



## Maimonides and Spinoza

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## II.—MAIMONIDES AND SPINOZA.

Prof. Schaarschmidt in his excellent preface to Spinoza's *Korte Verhandeling van God, &c.* (Amsterdam, 1869), has drawn attention to the somewhat one-sided view usually taken of Spinoza's position in the evolution of thought: the importance attributed to the influence of Descartes and the slight weight given to the Jewish writers. He concludes his considerations with the remark:—"Attamen in gravissimis rebus ab eo (Cartesio) differt et his ipsis cum Judæorum philosophia congruit, quorum quidem orthodoxiam repudiavit, ingenium ipsum et mentem retinuit." (Præfatio xxiv.)

The subject is all the more important because even an historian like Kuno Fischer (*Gesch. der neuern Philos.*, 3rd ed., 1880) still regards Spinoza as a mere link after Descartes in the chain of philosophical development, rejecting the view that he belongs rather to Jewish than Christian Philosophy. The hypothesis that Spinoza was very slightly influenced by Hebrew thought has become traditional and is to be found in the most recent English works on Spinoza. Mr. Pollock writes that the influence of Maimonides on the pure philosophy of Spinoza was comparatively slight (p. 94). Dr. Martineau tells us somewhat dogmatically that "no stress can be laid on the evidence of Spinoza's indebtedness to Rabbinical philosophy" (p. 56). These opinions seem in part based on a perusal of Maimonides's *More Nebuchim* and of Joël's *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinozas* (1871), taken in conjunction with Mr. W. R. Sorley's "Jewish Mediæval Philosophy and Spinoza" in MIND XIX. Neither Mr. Pollock nor Dr. Martineau seems acquainted with Maimonides's *Yad Hachazakah*. It is to the relation of this work to Spinoza's *Ethica* that I wish at present to refer.<sup>1</sup>

Maimonides (1135-1204) completed his *More Nebuchim* about 1190, its aim being to explain on the ground of reason the many obscure passages of Scripture and apparently irrational rites instituted by Moses. Hence the book was termed the "Guide of the Perplexed," being intended to lighten the difficult path of Biblical study. As might easily

<sup>1</sup> While on the subject of works concerning Spinoza and Jewish Philosophy I may give the following titles:—E. Saisset, "Maimonide et Spinoza," *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1862; Salomo Rubinus, *Spinoza und Maimonides*, Vienna, 1868.

be supposed it is only concerned in the second place with philosophical ethics. The influence of such a book on Spinoza is, as might be expected, most manifest in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. The *Yad Hachazakah*, however, or the "Mighty Hand," written some ten years previously, has far greater importance for the student of Spinoza's *Ethica*. Its author originally termed it "The Twofold Law," *i.e.*, the written and traditional law—Bible and Talmud,—and under 14 headings or books considered some of the most important problems in theology and ethics. Portions of the *Yad* were in 1832 translated by Herman Hedwig Bernard and published in Cambridge under the title:—*The Main Principles of the Creed and Ethics of the Jews exhibited in selections from the Yad Hachazakah of Maimonides*. Of this book I propose to make use in the following remarks on the thought-resemblance between Spinoza and Maimonides.<sup>1</sup> I shall omit all matter which has not direct bearing on Spinoza's *Ethica*, however interesting it may otherwise be, and endeavour to make allowance for the age and theologico-philosophical language in which Maimonides wrote. We have rather to consider the spirit in which Spinoza read the *Yad* than that in which it was composed.

<sup>1</sup>Two other translations of the First Book of the *Yad* may be mentioned, both "edited" by the Polish Rabbi, Elias Soloweyczik. The first—into German (Königsberg, 1846)—omits the last or fifth part of the First Book containing: "The Precepts of Repentance". The second—into English (Nicholson, 1863)—nominally contains all five parts, but really omits many of their most interesting sub-chapters (*e.g.*, Part III., c. v.-vii., on the relation of a scholar to his teacher and on respect for the wise). This English edition too loses much of its scientific value owing to the omission or perversion of many paragraphs where the editor has with a very false modesty thought Maimonides too outspoken for modern readers. On the title-page stand the words: "Translated from the Hebrew into English by several Learned Writers." The chief of these "Learned Writers" is Bernard, who has been freely used without apparent acknowledgment. Portions of the remainder appear to be translated from the German and not directly from the Hebrew. Appended to this English Edition is a translation of the 5th Chapter of Book xiv. of the *Yad*: or "Laws concerning Kings and their Wars". Whatever may have been the causes which gave rise to this so-called English translation, it must be noted that Soloweyczik's German translation is an independent work, suffering from none of these faults and of considerable value to the student of Maimonides.

Before entering upon a comparison of the intellectual relation of Maimonides to Spinoza, I may refer to a close connexion between Spinoza's method of life and Maimonides's theory of how a wise man should earn his livelihood. It seems to me the key-note of Spinoza's life by the optical bench,—his refusal of the professorial chair. "Let," writes Maimonides, "thy fixed occupation be the study of the Law" (*i.e.*, divine wisdom) "and thy worldly pursuits be of secondary consideration." After stating that

Let us first of all consider Maimonides's conception of God. This is contained in the "Precepts relating to the Foundations of the Law," and the "Precepts relating to Repentance," especially in the chapters entitled by Bernard "On the Deity and the Angels" (p. 71) and "On the Love of God and the true way of serving Him" (p. 314), which correspond roughly to *Ethica* i. and v. of Spinoza. Maimonides, to start with, sweeps away all human attributes and affections from the Godhead. God has neither body nor frame, nor *limit* of any kind; He has none of the accidental qualities of bodies—"neither composition nor decomposition; neither place nor measure; neither ascent nor descent; neither right nor left; neither before nor behind; neither sitting nor standing; neither does he exist in time, so that he should have a beginning or an end or a number of years; nor is he liable to change, since in Him there is nothing which can cause a change in Him." (B. 78.) Add to this, God is *one*, but this unity is not that of an *individual* or a material body "but such an One that there is no other Unity like His in the Universe." (B. 73.) That God has similitude or form in the Scripture is due only to an "apparition of prophecy"; while the assertion that God created man in His own image refers only to the soul or intellectual element in man. It has no reference to *shape* or to manner of life but to that knowledge which constitutes the "quality" of the soul. (B. 106.) The "pillar of wisdom" is to know that this first Being exists, and "that He has called all other beings into existence, and that all things existing, heaven, earth and whatever is between them, exist only through the truth of His existence, so that if we were to suppose that He did not exist, no other thing could exist." (B. 71.) Among the propositions which Spinoza in the Appendix to *Ethica* i., tells us that he has sought to prove are, that God exists necessarily:—"quod sit unicus; —quod sit omnium rerum causa libera, et quomodo; quod

all business is only a means to study, in that it provides the necessities of life, he continues: "He who resolves upon occupying himself solely with the study of the Law, not attending to any work or trade but living on charity, defiles the sacred name and heaps up contumely upon the Law. Study must have active labour joined with it, or it is worthless, produces sin, and leads the man to injure his neighbour." . . . "It is a cardinal virtue to live by the work of one's hands and it is one of the great characteristics of the pious of yore, even that whereby one attains to all respect and felicity of this and the future world." (After *Soloweyczik*, Part III., Chap. iii., 5-11). Why does Spinoza's life stand in such contrast to that of all other modern philosophers? Because his life at least, if not his philosophy, was Hebrew!

omnia in Deo sint, et ab ipso ita pendeant, ut sine ipso nec esse nec concipi possint"—words which might almost stand as a translation of Maimonides. Cf. also *Ethica* i. 14 and Corollary, and 15.

That God is not divisible (B. 73) Spinoza proves, i. 13 ; that He is without limit, i. 19 or better, *Principia Cartesii* 19 ; that God is incapable of change, i. 20, Coroll. 2 ; the notion that God has body or form is termed a "childish fancy," i. 15, Scholium ; while the infinite and eternal nature of God is asserted at the very commencement of the *Ethica*. Add to this that Maimonides's conception of the Deity, without being professedly pantheistic, is yet extremely anti-personal and diffused. Still more striking is the coincidence when we turn to the denial of human affections : Maimonides tells us that with God "there is neither death nor life like the life of a living body ; neither folly nor wisdom, like the wisdom of a wise man ; neither sleep nor waking ; neither anger nor laughter ; neither joy nor sorrow ; neither silence nor speech, like the speech of the sons of men". (B. 79.) Compare with this Spinoza's assertions that the intellect of God differs *toto cælo* from human intellect (i. 17, Schol.) and that "God is without passions and is not affected by any emotion of joy or sorrow"—"He neither loves nor hates anyone" (v. 17 and Coroll.).

Curiously enough, while both Maimonides and Spinoza strip God of all conceivable human characteristics, they yet hold it possible for the mind of man to attain to some, if an imperfect, *knowledge* of God, and make the attainment of such knowledge the highest good of life. There would be some danger of self-contradiction in this matter, if their conception of the Deity had not ceased to be a personal one, and become rather the recognition of an intellectual cause or law running through all phenomena—which, showing beneath a material succession an intellectual sequence or mental necessity, is for them the Highest Wisdom, to be acquainted with which becomes the end of human life. This intellectual relation of man to God forms an all-important feature in the ethics of both Maimonides and Spinoza ; it is in fact a vein of mystic gold which runs through the great mass of Hebrew thought.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Talmudic picture of the world to come where "the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads delighting in the shining glory of the Shechinah" is thus interpreted : their crowns denote intelligence or wisdom, while "delighting in the glory of the Shechinah" signifies that they know more of the truth of God than while in this dark and abject body. The attainment of wisdom as the self-sufficient end of life is one of the

Before entering upon Maimonides's conception of the relation of God to man, it may be as well to premise what he understands by *intelligence*. The Rabbinical writers oppose the term *quality* or *property* to the term *matter* (B. Note p. 82); most frequently, and in the *Yad* invariably, when the two terms are opposed, the former signifies intelligence or thought; so that in the language of Spinoza we may very well term them *thought* and *extension*. If we leave out of account the angels, to whom Maimonides rather on doctrinal and theological than on philosophical grounds assigned an anomalous position, we find that all things in the universe are composed of matter and quality (*i.e.*, extension and thought) though possessing these attributes in different degrees. These degrees form the basis of all classification and individuality. (B. 82-84.) We now arrive at a proposition which may be said to form the very foundation of Spinoza's *Ethica*: "You can never see matter without quality, nor quality without matter, and it is only the understanding of man which abstractedly parts the existing body and knows that it is composed of matter and quality". (B. 105.) This coexistence of matter and quality or extension and thought is carried even, as in Spinoza's case, throughout all being. Even "all the planets and orbs are beings possessed of soul, mind and understanding". (B. 97.) Spinoza in the Scholium to *Ethica* ii. 13, remarking on the union of thought and extension in man continues—"nam ea, quae hucusque ostendimus, admodum communia sunt, nec magis ad homines quam ad reliqua Individua pertinent, quae omnia, quamvis diversis gradibus, animata tamen sunt". The parallelism is all the more striking in that in this very Scholium a classification is suggested based on the *degrees* wherein the two attributes are present in individuals. Dr. Martineau, in a note on this passage (p. 190), remarks on a superficial resemblance between Giordano Bruno and Spinoza: "Bruno animates things to get them into action; Spinoza to fetch them into the sphere of *intelligence*." It will be seen at once how Spinoza coincides on this point with Maimonides, who wished to explain how it is that all things in their degree know the wisdom of the Creator and glorify Him. Each intelligence, according to the latter philosopher, in its degree can know God; yet none know

highest and most emphasised lessons of the Talmud and its commentators. The strong reaction against a merely formal knowledge at the beginning of our era led the founder of Christianity and his earlier followers to a somewhat one-sided view of life which neglected this all-important truth.

God as he knows himself. From this it follows that the measure of man's knowledge of God is his intelligence. With regard to this intelligence it may be remarked that Maimonides identifies it—that “more excellent knowledge which is found in the soul of man”—with the “quality” of man, *i.e.*, his thought-attribute, and that this “quality” of man is for him identical with the soul itself. (B. 105.) The bearing of all this on Spinoza's theosophical conceptions must be apparent; yet this is but a stage to a far more important coincidence—the principle, namely, that the *knowledge of God is associated always in an equal degree with the love of God*: what Spinoza has termed the “*Amor Dei intellectualis*”. Understanding the work of God is “an opening to the *intelligent man to love God*,” writes Maimonides. (B. 82.) Further, “a man however can love the Holy One, blessed be He! only by the knowledge which he has of Him; so that his love will be in proportion to his knowledge; if this latter be slight the former will also be slight; but if the latter be great the former also will be great. And therefore a man ought solely and entirely to devote himself to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, by applying to those sciences and doctrines which are calculated to give such an idea of his Creator as it is in the power of the intellect of man to conceive.” (B. 321.) This intellectual love of God is for Maimonides the highest good; the bliss of the world to come will consist in the knowledge of the truth of the Shechinah; the greatest worldly happiness is to have time and opportunity to learn wisdom (*i.e.*, knowledge of God), and this maximum of earthly peace will be reached when the Messiah comes, whose government will give the required opportunities. (B. 308, 311, &c.) Furthermore, the intensity of this intellectual love of God, this pursuit of wisdom, is insisted upon: the whole soul of the man must be absorbed in it—“it cannot be made fast in the heart of a man unless he be constantly and duly absorbed in the same and unless he renounce everything in the world except this love”. (B. 320.) It will be seen at once how closely this approaches Spinoza's “*Ex his clare intelligimus, qua in re nostra salus, seu Beatitudo, seu Libertas consistat; nempe in constanti et aeterno erga Deum Amore*” (v. 36, Schol.), and “*Hic erga Deum Amor summum bonum est, quod ex dictamine Rationis appetere possumus*” (v. 20). Spinoza's “third kind of intellection,” his knowledge of God, is associated with the renunciation of all worldly passions, all temporal strivings and fleshly appetites; it is the replacing of the

obscure by clear ideas, the seeing things under the aspect of eternity,—in their relation to God. There is in fact in Spinoza's system a strong notion of a 'renunciation' or 're-birth,' by means of which a man becomes *free*, thenceforth to be led "by the spirit of Christ, that is *by the idea of God* which alone is capable of making man free" (iv. 68, Schol.). This notion of re-birth or renunciation has very characteristic analogues in the 'Nirvana' of Buddha and the 'Ewige Geburt' of Meister Eckhart. It is, however, peculiarly strong in the theosophy of Maimonides. Having called to mind that contemplation of the highest truths of the Godhead has been figuratively termed by Rabbinical writers, "walking in the garden," I proceed to quote the *Yad* :—

"The man who is replete with such virtues and whose bodily constitution too is in a perfect state on his entering into the garden and on his being carried away by those great and extensive matters, if he have a correct knowledge so as to understand and comprehend them—if he continue to keep himself in holiness—if *he depart from the general manner of people, who walk in the darkness of temporary things*—if he continue to be solicitous about himself, and to train his mind so that it should *not think at all of any of those perishable things, or of the vanities of time and its devices*, but should have its thoughts constantly turned on high, and fastened to the Throne so as to comprehend those holy and pure intelligences and to meditate on the wisdom of the Holy One . . . and if by these means he come to know His excellency—*then the Holy Spirit immediately dwells with him*; and at the time when the spirit rests on him, his soul mixes with the degree of those angels called *Ishim*, so that he is changed into another man. Moreover he himself perceives from the state of his knowledge that he is not as he was" (B. 112.)

Separate the notions of this paragraph from their Talmudic language and they contain almost the exact thoughts of Spinoza—the passage from obscure to clear ideas and the consequent attainment to a knowledge of God. Maimonides's assertion that the man himself perceives that he has attained this higher knowledge is perfectly parallel with Spinoza's proposition, that the man who has a true idea is conscious that he has a true idea and cannot doubt its truth (ii. 43.) The parallel between this Mediæval Jewish Philosophy and Christian Theology is of course evident, and probably due to the fact that both had a common origin in Ancient Jewish Philosophy,—if the analogy of Buddhism does not point to a still wider foundation in human nature.

Still one point in the relation of God and man, wherein Maimonides and Spinoza follow the same groove of thought. With the former the "cleaving to the Shechinah," the striving after God, is identified with the pursuit of wisdom. This is in itself the highest bliss—the attainment of wis-



dom is as well the goal as the course of true human life ; wisdom is not to be desired for an end beyond itself—for the sake of private advantage or from fear of evil, above all not owing to dread of future punishment or hope of future reward—but only in and for itself because it is truth, it is wisdom. Only “rude folk” are virtuous out of fear. (B. 314.) Spinoza expresses the same thought in somewhat different words : he tells us, that the man who is virtuous owing to fear does not act reasonably. The perfect state is not the reward or goal of virtue, but is identical with virtue itself. The perfect state is one wherein there is a clear knowledge and consequent intellectual love of God ; and this is in itself an end and not a means (iv. 63 and v. 42, &c.).

We may now pass to a subject which, in the case of both philosophers, is beset with grave difficulties—namely, God’s knowledge and love of himself. We have seen that in both systems the knowledge of God is always accompanied by a corresponding love of God ; we should expect therefore to find God’s knowledge of himself accompanied by a love of himself. This inference, however, as to God’s intellectual love of himself seems only to have been drawn by Spinoza ; Maimonides is, on the other hand, particularly busied with God’s knowledge of himself. To begin with, we are told *that God because he knows himself knows everything*. This assertion is brought into close connexion with another :—all existing things from the first degree of intelligences to the smallest insect which may be found in the centre of the earth exist by the power of God’s truth. (B. 87.) Some light will perhaps be cast on the meaning of these propositions by a remark previously made as to Maimonides’s conception of the Deity as an intellectual cause or law. Behind the succession of material phenomena is a succession of ideas following logically the one on the other. This thought-logic is the only *form* wherein the mind can co-ordinate phenomena because it is itself a thinking entity, and so subject to the logic of thought. The ‘pure thought’ which has a logic of its own inner necessity is thus the cause, and an intellectual one, of all phenomena. That system which identifies this ‘pure thought’ with the godhead may be fitly termed an intellectual pantheism or a pantheistic idealism. It is obvious how in such a pantheistic idealism the propositions—that God in knowing himself knows everything ; and that all things exist by the power of God’s truth—can easily arise. Such a passage as the following too becomes replete with very deep truth :—“The Holy One . . .

perceives His own truth and knows it just as it really is. And he does *not know with a knowledge distinct from Himself* as we know; because we and our knowledge are not one; but . . . *His knowledge and His life are one* in every possible respect, and in every mode of unity; . . . Hence you may say that *He is the knower, the known and knowledge itself* all at once. . . . Therefore He does not perceive creatures and know them, by means of the creatures as we know them; but he knows them by means of Himself; so that, by dint of His knowing Himself, He knows everything; because everything is supported by its existing through Him." (B. 87.) What fruit such conceptions bore in the mind of Spinoza must be at once recognised by every student of the *Ethica*.

Let us compare these conceptions with their Spinozistic equivalents. "All things exist by the power of God's truth." To this *Ethica* i. 15 corresponds—"Quicquid est, in Deo est, et nihil sine Deo esse neque concipi potest."

"God in knowing himself knows everything." I am not aware of any passage in the *Ethica* where this proposition is distinctly stated, yet it follows immediately from Spinoza's fundamental principles, and is implied in i. 25, Schol. and Coroll., and elsewhere (ii. 3, &c.) It is of course involved in God's *infinite* intellectual love of himself. (v. 35).

"God does not know with a knowledge distinct from himself." "His knowledge and His life are one." "He is the knower, the known, and knowledge itself." "His perception differs from that of creatures." Compare the following statements of Spinoza. "Si intellectus ad divinam naturam pertinet, non poterit, uti noster intellectus, posterior (ut plerisque placet), vel simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis, quandoquidem Deus omnibus rebus prior est causalitate; sed contra veritas et formalis rerum essentia ideo talis est, quia talis in Dei intellectu existit objective. Quare Dei intellectus, quatenus Dei essentiam constituere concipitur est re vera causa rerum, tam earum essentiae quam earum existentiae" (i. 17, Schol.). These words are followed by the remark that this is the opinion of those "who hold the knowledge, will, and power of God to be identical," which probably refers to Maimonides. "Omnia quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt necessario sequi debent" (i. 16.) "Sicuti ex necessitate divinae naturae sequitur, ut Deus seipsum intelligat, eadem etiam necessitate sequitur, ut Deus infinita infinitis modis agat. Deinde, i. 34, ostendimus Dei potentiam nihil esse, praeterquam Dei actuosam essentiam" (ii. 3, Schol.). Such expressions sufficiently show that God's

knowledge, *i.e.*, his "intellectus," and his action—*i.e.*, his life are one and the same. "Nam intellectus et voluntas, qui Dei essentiam constituerent, a nostro intellectu et voluntate toto cœlo differre deberent" (i. 17, Schol.). Which sufficiently marks the difference between the divine and human intellect. Shortly, although in certain formal assertions of the *Ethica* this view is somewhat obscured, yet I venture to suggest that the only consistent interpretation of Spinoza's system is summed up in the following words:—that the intellect of God is *all*; his thought is the existence of things; to be real is to exist in the divine thought; that very intellect is itself existence; it does not understand things like the creature-intellect because *it is them*.<sup>1</sup> This is almost the exact equivalent of Maimonides's proposition that God is "the knower, the known, and knowledge itself".

As a step from theology to anthropology we may compare the views of the two philosophers on the immortality of the soul. We have seen that Maimonides identifies the soul with the "quality," *i.e.*, the thought-attribute in man. This quality not being composed of material elements cannot be decomposed with them; it stands in no need of the breath of life, of the body, but it proceeds from God (the infinite intellect). This "quality" is not destroyed with the body, but continues to know and comprehend those intelligences that are distinct from all matter (*i.e.*, it no longer has knowledge of material things and therefore must lose all trace of its former individuality), and it lasts for ever and ever. (B. 106.) A certain crude resemblance to *Ethica*, v. 23 and Schol., will hardly be denied to this view of immortality; but a still closer link may be discovered in the question whether this immortality is shared by all men alike. From the above it would seem that for Maimonides this question must be answered in the affirmative, but when we come to examine his notion of future life we shall find this by no means the case. For him goodness and wisdom—wickedness and ignorance—are synonymous terms.<sup>2</sup> He classifies all beings from the supreme intelligence down to the smallest insect according to their wisdom, the degree of "quality" in them. The wise man who has renounced all clogging passions and received the Holy Spirit, is classed

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Kuno Fischer's identification of Spinoza's Substance with Causality.

<sup>2</sup> Many passages might be quoted from the *Yad* to prove this. A somewhat similar though not quite identical distinction of good and evil occurs in the *More Nebuchim* (b. i., c. 1), where they are held equivalent to true and false respectively.

even with a peculiar rank of angel—"the man-angel". On the other hand, the fool, the evil man, may be in possession of no "quality" and therefore incapable of immortality. The future life of the soul of the wise is a purely *intellectual* one; it consists in that state of bliss which Spinoza would describe as perceiving things by the "third kind of intellection": it is perceiving more of the truth of God than was possible while in the dark and abject body; it is increased knowledge of the Shechinah; or again, to use Spinoza's words, a more perfect "Amor Dei intellectualis". (B. 296.) On the other hand, the reward of the evil man is, that his soul is cut off from this life; *it is that destruction after which there is no existence*; "the retribution which awaits the wicked consists in this, that they do not attain unto that life, but that they are cut off and die." (B. 294.) Shortly, Hell and Tophet are the destruction and end of all life; there is no immortality. I will only place for comparison by the side of this a portion of the very remarkable Scholium with which Spinoza concludes the *Ethica*:—"Ignarus enim, præterquam a causis externis multis modis agitatur, nec unquam vera animi acquiescentia potitur, vivit præterea sui et Dei et rerum quasi inscius, et simul ac pati desinit, *simul etiam esse desinit*. Cum contra sapiens, quatenus ut talis consideratur, vix animo movetur, sed sui et Dei et rerum aeterna quadam necessitate conscius, *nunquam esse desinit*, sed semper vera animi acquiescentia potitur". Obviously Spinoza recognised some form of immortality in the wise man, which the ignorant could not share; the one ceased, the other never could cease to be.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Maimonides on Spinoza becomes far less obvious when we turn to his doctrine of the human affections. On the one hand, this is perhaps the most thought-out, finished portion of Spinoza's work; on the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> It is a curious fact that the *last* words of the *Ethica* are very closely related to a paragraph in the *last* chapter of the *More Nebuchim*; wherein we are told that it is knowledge of God only which gives immortality. The soul is only so far immortal as it possesses knowledge of God, *i.e.*, wisdom. To perceive things under their intelligible aspect is the great aim of every human individual, it gives him true perfection and renders his soul immortal. In striking correspondence with this is Chap. 23 of the 2nd Part of the *Korte Verhandeling van God, &c.* We are told that the soul can only continue to exist in so far as it is united to the body or God. (1) When it is united only to the body it must perish with the body. (2) In so far as it is united with an unchangeable object, it must in itself be unchangeable. That is in so far as it is united to God, it cannot perish. This "union with God" is what Spinoza afterwards termed the "knowledge of God". The coincidence has been noted by Joël (*Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinozas*).

Maimonides's somewhat crude "Precepts relating to the Government of the Temper," are an unsystematic mass of moral precepts, exegesis, and interpretation of the Talmud; added to which only certain portions are yet available in translation. Nevertheless, we may find several points of contact and even double contact.

According to Spinoza the great end of life—the bliss which is nothing less than repose of the soul—springs from the knowledge of God. The more perfect the intellect is, the greater is the knowledge of God. The great aim then of the reasoning man is to regulate all other impulses to the end that he may truly understand himself and his surroundings—that is, know God (iv. Appendix c. 4). All things, therefore, all passions, are to be made subservient to this one end—the attainment of wisdom. Following up this conception Spinoza proves that all external objects, all natural affections, are to be so treated or encouraged, that the body may be maintained in a state fit to discharge its functions, for by this means the mind will be best able to form conceptions of many things (iv. Appendix c. 27, taken in conjunction with iv. 38 and 39). For this reason laughter and jest are good in moderation; so also eating and drinking, &c.; music and games are all good so far as they serve this end; "quo majori Laetitia afficimur, eo ad majorem perfectionem transimus, hoc est, eo nos magis de *natura divina participare* necesse est" (iv. 45, Schol.) Nay, even marriage is consistent with reason, if the love arises not from externals only but has for its cause the "libertas animi" (iv. App., c. 20). Shortly, Spinoza makes the gratification of the so-called natural passions reasonable in so far as it tends to the health of the body, and hence to the great end of life—the perfecting of the understanding or the knowing of God. We may gather a somewhat similar idea from Maimonides. I have already pointed out that in the terminology of the latter's philosophy "to be wise," to "delight in the Shechinah" or "to serve the Lord" are synonymous. Remembering this, the following passage is very suggestive:—"He who lives according to rule, if his object be merely that of preserving his body and his limbs whole, or that of having children to do his work, and to toil for his wants—his is not the right way; but his object ought to be that of preserving his body whole and strong, to the end that his soul may be fit to know the Lord . . . it being impossible for him to become intelligent or to acquire wisdom by studying the sciences whilst he is hungry or ill, or whilst any one of his limbs is ailing. . . . And

consequently he who walks in this way all his days, will be serving the Lord continually even at the time when he trades, or even at the time when he has sexual intercourse; because his purpose in all this is to obtain that which is necessary for him to the end that his mind may be perfect to serve the Lord." (B. 174.) Elsewhere Maimonides tells us that a man should direct all his doings—trading, eating, drinking, marrying a wife—so that his body may be in perfect health and his mind thus capable of directing its energies to knowledge of God. (B. 172.)

Other points of coincidence may be noted. Spinoza attributes all evil to confused ideas, to ignorance. Maimonides states that desire for evil arises from an *infirm* soul (here it must be remembered that soul is the "quality" of a man, his thinking attribute). "Now what remedy is there for those that have infirm souls? *They shall go to the wise, who are the physicians of soul.*" (B. 159.) Here evil is brought into close connexion with ignorance as its cause.<sup>1</sup> The characteristic of the wise man is that he avoids all opposite extremes, and takes that middle state which is found in all the dispositions of man; the rational man calculates his dispositions (*i.e.*, his affections or emotions) and directs the same "in the intermediate way to the end that he may preserve a perfect harmony in his bodily constitution." (B. 152.) There is an echo of this in Spinoza's "*Cupiditas quae ex Ratione oritur, excessum habere nequit*" (iv. 61). Maimonides holds haughtiness and humility extremes; the wise man will steer a middle course between them. (B. 154.) Spinoza tells us "*Humilitas virtus non est, sive ex Ratione non oritur*" (iv. 53). In the *Yad* we read, when a man is in a country where the inhabitants are wicked (*i.e.*, ignorant), "he ought to abide quite solitarily by himself." (B. 176.) In the *Ethica*:—"Homo liber, qui inter ignaros vivit, eorum, quantum potest beneficia declinare studet" (iv. 70). According to Spinoza all the emotions of hate, for example vengeance, can only arise from confused ideas, they have no existence for the rational man who

<sup>1</sup> It may be worth while remarking how the key-note to the moral Reformers who preceded the so-called Reformation is the conception that the wicked man and the fool are one and the same person. In woodcuts (*cf.* those in the *Narrenschiff*, 1494, and the recently discovered Block-book c. 1470) and in words (*cf.* Sebastian Brand, Geiler von Kaiserberg, and Thomas Murner) it is the ever-inculcated lesson. It is curious that this re-establishment of morality on a higher *intellectual* basis in preference to the old penal theory has ever—from Solomon to Spinoza—found such strong support in Hebrew Philosophy.

marks the true causes of things. Maimonides writes of vengeance that it shows an evil mind, "for with *intelligent* men all worldly concerns are but vain and idle things, such as are not enough to call forth vengeance." (B. 197.) Spinoza terms the passions obscure ideas (iii. Final paragraph), and in so far as the mind has obscure or inadequate ideas its power of acting or *existing* is decreased. Curiously enough Maimonides speaking of the passion anger says:—"passionate men cannot be said to live." (B. 164.)

Taken individually these coincidences might not be of much weight, yet taken in union I think they show that Spinoza was even in his doctrine of the human affections not uninfluenced by Maimonides; albeit to a lesser degree than in his theosophy.

It may not be uninteresting to note one point of divergence, namely, on the insoluble problem of free-will. Spinoza reduces man's free-will to an intellectual recognition of, and hence a free submission to, necessity. Maimonides on the other hand tells us distinctly that "free-will is granted to every man"; that there is no predestination; every man can choose whether he will be righteous or wicked, a wise man or a fool. (B. 263.) With regard to the question of God's pre-knowledge and whether this must not be a predestination, Maimonides writes: "Know ye that with regard to the discussion of this problem, the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea". He hints, however, that its solution must probably be sought in the fact that God's knowledge is not distinct from himself, but that he and his knowledge are one ("the knower, the known and the knowledge itself are identical"). Maimonides cautiously adds that it is impossible for man fully to grasp the truth regarding the nature of God's knowledge; and, while granting God pre-knowledge, still concludes: "But yet it is known so as not to admit of any doubt that the actions of a man are in his own power and that the Holy One, blessed be He! neither attracts him nor decrees that he should do so and so." (B. 270.) Perhaps the ordinary work-a-day mortal will find Maimonides's evasion of the problem as useful as Spinoza's attempted solution!

In the above remarks I have considered only the *Yad Hachazakah*, because hitherto attention seems to have been entirely directed to the *More Nebuchim* (cf. Joël, Sorley and others). It is not impossible that in the intervening ten years Maimonides somewhat altered his views. I should not be surprised to hear that the *More* was held more 'orthodox' than the *Yad*. The latter, despite much Tal-

mudic verbiage and scriptural exegesis, notwithstanding many faults and inconsistencies, yet contains the germs of a truly grand philosophical system, quite capable of powerfully influencing the mind even of a Spinoza. Such a reader would, while rejecting the exegesis, recognise the elements of truth in the pure theosophy (cf. Joël, *Zur Genesis*, p. 9), and this is the point wherein the two philosophers approach most closely. In the second place, I have confined myself entirely to the influence of the *Yad* on the *Ethica*. Greater agreement would have been found with the *Korte Verhandeling van God, &c.*, while Spinoza's views of Biblical criticism (especially his conceptions of prophets and prophecy as developed in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*) owe undoubtedly much to the *Yad*. Yet I wished to show that the study of Maimonides was traceable even in Spinoza's most finished exposition of his philosophy. Those who assert that Spinoza was influenced by Hebrew thought have not seldom been treated as though they were accusing Spinoza of a crime. Yet no great work ever sprung from the head of its creator like Athena from the head of Zeus; it has slowly developed within him, influenced and moulded by all that has influenced and moulded its shaper's own character. Had we but knowledge and critical insight enough, every idea might be traced to the germ from which it has developed. While recognising many other influences at work forming Spinoza's method of thought, it is only scientific to allow a certain place to the Jewish predecessors with whom he was acquainted. Critical comparison must show how great that influence was. We naturally expect to find considerable divergences between any individual Jewish philosopher and Spinoza; these divergences have been carefully pointed out by Mr. Sorley, but they are insufficient to prove that Spinoza was not very greatly influenced by Hebrew thought. My aim has been to call in question the traditional view of Spinoza's relation to Jewish philosophy, *i.e.*, that he learnt enough of it to throw it off entirely. I cannot help holding that, while Spinoza's form and language were a mixture of mediæval scholasticism and the Cartesian philosophy, yet the ideas which they clothed were not seldom Hebrew in their origin. He might be cast out by his co-religionists, but that could not deprive him of the mental birthright of his people—those deep moral and theosophical truths which have raised the Hebrews to a place hardly second to the Greeks in the history of thought.

Hebrew Philosophy seems to have a history and a de-



velopment more or less unique and apart from that of other nations ; once in the course of many centuries it will produce a giant-thinker ; one who, not satisfied by the narrow limits of his own nation, strives for a freer wider field of action, and grafts on to his Hebrew ideas a catholic language and a broader mental horizon. He becomes a world-prophet, but is rejected of his own folk. Such an one of a truth was Spinoza, and another perhaps, albeit in a lesser degree, Moses, the son of Maimon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> When the *More Nebuchim* became generally known, its author was looked upon by a large section of the Jews as a heretic of the worst type, who had "contaminated the religion of the Bible with the vile alloy of human reason" !