

Bachya and St. Thomas - The Other Maimonidean

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Theology, whether medieval or modern, is an interface phenomenon; it joins two worlds, the one emerging out of a particular religious tradition and the other arising out of a particular philosophical tradition. These traditions, whatever else they may be, are made up of words, words that came from the different worlds. Theology is a reflection upon the words (and the notions) that created the particular religious tradition using the words (and the concepts) that came from a particular philosophical tradition. The theologians, those engaged in that reflection, are persons who have inherited the former and now have come into contact with the latter. They read the latter with the understandings of the former. Hence theology deals with the meaning of words, which once had one meaning and now are understood to have another.

Therein lies the problem. Words in any language operate in a web of meaning; to change the meaning of particular words is to affect that web and, therefore, to change the meaning of other words in the web. The example of one sentence in the story read to us as children, or that we read to our children, that of, "Dick and Jane see Spot," will illuminate the problem. The words of the title make a number of assumptions that the reader must accept in order that the story conveys its message. The reader must understand that "Dick and Jane" are persons and that "Spot" is more than a dark patch on a light background, but is a dog. The title makes sense if, and only if, Dick and Jane are sighted and Spot is visible. If, alas, the children were blind, they could not see Spot; if Spot were somehow invisible, then even if the children were sighted, they could not see Spot. Thus the use of the word "see" in its usual and apparent sense is dependent on Dick and Jane being sighted and Spot being visible.

Though one might argue that in many languages "see" may mean "to understand," as in "I see what you mean," and that perhaps here the author intended to convey the notion that the children, by means other than visual, became aware of Spot; one might wonder why in a story directed to children, the author did not use some other word than "see"? Keeping the prospective audience in mind, one might assume that the author intended to use "see" in its literal sense and that indeed, "Dick and Jane *saw* Spot"!

The case of Dick, Jane, and Spot speaks to much of theology, whether medieval or modern, or whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. Words are used, but meanings derived from one world are rejected while meanings derived from another are inserted. It is as if, in some situations, Dick and Jane were blind and Spot were invisible and yet somehow they saw him and in other situations Dick and Jane were sighted and Spot were visible and yet for some reason they did not see him. Theology, in general and in particular, had and has difficulty with the meaning of certain words, because those words conveyed notions which, to a reader operating with a framework of meaning different from that of those who wrote the words, could not be understood to have the meaning they seemed to have.

Which words? The word "theology," derived from two Greek words *theos* "God" and *logos* "discourse" suggests the most important one: "God." To say the least, that word is a crucial one in most religious traditions and not only that word but other words linked to that word, which describe God's relation to the world and to persons. Since the various theologies are

always particular, presenting the view of a specific group, it follows that a particular theology will present the notion of the God's relation to a particular group of persons. Thus if it be Jewish theology, it will be to Jews; if Christian theology, to Christians, and if Islamic theology, to Muslims.

However, in any theological formulation, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, the word "God" and words associated with it, will be understood in a manner different from the way that word and those words were understood in the base texts of the particular religious traditions. Contact with the old/new world of philosophy (of whatever kind) forced the thinkers who formed the new theological systems to create a new understanding of those words so as to retain the old words with all their associations even as the new understanding superseded the old.

Those old words, it should be remembered, were the basis of the societies in which the thinkers lived and thought. Those words could not be jettisoned without threatening the various structures of the societies built upon them and without putting at risk the positions of those thinkers ensconced in them. Hence, whatever new insights philosophy might provide to one particular group within a society, it could not be allowed to threaten that society. Old words, therefore, would receive new meanings, but the old words would remain.

Those untouched by new ideas would remain content with old words and the old meanings; those affected by the new ideas would retain the old words while receiving new meanings. Even so, those new meanings would, like acid injected into an egg, empty out the content of those old words and would affect the conceptual net of meaning in which those words rested. It would seem that theological syntheses by their nature join words but not concepts together. To gain further insight into the problems of theological synthesis, we turn now to the statement of the philosopher who appears in the pages of Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*. We choose that statement because we find it to be the most concise position of the philosophers with whom the medieval theologians ostensibly contended. It expresses the philosophers' view of the Deity and the Deity's relation with the world and with humans, views which differ greatly from that of any traditional religion, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim.

To place the philosopher in the *Kuzari*, we need remember that Halevi begins the book with the king of the Khazars having repetitive dreams in which he hears a voice that he takes to be that of God, telling him that while his intentions are acceptable, his actions are not. Troubled by the dreams and seeking to discover which actions are acceptable, the king summons a philosopher. (The king will next call upon a Christian theologian, a Muslim theologian, and finally a Jewish scholar who will act as Halevi's mouthpiece.)

In response to the king's questions, the philosopher presents his view of the Deity:

There is no favor or dislike in [the nature of] God, because He is above desire and intention. A desire intimates a want in the person who feels it and not until it is satisfied does he become [so to speak] complete. If it remains unfilled, he lacks completion. In a similar way, He is, in the opinion of the philosophers, above the knowledge of individuals, because the latter change with the times, whilst there is no change in God's knowledge.

He, therefore, does not know thee, much less thy thoughts and actions, nor does He listen to thy prayers, or see thy movement. If philosophers say that He created thee, they only use a metaphor, because He is the Cause of Causes in the creation of all creatures, but not because this was His intention from the beginning. He never created man. For this world is without beginning, and there never arose a man otherwise than through one who came into existence before him, in whom there were united forms, gifts, and characteristics inherited from father, mother, and other relations, besides the influences of climate, countries, foods, and water, spheres, stars, and constellations. Everything is reduced to a Prime Cause, not to a Will proceeding from This, but an Emanation from which emanated a second, a third, and a fourth cause.¹

The elements of the philosopher's position, it should be noted, are consistent with one another. His Deity is perfect; it can neither gain nor lose; it can neither affect anything or be affected by anything; it is what it is, and it cannot change. Its relation to the world is that of eternal emanation, without intention and bereft of will.

If God be changeless, God cannot change His mind; if God be changeless, He cannot know changing particulars. If God cannot know particulars, He cannot know individual human beings; if God cannot know them, He cannot hear their prayers, He cannot respond to them, in sum, He cannot be involved in any way with human beings.

It is such a view of the Deity which lies behind the philosopher's response to the king: "He does not know thee, much less thy thoughts and actions, nor does He listen to your prayers, nor see thy movements." An unchanging God can do none of these things!

What the philosopher did not say, for such a statement would have been dangerous for him to say, was that which troubled the king was but a dream! It was not real! What the king thought had happened, for the philosopher, did not and could not have happened! It was precluded by his concept of God.

As an unchanging God could not be affected, so an unchanging God could not have an affect on anything else. So such a God could not create *ex nihilo* because to do so would be to act after not acting [or, as other philosophers might put it, such a Deity would have to move from potency to act.² Only things of matter can make such a move.³ Such a Deity would have to be a material entity!] One could argue that the changeless God could create continually; however, such a view would mean that the world would be as eternal as God was eternal; if so, paradoxically, we would reach the same conclusion as those who argued that God did not create, *viz.*, the world was eternal!⁴

Not only would the notion of a changeless God, affect the notion of creation, it would affect the notion of providence. A changeless God could neither know nor provide for any individual. Moreover, such a concept of God could not be the source of revelation in the traditional sense of the term, *i.e.*, revelation specific to persons, place, and time. One might hold, as with providence, so with revelation, that God revealed continually to all persons at all times. The differences in the reception of that revelation would then depend on the receiver and not

on the Divine Provider. The notion of Active Intellect,⁵ that aspect of the Deity, which constantly provided revelation to potential receivers, allowed the philosophers to retain the word revelation, all the while emptying out its content.

That Active Intellect, according to Halevi's philosopher is:

. . . the last and most longed for goal for the perfect man whose soul, having been purified, grasped the inward truths of all branches of science, and thus becomes equal to an angel . . . the soul of the perfect man and that Intellect becomes one. This is what is called . . . [the] *Pleasure of God*.⁶

Note well that this kind of "pleasure" is dependent on the knowledge of science, the province of the philosopher, and not the knowledge of any sacred text, the province of the religionist.

With such a view of "pleasure of God" vitiating the crucial elements of traditional religion, we might be surprised to find that Halevi's philosopher is in no way opposed to religion. Indeed, he tells the king that:

Thou mayest even choose a religion in the way of humility, worship, and benediction, for the management of thy temperament, thy house and [the people of thy] country.⁷

"Management" is the operative term here. For the philosopher here presented and for other medieval philosophers, religion in its various forms was conceived of as a means of social control.⁸ But such a means presented the problem of relating the concepts of the philosophers to the words of the religious texts; the concepts of one belied the words of the other. [Cf. the problem of "worship"!]. Metaphor was the mechanism by which the concepts of the one could be linked to the words of the other. It was not the simple believer who used metaphor to relate to the "old" words of his religious texts; rather, was the one who, coming into contact with the new conceptual system, was troubled by the challenge of the "new" system to the meanings of the old words.

As an example of "metaphor" eviscerating meaning, we may reflect on the philosopher's use of "creation." He said:

If the philosophers say that He created thee, they use a metaphor because He is the cause of causes.⁹

One might wonder whether a philosopher or a religionist would use the word! Yet having used the word, the philosopher made it abundantly clear, that the term was bereft of meaning by adding the words:

He never created thee.¹⁰

Whatever "creation" might suggest to the religionist, for the philosopher, the word had no meaning, for he added:

The world is without beginning.¹¹

However the world came into existence, for the philosopher, it was not the result of divine will. Rather he says:

It was not his intention from the beginning.¹²

It is clear then, that for the philosopher, though he might use the term, the word “creation” was without meaning! If creation be a “metaphor” for the philosopher, then for him, the word “metaphor” suggests the use of certain words all the while denying their essential meanings and the connections made with those meanings.

Metaphor made for management because it allowed one group to understand words in one way and another group to understand the same words in a totally different way. The philosopher’s instruction to the king to “choose a religion” even after demonstrating why the words of religion were meaningless was to suggest that a religion could be maintained all the while its notions were rejected. The only way such a religion could be maintained was if “the people” did not know what the king knew; one cannot believe that they would knowingly follow a religion bereft of meaning!¹³ However, were “the people” to take the words of their religious tradition as they always had, filled with meaning, and the king were to take the words of that tradition as empty of meaning, then the former could be “managed” and the latter could “manage.”¹⁴ It may be argued that the sharing of words but not of meanings lies at the core of the question of a “hidden doctrine” which bedeviled much of medieval theology.

As is well known, Maimonides’ *Guide* was a book containing a “hidden doctrine.” This is evinced by the Introduction to *Guide*,¹⁵ the vast commentary literature,¹⁶ an elaborate study by Leo Strauss,¹⁷ and some recent books.¹⁸ It is our contention that such a “hidden doctrine” is structural and hence endemic in theological literature. It is structural because theology attempts an unattainable synthesis; it is endemic, because many thinkers of different religious persuasions using different philosophical carriers consciously or unconsciously sought to combine what could not be combined.¹⁹ Hence Maimonides was not the first or the only theologian to produce such a doctrine. To test our hypothesis, we have chosen to deal with two thinkers separated by time and faith, Bachya Ibn Pakudah (*circa* 1080) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274).

To move to a point of clarity: If we point to elements within the thinking of both theologians which were incompatible with their religious commitments, we may notice that it does not follow of necessity that those thinkers saw what we see. The human ability not to see what one wishes not to see is almost infinite. As example, we may think of those attending the synagogue service who, accepting the Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP), can still sing “*v’zot ha-Torah*” while the Torah is being held up! Hence, even in modern times, people can hold on to two contradictory notions at the same time. However, we argue that the contradictions we present should have been seen. It may be that the thinkers sensed that the notions that made for contradictions presented a threat to stability, whether it was that of society, that of position, or that of psyche, a threat which could not be allowed.

We turn now to one of the most popular books in the Jewish world of the Middle Ages,

Chovot Hallevavot, The Duties of the Heart, written by Bachya bar Yosef ibn Pakudah.¹⁷ Though it is not clear when or where the book was written, it was translated from Arabic into Hebrew by Joseph Ibn Tibbon in 1060.²¹

At first glance, the book gives the appearance of a pietistic book. Divided in two, it contains the following topics in treatise form: an introduction, followed by reflections on the Unity of God, an Examination of the Creation, the Service of God, Trust in God, Wholehearted Devotion, Humility, Repentance, Spiritual Accounting, Abstinence, The Love of God, the Ten Strophes, Admonition and Petition. Though one may view the book as “essentially ethical,”²² the reader will note that the author possesses a background in philosophy. In the Introduction to his the book, he divides “wisdom” into mathematics, physics, and metaphysics. He explains the last as:

... the science of theology which treats of the knowledge of God . . . and the knowledge of His law, and of other subjects that can be apprehended by the intellect, such as the Soul, the Intellect, and Spiritual beings . . . ²³

Though Bachya said here that “science of theology” encompassed both “the knowledge of God” and “the knowledge of His law,” the careful reader will discover elsewhere that there were some problems between the two kinds of knowledge. On the one hand, Bachya held that the acceptance of the Unity of God was:

... the most necessary among the fundamental principles of our religion . . . [the] root and foundation of Judaism . . . By the acceptance of the Unity of God, the believer is distinguished from the infidel.²⁴

and:

... there is the command to believe in the Creator, when it says, Shema (Hear) the text refers . . . to inward belief . . . Whenever the term “hear” is used in this way, it is intended to express nothing else but believing and accepting . . . the reality of God’s existence [and] that He is our God . . . [and] that He is the true unity.²⁵

But on the other hand, mere recitation of the *Shema* is not sufficient to fulfill “believing and accepting,” for Bachya complains of some Jews who while reciting it:

... do not appreciate that their hearts are void of truth and their minds are empty of its meaning. For they declare God’s Unity with their tongues and in words. But in their hearts, they conceive Him as more than one.²⁶

So it would follow that by themselves the words of the *Shema*, even though they be the words of the Torah, cannot properly fill the mind; “the knowledge of the Law” by itself cannot provide “the knowledge of God” which “distinguish[es] the believer from the infidel”! The believer who depends only on texts of the Torah will be left with a mouth filled with words and a mind empty of meaning!

Who then has a proper concept of God? Bachya gives an interesting answer:

The philosopher spoke the truth when he said: “Only the prophet, by reason of his natural endowment or the distinguished philosopher, through the wisdom he has acquired, is able to worship the First Cause. But all the rest worship something else, since they cannot conceive of any being that is not composite.”²⁷

Such a statement raises a number of questions: does Bachya intend that his reader accept the philosopher’s view? If so, if “only the prophet” and “only the distinguished philosopher” can truly worship God, what hope is there for those who are neither prophets nor philosophers?

To answer these questions, Bachya provides the reader with four ways of accepting the Unity of God.²⁸ It should be noted that those ways are dependent on the intellectual ability of the one wishing to profess the Unity of God. The first, fit for a child or the simple person is simply the acknowledgement, in words alone, of God. From what we have already learned, such an acknowledgement is without worth.

The second is the “profession of the Unity of God,” *i.e.*, the recital of the *Shema* while reflecting on its traditional meaning, with the lips and with the mind. Even such a reflective recital will not avail, because:

... if a man accepts the doctrine of the Unity on the ground of tradition only, he can never be sure that he will not come to associate the worship of the One God with the worship of another being.²⁹

So once again, we learn that the Tradition, *per se*, cannot enable a person to properly acknowledge the Unity of God. Neither Biblical nor Rabbinic texts suffice!

There is a third way: it is:

the acknowledgement of the Creator’s Unity with mind and in speech after one is able to maintain that doctrine with proofs of the reality of His existence, according to the method of rational investigation without the knowledge, however, of what is implied by true Unity as distinguished from conventional Unity . . .³⁰

Though the one who follows the third way does not yet have “the knowledge . . . of the true Unity,” it is clear that such a person does have that which his predecessors lacked: “rational investigation”! That kind of investigation makes the difference, not the perusal of religious texts. That which this person lacks, *i.e.*, “the knowledge . . . of what is implied by true Unity as distinguished from conventional Unity” is a matter of philosophical not religious knowledge.

The fourth way is even more philosophical. It is:

... the acknowledgement of the Unity of God with mind and in speech, after one knows how to adduce proofs of His existence and has arrived at a knowledge of the truth of His Unity by the method of ration-

al investigation and by arguments that are right and reasonable. This is the [most] complete and worthiest category of belief.³¹

“The method of rational investigation,” “arguments that right and reasonable” — such a method and such arguments are the province of the philosopher and not those of the religionist! Even so, Bachya insists that they are incumbent upon every person who can do so, saying:

. . . that anyone capable of investigating this [the doctrine of God’s Unity] and similar philosophical themes by rational methods, is bound to do so . . . Anyone who neglects to institute such an inquiry is blameworthy.³²

Thus philosophical investigation is not only permissible, it is mandatory!

Bachya devotes the next chapters of his book to the rational investigation of the existence, unity, and attributes of God. Since a created world would entail a Creator, Bachya uses three arguments to prove that the world has been created *ex nihilo*:

1, . . . a thing does not make itself; 2, . . . [since] causes are limited in number . . . they must have a First Cause . . . [and] 3, . . . every thing that is a compound must have been brought into existence.³³

He adds the argument from design, that not to be aware of the wise Creator of the world would be as if a:

. . . person brought to us a fair copy of a script that could only have been written with a pen, and [he] said that the ink had been spilt on paper and these written characters had come of themselves.³⁴

Having proved the existence of God as Creator, Bachya moves to prove the Unity of God, *i.e.*, that there is one Creator rather than many; perhaps the most telling of his seven arguments is his use again of the example of a manuscript. For him, the order of creation argues for one Creator in the same manner that a manuscript may argue for one author:

When we see a manuscript, uniform in composition and handwriting, it will at once occur to us that one individual wrote and composed it . . . [Though] . . . [i]t might indeed have been more than one writer. Still, in the absence of evidence, such as a variety in handwriting, etc., we are not warranted in making this assumption . . . Similarly we may reason concerning the Creator.³⁵

In his discussion of the Unity of God, Bachya gives his reader a philosophy lesson: he mentions the Ten Categories of Aristotle, *viz.*, Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, Possession, Action, and Passion. He mentions their causes: motion and the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water. Though Bachya thinks that the ultimate cause of the elements are Matter and Form, he believes that since they are two, they must have one cause and that cause is the Divine Will.³⁶

Though the words “Divine Will” might suggest something to a religious reader, they would

suggest something different to the philosophical reader. As we read the next chapter in the book and come to Bachya's discussion of the term "true Unity," we will begin to wonder. He defines that unity in this manner:

. . . true (absolute) Unity . . . [is] . . . that which is neither plural nor susceptible of change or transformation; is not described by any one of the corporeal attributes; is not subject to creation, destruction, or limitation; does not move or waver, resembles naught, has naught resembling it and is not associated with aught. It is in all respects true Unity and the root of everything plural. [It] . . . has neither beginning or end.³⁷

Such a definition describes an entity which is immaterial and unchanging. For the philosopher, such a Deity would possess an unchanging Divine Will, even though such a "will" would contradict the notion of will as intermittency, or as a later philosopher, Maimonides would put it, "to will or not to will."³⁸ For the religionist, such an unchanging Deity would present the same problems of affect and relation suggested by the philosopher of the *Kuzari*! Thus for the philosopher, such a God cannot will, and for the religionist such a God cannot relate!

Bachya goes on to stress that such a God cannot be described:

All the implications of Absolute Unity . . . befit Him alone. Plurality, accidental properties, changes, movements, similarities, or any qualities inconsistent with True (Absolute) Unity cannot be attributed to Him.³⁹

If no quality inconsistent with the Divine Unity can be attributed to God, one might wonder, could God have any Divine Attributes? In his response, Bachya uses language which gradually is emptied of meaning. He first distinguishes between essential and active attributes. There are three essential attributes; they are:

“. . . that He is, that He is one, and that He is eternal without predecessor.”⁴⁰

Though these seem to be three, they are actually only one, for the analysis of any one reveals the other two. Hence:

These three attributes . . . are one in meaning and are so to be regarded. They do not imply any change in the Creator's glorious essence, not the intrusion of any accidental properties of plurality into His being . . .⁴¹

Though the three terms have but one meaning, we use the three because of the inadequacy of language:

If we could express the conception of His being in a single word that would at once denote these attributes even as they are comprehended by . . . Reason . . . we would employ that word. But as we do not find in any of the spoken languages a word that would designate the true conception of God, we express it in more than one word.⁴²

The plurality in Divine attributes does not indicate a plurality in the Divine nature. More than that: the three essential attributes when applied to God do not mean what they seem to mean; they are the negations of negations:

. . . the Creator is neither non-existent, nor created, nor plural. Whatever attributes you ascribe to the Creator, you are to infer from them the denial of their contraries. As Aristotle said, 'Negatives give a truer conception of God's attributes than affirmatives.'⁴³

One may note from Bachya's statement that he anticipated the "negative theology" developed by Maimonides!

Having discovered that the essential attributes do not describe the Deity, we learn that the so-called "active attributes" do so even less! Even so, though known to be inaccurate, they are to be used:

It is possible that in attributing these qualities to Him, He is made an associate of some of His creatures. We are permitted, however, to ascribe these qualities to Him, because of our urgent need of acquainting ourselves with, and realizing His existence, so that we may assume the obligations of His service . . .⁴⁴

A most interesting formulation! Because of an "urgent need," certain persons will give themselves permission to ascribe qualities to the Deity that they know to be false so as to convey to other persons an erroneous belief about God that those others will think to be true! So stated, Bachya's view here is very close to the "management" view of the philosopher of the *Kuzari*! One wonders, moreover, what kind of "obligation" could be based on error and what kind of "service" could be rendered to a mistake?

In further discussing the attributes of God, Bachya notes that the prophets of Israel often described God in corporeal terms, which they knew to be incorrect, so as to make God's existence manifest. Had they used precise and proper terms:

. . . we would have understood neither the terms nor the concepts; and it would have been impossible for us to worship a Being whom we did not know, since the worship of that which is unknown is impossible.⁴⁵

Again, the reader may wonder: how can terms which are incorrect give us knowledge? If it be impossible to worship a Being Whom we do not know, how is worship of the Deity made possible by terms we know to be incorrect? One may wonder further, is there a message which Bachya is giving an astute reader? If corporeal terms used to describe the Deity be incorrect, what remains of their meaning if we follow Bachya's advice that:

The wise thinker will endeavor to strip the husk of the terms — their materialistic meaning — from the kernel, and will raise his conception, step by step, till he will at last attain to as much of the knowledge of the truth as his intellect is capable of apprehending.⁴⁶

So the “wise thinker” is s/he who gradually learns two things: first, that such terms do not mean what they seem to mean, and second, that since the Biblical text is replete with such terms, its literal meaning cannot provide “the knowledge of the truth”! It follows that there are two kinds of readers: those who are “wise” and those who are not; the former can penetrate through a Biblical word to its inner, non-“materialistic” meaning; the latter cannot; the former can attain “the knowledge of the truth,” but not the latter.

Bachya illustrates the difference between the two kinds of readers with a striking image: it is to be compared to a host who had to provide food for a guest and for the guest’s cattle. For the cattle, the host provided a great amount of feed; for the guest himself, the host provided a scant amount of food, barely enough to meet the needs of that guest. So it is with the texts of Judaism; they are filled with a great deal of anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity, descriptions directed at the masses, while the few hints of real meaning are directed to those “capable of understanding.”⁴⁷

The parallel between cattle and the masses, which may seem shocking to the modern reader, will find its echo in a statement of Maimonides in the *Guide*.⁴⁸ Bachya makes further use of that parallel with startling effect, when he quotes a philosopher who said:

He whose mind is incapable of grasping the abstract, fastens on the terms used in the Divinely given Scriptures, and is unaware that the style of the Biblical books is adapted to the intelligence of those to whom they were addressed, but does not express the real nature of Him Who addressed them and concerning Whom these terms are used. *It is like a whistling call, cattle are to be watered, which is more effective to make the beast drink, than clear and intelligent speech would be.*⁴⁹

“A whistling call for cattle”!? Is that what Scripture is? A moment’s reflection will suggest that that indeed was the message that Bachya, using the cover of the philosopher wished to convey to the reader “capable of understanding”! If the masses, lacking the requisite philosophical training, cannot understand the meaning of the words of Scripture, all they can receive from Scripture are the sounds of the words, which for the masses can only operate, to use a modern term, in a Pavlovian manner!

That Bachya was hinting that Scripture cannot “express the real nature” of God will become even clearer as we unpack his further hint that Scripture cannot even convey the truth about the Divine Unity. He begins by putting a question in the mouth of a “foolish and simple person”:

Will the subject of God’s Unity be unknown to any person who learns even a single page of the Torah . . .⁵⁰

Bachya responds:

To such a person, I would reply, “Answer a fool according to his folly.”
(Pr.26:5)⁵¹

One might easily conclude that such an answer was Bachya's hint to his reader that only a fool would think that Scripture was sufficient in itself to explain the Divine Unity. That that was Bachya's intention is indicated by his statement that as far as the understanding of that Unity as the Torah might teach it:

. . . men fall into three classes. The first class consists of those endowed with clear and bright mental faculties. The second, of those whose minds are utterly incapable of understanding the content of Holy Writ. The third, of those whose power of comprehension is not as strong as those who belong to the first class, but who have yet sufficient intelligence to perceive things that are near to them and are easy.⁵²

The first group will⁵³ immediately understand what the Torah is teaching them; they are so astute, that as Bachya puts it, "They do not need this treatise." The second group neither knows the Torah nor the notion of God's Unity therein contained; they might hear the words dealing with the topic, but they would not understand them. For this group, Bachya says, "My book is of no use whatever." The third group has some understanding of the Scriptural presentation of God's Unity; to complete that understanding, the group needs a teacher to "instruct them . . . with the aid of sound rational proofs." Hence for those in this last group:

. . . this book will be of great and comprehensive use.⁵⁴

Thus it is clear that for Bachya, the achievement of the understanding of the Divine Unity cannot be achieved by Scriptural study alone; philosophical study is also required.

The importance of philosophy will be reiterated by Bachya in his discussion of the Service of God. Such service is submission to God; that submission can be motivated either by external or by internal stimuli. The external stimulus can be the hope of reward or the fear of punishment; the internal stimulus is that which is motivated by:

an innate urge of the mind, innate in the nature of the human being.⁵⁵

Thus there are two kinds of submission to God, both of which are worthy of praise but one of which is one a higher level:

The former is the submission induced by the study of the Torah. The [latter is the] submission which is induced by the urge of the understanding and based on rational demonstrations is near to God and more acceptable.⁵⁶

So "understanding . . . based on rational demonstrations" counts more than ". . . the study of the Torah"! Bachya then seems to hide this conclusion by providing the reader with two lists of seven, seven reasons why rational demonstrations are nearer to God and then seven reasons for the study of the Torah. A careful comparison of the two lists is instructive. From the first list the reader will learn that the rational approach is to be favored because Torah study may be devotional or it may be hypocritical, concerned only with gain or loss, while:

the service of God induced by the intellectual urge is wholly and solely

devoted to God . . . this service is not founded on hope or fear, but based on wisdom and knowledge of what service a creature owes to the Creator.⁵⁷

So “hope or fear” is contrasted with “wisdom and knowledge”! From the second list of seven, we will learn that:

. . . the instruction[s] of the Torah turns about hope and fear — the poles of its axis.⁵⁸

From the second list, we learn a benefit of the Torah and a possible danger arising from “knowledge and comprehension.”

. . . the intellectual urge to the service of God does not lead to the intellectual recognition of active obligations such as prayer, fasting, alms-giving, tithing [and] deeds of benevolence.⁵⁹

From the first list, we learn again the difference between intellectual activity and behaviors in the service of God:

. . . the urge of the Torah is manifested in external good deeds rather than inward thoughts and feelings . . . [I]n the service prompted by understanding, that which is hidden in the heart is many times as much as what is seen in the external activity of the bodily limbs. This service includes the duties of the heart.⁶⁰

It would follow then that “the service prompted by understanding” is more active and more worthy of praise than the outer works of piety!

From the second list of seven, we learn a further problem of the intellectual approach; by its very nature, it is not available to everyone:

. . . the intellectual urge cannot comprehend equally all who are under the obligation of service, because some human beings are of limited intelligence, while some are superior in apprehension.⁶¹

One might draw the unfortunate conclusion that the Torah is directed to those persons who, by their nature, are unable to use their intellects!

The first list contains a remarkable parable concerning the relation of the Torah to intellectual pursuits. That service of God induced by the study and observance of the Torah is to be regarded as the precursor of that service of God induced by understanding. The last:

. . . is like seed planted in the ground. The study of the Torah is as tillage is to the soil — plowing and clearing it. The aid that comes from God is like the rain that waters the field. And the fruit that is produced and brought forth is what remains in the heart — the service of God for His sake only, and not prompted by hope . . . or fear.⁶²

His use of the phrase “hope [and] or fear,” “the poles of the axis of the Torah,”⁶³ makes it clear that he regards the intellectual service of God to be the true service. The parable which he presented might be interpreted by the philosophically trained reader in the following manner: the “seed” is the human intellect; the tillage, those preparations, moral and intellectual, required for its development; and the rain, the input from the Active Intellect which moves the human passive intellect to its activated state. However the parable be read, its message is clear: the Torah by itself is insufficient to properly prepare the soul for the service of God!

So the question again arises: then why the Torah? In his second list, Bachya presents his answer:

. . . the people to whom the Torah was given were at that time period in such a condition that animal lusts dominated them and were too weak in their knowledge and perceptive faculties to apprehend many of the rational concepts.⁶⁴

The Torah, therefore, was a concession to the people of the time when it was given. One might wonder, what of the people of a different time and a different condition? Might not a reader of Bachya, who thought himself/herself to be strong in “knowledge and perceptive faculties” conclude that philosophy(!) and not Torah would be the proper service of God?

That “strong” reader would understand Bachya’s statement that the “duties of the heart” began with “the acceptance of the Unity of God” differently from the reader who was “weak” because he would know that such acceptance would require that philosophical training to produce “rational investigation” and “arguments . . . [that are] “right and reasonable”!

Indeed, that “strong” reader would understand what Bachya meant when he said that the highest level of accepting the Unity of God was:

. . . attained by those who have a reasoned conviction of the truth of the Torah. . . who are ever conscious of what they owe . . . They do not fix their attention on reward or punishment, but hasten to fulfill the service of God for His name’s sake because they know Him and have realized what is due to His infinite majesty . . . ⁶⁵

So those who have reached the highest level are those who care not for “reward” or fear “punishment,” rather, they are those who “know” God. That knowing, however, as the reader of Bachya’s words would remember is achieved by the development of one’s intellect. That person who has developed his/her intellect would understand “the truth of the Torah” differently from one who has not; the former would reject the anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity which the latter would accept.

Thus Bachya in a careful but concealed manner has suggested that the development of one’s intellect is paramount — and it is the conceptions of the developed intellect that judge the meanings of the Torah.

By presenting a dialogue between the soul and the intellect, Bachya suggests the importance of that development. For Bachya, the intellect urges us to the service of God. He explains

the meaning of such urging:

“To be urged by the intellect means that God reminds a human being through his intellect, of his duty to know Him, and to be cognizant of the marks of divine wisdom.”⁶⁶

Whatever be the other topics of the *Duties of the Heart*, whether discussing humility or repentance, or many another “religious” topic, Bachya has given some clear signals to the careful reader that it is philosophy, not Torah, which provides a correct view of the Deity. Bachya’s problem was the relation of the concept of a Deity beyond description to the God described in Scripture. To put it another way: the relation of an immaterial Deity beyond change to the responding (and thus changing) God of the religious Tradition. Whatever the *Duties of the Heart* may be, what counts is the work of the intellect! Without the intellect to give it proper interpretation, the Torah would be but a “whistling call”!

We turn now to a discussion of St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274). We shall find some parallels to the problems of theological synthesis we have seen in Bachya. We face the problem of dealing with an iconic figure. Is it conceivable that a saint of the church, one of the developers of scholastic philosophy, concealed heterodox notions within his writings? Is it possible that he did not see what contradictions some of his positions created? Is it possible that he thought that he had solved some of the conundrums generated from the tensions from the possible linkage of philosophical and religious texts?

If, however, the problem of theology be structural, *i.e.*, in the very nature of the attempt at synthesis, then we should not be surprised to see similar problems. Whether the “Angelic Doctor” was aware or not of those problems, the problems would remain.

The problems would originate, as we have seen, in the notion of God. If that notion be the same as that of the philosopher, it will create the same problems of consistency and coherence. We shall examine notions contained in the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.⁶⁷ We shall find that some of the notions therein contained will create problems.

As is well known, both books are laid out in an ordered and logical manner. *The Summa Theologica* begins with *The Nature of Sacred Doctrine*. The First Question and its contained articles start with the assumption of and the need for revelation by a God pictured in a particular religious text even while mentioning another source of knowledge, that generated by philosophy:

... It was necessary for man’s salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, beside the philosophical sciences investigated by human reason.⁶⁸

The need for Divine revelation is due to human incapacity:

... it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths, which exceed human reason, should be made known to him by Divine Revelation. For the truth about God, such as reason can know it, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture

of many errors; whereas man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends on the knowledge of this truth.⁶⁹

It should be noted here that revelation, at least in its traditional, religious form, assumes a God who, by an act of Divine Will and by the ability to know particulars, conveys certain information to those to whom He has chosen to do so. It would seem that such a concept of revelation would mandate the notion of a responsive God, a God who changed, a God who cared; in sum, a God, to whatever level we understand the notion, Who was a Person! It was precisely the notion of a God who could and did change which was denied by the philosopher who appeared in the *Kuzari* and it was precisely the relation between the God of Scripture and the God of the philosophers that was the problem for Bachya. That same problem exists for St. Thomas.

A glimmering of the problem may be seen in the five ways by which he proves the existence of God.⁷⁰ After presenting the arguments from motion, from the nature of the efficient cause, from possibility and necessity, from gradation, and government of the world, St. Thomas says after each, "this everyone understands to be God," "...[this is] which everyone gives the name of God," "This all men speak of God," "this we call God," and "this being we call God." "All men"? "Everyone"? One finds no caring in such a description; one finds no love in such a definition! Would not the Christian believer, the one to whom revelation was given for his/her salvation, see God in the statement, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son . . ." ⁷¹?

Alas, the philosophical component of St. Thomas' thinking becomes problematical with the issue of change as it had been with Bachya. Change for the medieval thinkers was matter receiving new forms; the forms themselves did not change. From such a definition of change it followed that the potentiality for change rested in matter. Hence when we read that:

. . . God is pure act without any potentiality . . . [and] God is the first agent, since He is first efficient cause . . . [and] He is therefore of His essence, a form . . . ⁷²

would we not conclude that God could not change?

Seemingly to reinforce that conclusion, St. Thomas tells his reader that the change of affect cannot be properly applied to God. He says:

A soul is attributed to God because of a similitude of acts; for, if we will anything, is due to our soul. Hence what is pleasing to His will is said to be pleasing to His soul . . . [and] Anger and the like are attributed to God because of a similitude in effects . . . God's punishment is metaphorically spoken of as His anger.⁷³

The issue of change in God is related to the notion of God as a simple and pure form; for St. Thomas God is a simple essence. As he puts it:

But in God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are one and the same.⁷⁴

If so, it would follow that as God's essence could not change, His will could not change! This indeed is St. Thomas' conclusion:

. . . The will of God is entirely unchangeable . . . Now it has been shown that both the substance of God and His knowledge are entirely unchangeable. Therefore His will must be entirely unchangeable.⁷⁵

How that will operates will create a theological problem: does God act by necessity? One might think that from the last two citations that He does. Yet St. Thomas wishes to deny such a conclusion, saying:

Just as the divine being is necessary of itself, so is the divine willing and knowing; but the divine knowing has a necessary relation to the thing known; not the divine willing, however, to the thing willed . . . it follows that God necessarily knows whatever He knows, but does not will necessarily whatever He wills.⁷⁶

That this may be a distinction without a difference is suggested by the Angelic Doctor's statement in the very next article:

Because the essence of God is His intellect and will, from the fact of His acting by His essence it follows that He acts after the mode of intellect and will.⁷⁷

and from the statement already quoted, which we give now in a somewhat fuller form:

But in God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are one and the same . . . For His doing is subject to His foreknowledge and preordination, though His power, which is his nature, is not. For God does things because He so wills; yet He is able to do so, not because He so wills, but because He is such in His nature.⁷⁸

It should be clear to the reader that if "power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are one and the same," then one cannot make the distinction between any one of them; if one can, then the aforementioned items are not "one and the same"!

As we may remember, the issue of God's will would not be a problem for the philosopher, as the philosopher of the *Kuzari* indicates, it would be a problem for the religionist and for the theologian attempting to maintain a religious position. It is instructive to note that St. Thomas deals with the Divine will in terms of metaphor:

As God may by metaphor be said to will what by His will, He wills not, so He may by metaphor be said to will what He does, properly speaking, will.⁷⁹

If we cannot be sure of the meaning of the Divine will, we might wonder about creation. If the Divine will were unchanging, it might be that the world, the product of that will, would

always have been.⁸⁰ Perhaps, we are not surprised to find:

That the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone: it cannot be proved demonstratively . . . The reason for this is that the newness of the world cannot be demonstrated from the world itself . . . neither can the newness of the world be demonstrated from the efficient cause, which acts by will. For the will of God cannot be investigated by reason, except those things which God must will of necessity . . . Hence that the world began to exist is an object of faith, but not of demonstration or science.⁸¹

St. Thomas may be giving his reader a further hint as to his understanding of creation when he discusses the effect of an efficient cause:

. . . an efficient cause which acts by motion of necessity precedes its effect in time . . . But if the action is instantaneous and not successive, it is not necessary for the maker to be prior in duration to the thing made, as appears in the case of illumination. Hence it is held that it does not follow necessarily that if God is the active cause of the world, He must be prior to the world in duration; because creation, by which He produced the world, is not a successive change.⁸²

It would follow from this last statement, that if God be the efficient [“active”] cause of the world and God’s will be unchanging [for God’s will=God’s essence], then the world will always be as God always was, is, and will be. Now we can see even more clearly, why “that the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone.”⁸³

If St. Thomas’ treatment of creation raised “philosophical” suspicions, his treatment of “man’s last end and ultimate happiness” will bring more. In a number of chapters (27-40, 44, 48, and 63) in Book Three of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, we learn what happiness is not and what it is.⁸⁴

What the reader may find startling is St. Thomas’ statement at the beginning of the discussion of happiness that:

. . . someone might think that man’s last end and ultimate happiness consists, not in knowing God, but in loving Him, or in some other act of will towards Him. . . . Therefore, it would seem that the last end, which is beatitude, consists of an act of will rather than of the intellect. But this can be clearly shown to be impossible. For since happiness is the proper good of the intellectual nature, it must needs become the intellectual nature according to that which is proper thereto.⁸⁵

So it is not an act of will that counts, but rather an act of the intellect! A more “philosophical” statement would be hard to imagine! Even more so, is the chapter entitled: “That Man’s Ultimate Happiness Does Not Consist in Acts of the Moral Virtues”⁸⁶ In that chapter we read:

Since man is man through the possession of his reason, his proper good,

which is happiness, must needs be in accordance with that which is proper to reason, . . . T]he good of moral virtue . . . cannot be the greatest good of man which happiness is; rather this good must be a good that is in reason itself.⁸⁷

Were this statement not sufficiently surprising, the continuation of the passage may be so:

We have already proved that the last end of all things is to become like God . . . Now this is not in terms of moral actions, since such actions cannot be ascribed to God, except metaphorically; for it is not befitting to God to have passions, or the like, with which moral virtue is concerned. Therefore man's ultimate happiness, which is his last end, does not consist in moral actions.⁸⁸

We are not surprised to find the next two chapters indicate by their headings: "That Ultimate Happiness Does Not Consist in the Act of Prudence" and "That Happiness Does Not Consist in the Practice of an Art."⁸⁹ We would expect as indicated by the next chapter heading "That Man's Ultimate Happiness Consists in Contemplating God." As St. Thomas suggests, that all of society is organized that such contemplation may occur:

For perfect contemplation requires that the body be disencumbered . . . it requires freedom from disturbance caused by the passions . . . achieved by means of the moral virtues and prudence; and freedom from external disturbance . . . So . . . we shall see that all human occupations appear to serve those who contemplate the truth.⁹⁰

It would seem that not every one can achieve that "happiness consist[ing of] wisdom based on the consideration of divine things"⁹¹ for the title of the next chapter is "That Human Happiness Does Not Consist in the Knowledge of God Which Is Possessed by the Majority."⁹²

Having proceeded so far, the title of the next chapter may be surprising: "That Man's Happiness Does Not Consist in the Knowledge of God Acquired by Demonstration." One might have expected by the logic of the last few chapters that it might. However, those who are accustomed to read between the lines and see "hidden doctrines" might see in the chapter an attempt to distract the unwary reader. The chapter does say what demonstration does. It:

. . . proves that God is immovable, eternal, incorporeal, utterly simple, one, and the like.⁹⁴

That would seem to be enough for philosophers. But St. Thomas suggests that even for them, it would not be enough:

. . . [H]appiness is essentially that knowledge of God the possession of which leaves no knowledge to be desired of anything knowable. Such . . . is not the knowledge which the philosophers were able to have about God by way of demonstration . . . we still have the desire to know other things

— things that we do not know by means of this knowledge. Therefore happiness does not consist in such a knowledge of God.⁹⁵

Though we might wonder what knowledge there could be that is not found among the philosophers, in the next chapter St. Thomas reassures us, “That Man’s Happiness Does Not Consist in the Knowledge of God by Faith.” The reason why this is so relates to the operation of the intellect:

For happiness is the intellect’s perfect operation . . . But in knowledge by faith, the operation of the intellect is found to be most imperfect as regards the contribution of the intellect . . . for the intellect in believing does not grasp the object of its assent. Therefore neither does man’s happiness consist in this knowledge of God.⁹⁶

That the intellect in believing does not grasp the object of its assent is not a positive statement about the content of faith! After a further discussion of where ultimate happiness might be found, St. Thomas quotes Aristotle:

Clearly . . . the opinion of Aristotle was that ultimate happiness, which man is able to obtain in this life, is that knowledge of divine things which can be acquired through the speculative sciences.⁹⁷

Earlier in this book, St. Thomas had spoken of “the speculative sciences” and their relation to “the first philosophy”:

[S]uch is the relation of first philosophy to the speculative sciences, for all the others depend thereon, since they derive their principles from it . . . moreover first philosophy is wholly directed to the knowledge of God as its last end . . . the last end of all human knowledge and activity.⁹⁸

So it would seem that if “the knowledge of God [is] the last end of all human knowledge.” we might expect that in some manner such knowledge is achievable. Yet we are to read as a chapter heading, “That Man’s Ultimate Happiness is Not of This Life.” One wonders about that statement when one reads that:

Man’s last end is the term of his natural appetite, so that when he has obtained it, he desires nothing more . . .⁹⁹

May not one ask, is not a “natural appetite” something that is in this world? Perhaps there is some hint given in Chapter 53, entitled “How in That Ultimate Happiness Man’s Every Desire Is Fulfilled.” After all, that blessedness, that beatitude promised in the next life is that which is given not by reason, but by faith. If, as we have seen, faith provides no sure assurance of happiness, how shall we accept promises of a future happiness based on faith? Perhaps there is a message in St. Thomas’ words at the end of the chapter:

In this life there is nothing so like this ultimate and perfect happiness as the life those who contemplate the truth, as far as it is possible in this life. Hence the philosophers who were unable to obtain full knowledge of that

final beatitude placed man's ultimate happiness in that contemplation which is possible in this life. For this reason too, Holy Scripture commends the contemplative rather than other forms of life, when our Lord said (Luke X:42) *Mary hath chosen the better part*, namely, the contemplation of truth, *which shall not be taken from her*. For the contemplation of truth begins in this life, but will be consummated in the life to come; while the active and civic life does not transcend the limits of this life.¹⁰⁰

What we have seen with St. Thomas is his stress on the intellectual knowledge in the achievement of ultimate happiness, that such happiness was not that conceived by the masses nor was it the resultant of "knowledge" gained by faith. His conclusions followed his concept of God as utterly simple and unchangeable; that the terms "power," "wisdom," "will," "essence" applied to God meant exactly the same thing. In sum, his concept of God was little different from that of the philosopher of the *Kuzari* and therefore the relation of that God to the God of Scripture could only be handled by metaphors — some of which, for example, the metaphorical meaning of will, seem totally empty.

Was St. Thomas aware of the problem? His Jewish predecessor Maimonides certainly was. Should he have been? One wonders; it is a commonplace that some in the religious life are often able to say one thing and mean another. At least we may say of St. Thomas, what we said of Bachya, there is reason to suspect that he did.

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- ¹ *The Book of Kuzari*, translated from the Arabic by Hartwig Hirschfeld, PhD, with a preface to the American Edition by Joshua Bloch, PhD, New York, Pardes Publishing Co, 1946, Part One, pp. 31, 32. Henceforth cited in this manner: K I: pp. 32, 33.
- ² Cf. those mentioned by Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Moses Maimonides, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Shlomo Pines, With an Introductory Essay by Leo Strauss, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1969, Part II:14, pp. 287, 289. Henceforth cited in this manner: MN II:14, pp. 287, 289.
- ³ Cf. MN II:18, pp. 299.
- ⁴ *Beur l' Sefer Moreh Nebuchim asher Beuro HeChacham R' Mosheh HaNarbone* by Jaacob Goldental, Wien, 1832, republished in *Sheloshah Kadmoney Mephrashei HaMoreh*, photo offset, Jerusalem 1961, Intro. 1b.
- ⁵ For an excellent summary of the development of the notion of the Active Intellect, cf Article "Aristotle" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Richards, Macmillan Publishing Co. New York, 1967.p 158. See also, Maimonides, MN II:4, pp257; MN II:18, pp. 299; MN II:36, pp 369ff.
- ⁶ *Kuzari* I:1, p33.
- ⁷ *Kuzari* I:1, p34.
- ⁸ E.g., Averroes's comments on the importance of religious law: "... the philosophers believe that religious laws are necessary political arts, the principles of which are taken from natural reason and inspiration . . . The philosophers further hold that one must not object either through a positive or negative statement to any of the general religious principles, for instance is it obligatory to serve God or not . . . In short, the religions are according to the philosophers, obligatory, since they lead toward wisdom in a

way universal to all human beings, for philosophy only leads a certain number of intelligent people to the knowledge of happiness, . . . whereas religions seek the instruction of the masses generally . . . [A]ll the learned hold about religions the opinion that *the principles of the actions and regulations prescribed in every religion . . . incite the masses to the performance of virtuous acts.*" (emphasis mine) Averroes' *Tahafut Al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of Incoherence)* Translated from the Arabic with Introduction and Notes by Simon Van Den Bergh, Oxford Press, London, 1954, Vol. I, pp. 359-361. Note too, the quotation by Narboni, *op.cit.*, of Averroes's statement and his own objection to revealing the truth to those who should not receive it: *yitbalbel ha siddur v'yovayd ha-mesudar* "order will be affected and that which was ordered will be destroyed."

9 Above, note 1

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Cf.* Alfarabi's statement that "everything of which philosophy gives an account based on intellectual perception or conception, religion gives an account based on imagination. In everything demonstrated by philosophy, religion employs persuasion. Philosophy gives an account of ultimate principles, as they are perceived by the intellect. Religion sets forth their images by means of similitudes of them taken from corporeal principles and imitates them by likenesses among political offices . . . Once the images representing the theoretical things demonstrated in the theoretical sciences are produced in the souls of the multitude and they are made to assent to their images, and once the practical things . . . *take hold of their souls and dominate them so that they are unable to resolve to do anything else, then the theoretical and practical things are realized. Now these things are philosophy when they are in the soul of the legislator. They are religion when in the soul of the multitude.*" (emphasis mine.) *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, translated with an Introduction by Muhsin Mahdi, The Free Press of Glencoe, N.Y. 1962, Part One, "The Attainment of Happiness," pp. 44-46. The equations made by Alfarabi: philosophy/religion=conception/imagination=principles/similitudes=elite/multitude, will be replicated throughout the literature.

14 The notion that the king knows something manifestly different from that which the masses know goes back to Plato's notion of the "useful lie," *The Essential Plato*, Jowett's Translation, with an Introduction by Alain de Botton, Book of the Month Club, New York, 1999, *The Republic*, Book II, p. 81. Averroes made the case for the societal usefulness of such lies, when he wrote, "Just as it is only the physician who prescribes a drug, so it is the king who lies to the multitude concerning affairs of the realm. *That is because untrue stories are necessary for the teaching of the citizens. No bringer of a nomos is to be found who does not make use of invented stories, for this is necessary for the multitude to reach their happiness.*" (emphasis mine). Averroes on Plato's *Republic*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Ralph Lerner, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1974, p. 24.

15 *Cf.* Maimonides' statements in the Introduction: "A sensible man . . . should not demand of me or hope that when we mention a subject, we shall make a complete exposition of it." MN Intro. p. 6; and "In speaking about very obscure matters, it is necessary to conceal some parts and disclose others . . . In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware." MN Intro. p. 18.

16 *Cf.* the alphabetical listing of 33 named commentaries and two anonymous commentaries to be found in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by M. Friedlander, Hebrew Publishing Co., New York, 1951, Part Three, Preface, pp. xix-xxi.

17 Strauss, Leo, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952, "The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed," pp. 38-94.

18 *Cf.*, Becker, Yaakov, *Sodo shel Moreh Nebuchim*, J. Simoni Publishing House, Tel Aviv, 1955 and Kravitz, L.S. *The Hidden Doctrine of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed*, Edward Mellen Press, Lewiston,

N.Y., 1988.

- 19 Cf. Kravitz, L.S., “Maimonides and Malebranche,” CCAR Journal, Fall 2001.
- 20 *Chovot Halevavot, Duties of the Heart*, by Bachya ben Joseph Ibn Pakudah, translated from the Arabic by Jehudah Ibn Tibbon, with an English Translation by Moses Hyamson, in two volumes, Boys Town Publishers, Jerusalem, 1962. Henceforth quoted in this manner: DOH, Vol. I or Vol.II, Treatise and page.
- 21 Hyamson assumed that Bachya lived either in the 11th or the first half of the 12th century. That Bachya lived in Saragossa is for Hyamson, a mere conjecture. DOH, Vol. I, Intro. p. 9, Note 2.
- 22 Hyamson, Moses, DOH, Vol. I, Foreword, p. 9.
- 23 DOH, Vol. I, Intro., p. 15. That Bachya makes a point of calling the “science of theology” by its Arabic name *Al-Ilm al-ilahi* bespeaks his involvement in the philosophical world.
- 24 DOH, Vol. Treatise I, Chapter 1, p. 55.
- 25 *ibid.*
- 26 DOH, Vol., Treatise I, Chapter 2, p. 63.
- 27 *Ibid.* Maimonides will make a similar statement, calling the person who has a mistaken concept of God an unconscious atheist. MN I:60, pp. 145.
- 28 DOH, Treatise I, Chapter 2, pp. 63-65.
- 29 *Loc. cit.*, p. 65.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 DOH, Vol.I, Treatise I, Chapter 3, p. 67. Bachya further argues that rational inquiry is enjoined by the verse, “Know this day and lay it to heart.” He argues that this verse exhorts a person to pursue “the method of rational investigation and arguments that are right and reasonable.” (*cf.* previous note.)
- 33 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 5, p. 71.
- 34 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 6, p. 79.
- 35 DOH, Vol. I. Treatise I, Chapter 7, p. 85.
- 36 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 7, p. 81.
- 37 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 8, p. 93.
- 38 MN II:18, pp. 301. A close reading of that chapter will show that Maimonides meant to indicate one thing about the “Divine Will” to one kind of reader and something else to another kind of reader.
- 39 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 9, p. 97. With such a description, or lack of it, one can see why “only the prophet...or the distinguished philosopher ... is able to worship the First Cause.” Above, note 29.

One may wonder about the prophet!

- 40 DOH, Vol. I , Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 99.
- 41 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 101.
- 42 DOH, Vol I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 103. Saadia said something similar with regard to the three divine attributes of vitality, omnipotence, and omniscience, saying, “Although these three attributes are grasped by our minds at one blow, our tongues are unable to convey them with one word, since we do not find in language an expression that would embrace these three connotations.” *Saadia Gaon, The Book of Beliefs, and Opinions*, translated from the Arabic and the Hebrew by Samuel Rosenblatt, The John Hopkins University , New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948, Treatise II, Chapter 4, pp. 101, 102.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 105.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 OH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 107.
- 48 MN II:36, p. 372.
- 49 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, pp. 119, 120. (emphasis mine)
- 50 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 121.
- 51 *Ibid.* One might wonder whether Bachya’s quoting *Prov.* 26:5 would move his reader to remember the great example of Scriptural contradiction, namely, the preceding verse, *Prov.* 26:4, “Don’t answer a fool according to his folly”!
- 52 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise I, Chapter 10, p. 123.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 *Ibid.* It should be noted that the English translation of the Hebrew translation of the original Arabic text has the words “sound rational proofs” while the Hebrew translation has the words *moftim amitiim v’haraayot hasechilot* “true proofs and intellectual arguments.” The one who follows the teacher in the philosophical exposition of Scripture is promised that “its meaning then will be clear; its secret will be revealed to them, and they will reach the standard of the first [group].
- 55 DOH, Vol I, Treatise III, Chapter 3, p. 199.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.* This kind of service, we will learn, *loc.cit.*, p. 200, will lead to the “Service of the Heart”!
- 58 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 3, p. 207.
- 59 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 3, p. 203.

- 60 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 3, p. 201. Bachya will devote the next chapter to “Duties of the Heart.”
- 61 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 3, p. 205.
- 62 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 3, p. 201.
- 63 *Cf.* above, Note lxvi.
- 64 DOH, Vol. I, Chapter 3, p. 207.
- 65 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 4, p. 229.
- 66 DOH, Vol. I, Treatise III, Chapter 5, p. 233.
- 67 As contained in Basic Writings of Saint Thomas, in Two Volumes, Edited and Annotated, with an Introduction, by Anton C. Pegis, Random House, New York, 1945. Henceforth cited as ST (*Summa Theologica*) or SCG (*Summa Contra Gentiles*). In the former, Question, Article, and Reply, will be cited in this manner: Q, A, R, with specific number and page given in the particular volume of Pegis.
- 68 ST, Q1, A2, p. 6.
- 69 *Ibid.*
- 70 ST, Q2, A3, Vol.I, pp. 22, 23.
- 71 John 3:16.
- 72 ST, Q3, A2, Vol.I, p. 28.
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 ST, Q25, A5, Vol. I, p. 267.
- 75 ST Q19, A7, Vol. I, p. 206.
- 76 ST, Q19, A3, Vol. I, p. 200.
- 77 ST, Q 19, A4, Vol. I, p. 201.
- 78 ST, Q25, A5, Vol. I, pp. 267, 268.
- 79 ST, Q19, A12, Vol. I, p. 213. Maimonides, St. Thomas’s Jewish predecessor, played a simple word game with the Divine Will. He told his reader that “The universe is consequent upon His perpetual and immutable wisdom . . . in our opinion, volition too is consequent upon wisdom; all these being one and the same thing — I mean His essence and His wisdom — for we do not believe in attributes.” MN II:18, p. 302. Earlier in the same chapter, Maimonides told his reader, that, “. . . for a being separate from matter, its will, which does not exist for the sake of some other thing, is not subject to change . . . It shall be explained later on that only by equivocation that our will and that of a being separate from matter are both designated “will,” for there is no likeness between the two wills.” MN III:18, p. 301. In a later chapter, Maimonides mentions some “latter-day philosophers who . . . think . . . that . . . the world has always been and will always be like this . . . they say it . . . is impossible that His act or His

will should change . . . ” MN II:21, pp. 314, 315. Though Maimonides comments that “these people have altered the term ‘necessity’ but let its meaning remain. Perhaps they intended to choose a more beautiful expression or get rid of one that is shocking,” MN II:21, p. 315, the careful reader will realize that Maimonides is one of the “latter-day philosophers”!

80 *Cf.* note above.

81 ST, Q 46, A2, Vol. I, p. 453. Though St. Thomas adds after “what God must will of necessity” the words “and what He wills about creatures is not among them,” referring the reader to Q19, A3, the reader will not find in that passage sufficient grounds to avoid the conclusion that if God’s will be unchanging and if He be the efficient cause of the world, the world must always be. Maimonides suggests the same notion to his reader telling him that God is the efficient cause of the world and that when an efficient cause is in act, its effect must necessarily be. MN I: 69, pp. 167,168.

82 ST,Q46,A3, Vol.I., p. 454. The reader will note the parallel to the position of Narboni, Note iv.

83 We are reminded of the statement of Efodi, one of the commentators on the *Guide*, who wrote, “If we did not hold creation as a matter of faith and we wish to justify it by the nature of reality, we would not be able to nullify the arguments of Aristotle [against it]” (translation mine) *Beur Efodi, SeferHaNebuchim l’HaRav HaElohi Rabbenu Moshe ben Maimon, Tzulam v’Nidpas Maychadash*, Jerusalem, 1960, *Chelek Sheni, Perek 17*, p. 36a.

84 SCG, Vol. II, pp. 47-65; 76-77; 84-87; 111-113. The reader of the *Guide* will see these chapters and their subject matters as an expansion of the subject matter of its last chapter with its interpretation of Jeremiah 9:22-23.

85 SCG, Chapter 36, Vol. II, p. 47.

86 SCG, Chapter 34, Vol. II, pp. 57,58.

87 SCG, Chapter 34, Vol. II, p. 58.

88 *Ibid.*

89 SCG Chapters 36,37 Vol. II, pp. 58,59.

90 SCG Chapter 37, m Vol. II, p. 60.

91 *Ibid.*

92 SCG, Chapter 38, Vol. II, p. 61.

93 *E.g.*, Strauss, Leo, *op. cit.*, note xvii and Becker, Yaakov and Kravitz, L.S. *op. cit.*, note xviii.

94 SCG Chapter 39, Vol. II, p. 62.

95 SCG Chapter 39, Vol. II, p. 63.

96 SCG Chapter 40, Vol. II, p. 64.

97 SCG Chapter 44, Vol. II, p. 77.

98 SCG Chapter 25, Vol. II, p. 45.

- 99 SCG Chapter 48, Vol. II, p. 84.
- 100 SCG Chapter 53, Vol. II, pp. 112.