe in a logical frame-work, who beholds man and nature acting freely in their undelineable boundaries, sees all their irregularities, all their defiance of system and law, in spite of their occasionally apparent regularity. There are miracles in nature and mysteries in human nature, which cannot be grasped and explained by bare reason. Man must possess another faculty to understand them, and he must have recourse to another language to communicate them. There is prophecy, divine influence, and inner vision which are quite different from reason and independent of it. Persons who have not been devoted to study and to the development of their intellect have often been endowed with supernatural powers by which they have been enabled to discover truth which philosophers with their superior intellect have in vain striven after.⁸⁴ "This proves that the divine influence as well as the souls have a secret which is not identical with the intellect."⁸⁴

You will say that philosophers, too, recognize the value of moral virtue, and "recommend good and dissuade from evil in the most admirable manner."⁸⁵ But what is the moral force that will cause one to do good and desist from doing evil? The philosophers "have contrived laws or rather regulations without binding force, which may be overridden in times of need."⁸⁵ Reason alone cannot be a binding force; one's knowledge that by doing evil to others he does evil to himself is not strong enough to overcome his momentary impulses to do evil. These can be over-

⁸⁴ Kuzari I, 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 19.

come, but by an inhibiting impulse, by a consciousness of responsibility, by a sentiment that certain actions are wrong in themselves. You may say that the fear of punishment will inhibit a man from doing evil, but how can the fear of a remote uncertain pain inhibit man from immediate pleasure? The inhibition of evil conduct must be present in the action just as is the desire to do it. Man would not desist from doing evil unless together with the desire of evil there comes an opposed desire not to do it. What can this opposed desire be if not the same that certain actions are wrong in themselves, that they are prohibited by Authority, and are, "like the work of nature, entirely determined by God, but beyond the power of man?"⁸⁷ The doing of good likewise must be inspired by a social sentiment, by a feeling that "the relation of the individual to society is as the relation of the single limb to the body"⁸⁷ and that "it is the duty of the individual to bear hardships, or even death, for the sake of the welfare of the commonwealth."⁸⁷ Philosophy does not offer such binding forces. Philosophers "love solitude to refine their thoughts"⁸⁸ and do not consider their relation to society as that of the single limb to the body. They have no sense of social obligation. "They only desire the society of disciples who stimulate their research and retentiveness, just as he who is bent upon making money would only surround himself with persons with whom he could do lucrative business."⁸⁹

But inasmuch as the philosophers recommend moral virtues, the difference reduces itself to this: Do moral virtues exist for intellectual virtues, or intellectual virtues for

⁸⁶ Kuzari III, 53.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 19.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 1.

⁸⁹ Kuzari III, 1.

moral? Joseph ben Shemṭob (1400-1460), attempts to answer the question.⁶⁰ Regarding religion as identical with life he concludes that speculation (עיין) arises for the sake of action, (מעשה). Though in some sense religious practices are themselves a means to a particular sort of speculation, to the pure or mystical knowledge, i. e. possession of God, most men cannot attain this stage of happiness. Only a few saints, like Simon bar Joḥai and his son (ר' שמעון בר יוחאי ובנו), achieved the heights on which they could be absolved from the practice of the Law. In this case their mere existence *was* the source and existence of law. But the great majority of men cannot be merged in God in this way, and must subordinate speculation to life.

Thus it is evident that intellectual excellence, the pleasure derived from "finding the truth, from describing everything in a fitting manner, and rightly recognizing its basis,"⁶¹ can be attained only after man had completely adapted himself to nature. Play does not begin till after all work is done. But can man completely adapt himself to nature? This would be possible if man were the only being, living on a planet made for his special purposes, and meeting all his needs. But man is placed in a world not altogether fit for his purposes; he must make terms with it; his chief concern is to adjust himself to the universe in order that he may survive in it. And the process of adjustment is an eternal endless process, for each adjustment is only between one small part of man and one small part of the universe, and after the adjustment between any such two parts is completed, there comes forth

⁶⁰ Comp. Joseph b. Shemṭob, **כבוד אלהים**.

⁶¹ Kuzari I, 1.

the need of a new adjustment between other parts. Contemplation, therefore, cannot be an end in itself, since man can never adapt himself completely to the universe. Of course, individual persons, instead of adapting themselves to the world, may renounce it, withdraw in caves and deserts and spend their lives in contemplation. But mankind as a whole live in the world and do not retire from it. It is, therefore, not sufficient for man to comprehend things objectively and "describe them in a fitting manner." What he needs is to understand everything in its relation to his purposes. Knowledge must be an instrument for action. "Reason must rather obey, just as a sick person must obey the physician in applying his medicine and advice."⁹²

Finally, the philosophers place speculation above action because they consider speculation as the greatest, the only self-sufficient happiness. But speculation can afford man no happiness unless it has its basis in action, unless it has been called forth by some practical motive. In order to derive intellectual pleasure from seeing things as they are, there must first be a problem, a difficulty in seeing those things. Intellectual pleasure consists in the transition from a state of perplexity to that of certainty, in the unraveling of a problem, in the suspense and repose we experience after a state of confusion. "The pleasures of our life consist in the getting of things we desire; and the desire for a thing consists in our being potentially in the possession of that thing but actually deprived of it."⁹³ We can have no intellectual pleasure unless we are conscious of its com-

⁹² Kuzari III, 8.

⁹³ הערבות אשר נמצא בחיינו הוא להשגת הדבר הנכסף כי למה שהאדם כחיי אל השגת המושכלות והוא הכוסף אליהם, והיה הכוסף איננו זולת המרצת הרצון להשיג הדבר הנכסף. Kreskas, 'ה' אור, ed. Vienna, 55b.

ing. We all take pleasure in our senses, and yet it is not those permanent sensations impressed upon us by external forces that give us the greatest pleasure, but those sensations which we ourselves bring upon us by intention and desire. The mathematician may take pleasure in solving problems, but certainly not in the self-evident truth of the multiplication table. "We see this in the fact that we do not take pleasure in the comprehension of self-evident truths. The reason is because there was no transition from potentiality to actuality, and hence there was no desire to comprehend them."⁹⁴ Intellectual pleasure, then, cannot result but from a problem; but how can you have any problem if you have no practical interest in the world, if you already had conquered it, and are going to live in it on mere contemplation?

With this Halevi's criticism of philosophy is completed. His general point of view, it will be gathered, is Hebraic. His implicit standards of criticism involve the empirical method, the voluntaristic assumptions, the historic sense, and the high *morality* which are embodied in the Jewish Scriptures. But we have not here to deal with his constructive doctrine compounded of religion, tradition, and criticism. Our task has been to separate and exhibit the bearing of two opposed tendencies toward Greek philosophy in the thought of the Jews of the Middle Ages, as these tendencies are expressed in their most representative protagonists, especially Moses ben Maimon and Judah Halevi. Maimonides is Hellenist, Halevi a Hebraist; Maimonides is a rationalist, Halevi an empiricist. Maimon-

⁹⁴ והנה ממה שיורה על זה אשר אמרנו מה שנמצא בהשגותינו המושכלות הראשונות שלא נרגיש בהן ערבות כלל, וזה אמנם למה שלא היה להם העתק מורגש הראשונות שלא, מן הכח אל הפעל ולא היה בהשגותם כוסף קודם שהושגו. Kreskas, *ibid.*

ides subordinates everything to reason, which, for him, is alone the master of man. Halevi, too, serves only one master, but he recognizes and regards the other. He thinks will fundamental but offers reason its proper place. Though he criticises the works of reason, and is skeptical about the validity of theory, he accepts it within limitations, and seeks to conform theory to practice. We cannot know the world as it is, but we can know it so as to live in it. In form, the philosophy of both men, Maimonides and Halevi, is antiquated, yet the substance of their differences is still operative. Maimonides, however, is more truly mediæval; his thought is closely allied to that of the Schoolmen; while Halevi's is old wine that is even now bursting new bottles. Contemporary thought, the whole pragmatic movement, may find its visions foreshadowed in Halevi's discussions. Maimonides intended his book to be the "Guide of the Perplexed," and it can now be taken but for a scholastic apology of religion; Halevi called his work: "Book of Argument and Demonstration in the Aid of the Despised Faith," and it must now be considered the most logical of mediæval expositions of the practical spirit as contrasted with the speculative.

