

THE PLACE OF THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE ACCORDING TO MAIMONIDES

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[93]* **I**N THE *GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED*, Maimonides does not treat the doctrine of divine omniscience and divine providence in a strictly theological context. He arrives at this subject for the first time in the third section of the *Guide*, after he has concluded the thematic treatment of at least the following themes: (1) the names and attributes of God (I 1–70); (2) the proof of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God (I 71–II 1); (3) the separate intelligences and the order of the world (II 2–12); (4) the creation of the world (II 13¹–31); and (5) prophecy (II 32–48). Directly following the discussion of prophecy is the thematic interpretation of *ma'aseh merkabah**—Ezekiel 1 and 10—(III 1–7). This interpretation concludes with the remark that while all of the preceding “up to this chapter,” that is, I 1–III 7, is indispensable for the understanding of *ma'aseh merkabah*, the discussion

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¹ See II 11 end.

* Translators' note: This Hebrew term means “Account of the Chariot.” The other Hebrew term, so important for Maimonides in the *Guide*, is *ma'aseh bereshit*, which means “Account of the Beginning.” We follow Strauss in transliterating these Hebrew terms, although the reader may find it important to note that in his later work on the *Guide* in English, “How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*,” Strauss simply translates these Hebrew terms directly.

“after this chapter,” that is, from III 8 to the end, will in no way—neither in a detailed manner nor in the form of hints—involve “this subject,” namely *ma’aseh merkabah*. Accordingly, Maimonides immediately turns to “other subjects.”² Now, for Maimonides *ma’aseh merkabah* is identical with metaphysics (theology as a philosophic discipline).³ The closing remark at the end of *Guide* III 7 means, then, that while all preceding discussions (I 1–III 7) are of a metaphysical character, the following discussions will not belong to metaphysics. The subjects of the nonmetaphysical section of the *Guide* are: (1) divine providence (and the questions which belong most closely together with the question of providence, those concerning the origin and kinds of evil as well as divine omniscience) (III 8–24); and (2) the purpose of the Torah in general and of its arrangements in particular (III 25–50). Whatever else may be the case with regard to the plan of the *Guide*, it is certain that Maimonides, through precisely this plan, excludes the question of divine omniscience and of divine providence from the subject matter of metaphysics.⁴

(*This conclusion requires four additions in order to be precise.

(1) The first section of the *Guide* (I 1–III 7), which we have provision-

² III 7 end. Compare I 70 end.

³ “The Account of the Beginning is identical with natural science and the Account of the Chariot with divine science,” I Introd. (Munk [*Le Guide des Égarés*, 3 vols., Paris, 1856–66], 3b), [6]. [Translators’ note: All direct quotations from the *Guide* in this translation are from Shlomo Pines’s translation of the *Guide: The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963). Where pages from the Munk edition are given by Strauss, we have supplied in brackets the page numbers from Shlomo Pines’s translation as well. In the original article, Strauss quotes from the *Guide* in the original Judeo-Arabic]. The restrictions to which this identification is subject (see II 2 end) can only be treated adequately within the framework of an examination of the structure and the secret teaching of the *Guide*. We content ourselves with saying that these restrictions may be neglected in an introductory consideration since Maimonides himself sets forth the unconditional identification of *ma’aseh merkabah* with metaphysics in *Sefer ha-Madda’* (*The Book of Knowledge*). I refer provisionally to what the hidden structure of the *Guide* involves in footnote 35.

⁴ A further piece of evidence for this is supplied by the remark in III 23 (50b) [496] that the sublunar things and “nothing else” are to be taken into account in proving the true doctrine of providence in the Book of Job, and that, therefore, this proof, that is, the only possible proof, is not of a metaphysical character. See also the beginning words in III 8.

* Translators’ note: We have put this paragraph in parentheses to indicate its supplementary character, which in the original is suggested by the use of a smaller font.

ally characterized as metaphysical, treats not only themes of metaphysics as *theologia naturalis* but also such themes as one would have to—in the sense of Maimonides or at any rate [95] in the sense of his exoteric teaching—attribute to *theologia revelata* (especially the doctrine of the creation of the world). The division of the subjects of the *Guide* into metaphysical and nonmetaphysical therefore in no way follows from the distinction between natural and revealed theology.⁵ The exclusion of the doctrine of providence from the realm of metaphysics, then, is not identical with an attribution of this doctrine to a *theologia revelata*. (2) Physics finds its proper place within the first section of the *Guide*. The discussion of physics—through the thematic interpretation of *ma'aseh bereshit*—is concluded in a similar manner,⁶ just as the comprehensive metaphysical discussion is later concluded through the thematic interpretation of *ma'aseh merkabah*. Therefore, the topics of the second, nonmetaphysical section of the *Guide* belong just as little to physics as they do to metaphysics. Physics and metaphysics form together with mathematics the whole of theoretical philosophy.⁷ Since the subjects of the nonmetaphysical section of the *Guide* are clearly not of a mathematical character, Maimonides, insofar as he treats these subjects for the first time after the formal conclusion of both physics and metaphysics, expresses the view that the same subjects should be altogether excluded from the realm of theoretical philosophy. (3) Maimonides already treats providence in the theoretical section of the *Guide* (most importantly in II 10).⁸ The discussion that appears in this context admittedly concerns general providence alone, that is, the intelligent and artful direction of the whole world. Therefore, Maimonides withdraws only the question of particular providence from theoretical philosophy.⁹ Accordingly,

⁵ Compare III 21 end, with II 16 and following.

⁶ In II 30. Compare II 29 (65b) [346] and footnote 3.

⁷ Maimonides, *Millot ha-Higgayon* [*Treatise on the Art of Logic*], chap. 14.

⁸ I of course leave out here the numerous, occasional mentions of providence.

⁹ Maimonides characterizes the providence of which he speaks in the first section of the *Guide* as *tadbîr* (*hanhaga*) [governance], the providence of which he speaks in the second section as *'inâya* (*hashgacha*) [supervision]; compare especially the indication of the respective themes at the beginning of II 10, on the one hand, and at the end of III 16 and the beginning of 17, on the other. Even though he in no way pedantically adheres to this terminological distinction—he mostly uses both expressions synonymously—it is nevertheless striking that in the relevant chapters of the first section (I 72 and II 4–11) he prefers to speak of *tadbîr* [governance], whereas in the relevant chapters of the second major division (III 16–24) he prefers to speak

Maimonides treats [96] divine knowledge within the theoretical section, namely to show that the attribution of knowledge to God does not contradict the absolute unity of God; it is the question of divine omniscience alone, which is reasonable and necessary only on the basis of the question of particular providence, that belongs to the non-theoretical section. (4) Philosophy as a whole is divided—if one abstracts from logic, which is merely an instrument—into theoretical philosophy, on the one hand, and practical or human or political philosophy, on the other.¹⁰ This is to say that the exclusion of the doctrine of divine omniscience and of divine (particular) providence from theoretical philosophy amounts to the attribution of this doctrine to practical or political philosophy. What seems to speak against this is that Maimonides remarks on one occasion—in the context of an explanation that is certainly meant to prepare the treatment of the question of providence—that the treatment of “ethical topics” does not belong to the subject matter of the *Guide*.¹¹ For it is precisely in this manner that he especially appears to deny that the second section of the *Guide* (III 8 to the end) belongs to practical philosophy. Against this objection, one must note that ethics is in Maimonides’s view only a part, and indeed in no way the central part, of practical or political philosophy: the understanding of the essence of happiness and what leads to it is not the business of ethics but of politics in the true sense (the doctrine of the governance of the city).¹² The upshot of this is that Maimonides can very well deny that the second section of the *Guide* belongs to ethics without thereby in the least having to deny that this section belongs to practical or political philosophy.)

of *‘inâya* [supervision]. One should refer also to I 35 (42a) [80] where he says: “the character of His governance of the world, the ‘how’ of His providence with respect to what is other than He” (Pines’s translation). The origin of this distinction would require an investigation. Munk perhaps supplies a pointer (*Le Guide des Égarés* III 111 n. 2) with which one should compare Julius Guttmann, “Das Problem der Willensfreiheit . . .,” in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut* (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1935), 346–9. The distinction mentioned agrees in part in its result, though in no way in its intention, with the distinction between *‘inâya naw’iyya* (general providence) and *‘inâya shakhsiyya* (particular providence), which occurs in III 17 (36b [472] and 37a [473]) and 18 (39a [476]).

¹⁰ *Millot ha-Higgayon* [*Treatise on the Art of Logic*], chap. 14.

¹¹ *Guide* III 8 end. [Translators’ note: What Strauss, quoting from the *Guide* in this context, calls “ethischer Gegenstände,” and we, translating directly from the German, have rendered as “ethical topics,” Pines translates as “moral . . . matters” (436).]

Maimonides thus excludes, through the plan of the *Guide*, the question of particular providence (and the essentially related question of divine omniscience) from the realm of theoretical philosophy and does so, in particular, in such a way that this exclusion amounts in no way to the attribution of this question to revealed theology but to politics. The implied characterization of the above-mentioned question would appear strange to the historian of philosophy. Indeed, in the Western, Latin tradition from which the history of philosophy is derived, the view that prevailed, at any rate, [97] was that precisely this question was a theme of natural theology and thus of theoretical philosophy.¹³

In order to understand Maimonides's initially strange view, one must distinguish two moments in it. It is characteristic of this view that (1) the doctrine of providence is treated at a much later point, that is, after the doctrines of God's unity, of creation, and of prophecy; and (2) this late treatment implies the attribution of the doctrine of providence to politics.

As regards the late treatment of the question of providence as such, one encounters it in the beginnings of medieval Jewish philosophy, with Saadia. In his *Emunot ve-Deot* [*Book of Beliefs and Opinions*], the question of providence comes up for discussion for the first time from the fifth treatise on, or after creation, the unity of God, law and prophecy, and the freedom of the will have been treated in the preceding treatises. While Saadia begins to discuss the doctrine of the

¹² *Millot ha-Higgayon* [*Treatise on the Art of Logic*], chap. 14. For an interpretation compare *REJ* [*Revue des Etudes Juives*, "Quelques remarques sur la science politique de Maïmonide et de Farabi"] 1936, 7–12 and 15 [Translators' note: Professor Robert Bartlett of Emory College translated this article of Strauss's from the French. It appeared as "Some Remarks on the Political Science of Maimonides and Farabi," in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (Fall 1990). Pages 7–12 in the original article correspond to pages 7–10 in Bartlett's translation; page 15 in the original corresponds to pages 11–12. Hereafter the corresponding page numbers in Bartlett's translation will be given in brackets].

¹³ It should not therefore be contested that this view is also encountered within Islamic–Jewish philosophy. I refer to Avicenna's *Great Metaphysics* and to his *Compendium of Metaphysics*, to Averroes' *Compendium of Metaphysics*, to Gersonides's *Milchamot ha-Shem* [*The Wars of the Lord*] and to Crescas's *Or ha-Shem* [*The Light of the Lord*]. Albo follows the older tradition, represented by Saadia and Maimonides, even though the leading thought of this tradition has become incomprehensible to him (see *Ikkarim* [*Book of Roots*] III beginning).

Law (third treatise: *Of Commandments and Prohibitions*) before the doctrine of providence—and with a sharpness that Maimonides lacks in the *Guide*, at least at first glance—he reveals the original reason for the late treatment of the doctrine of providence, which is also significant for Maimonides: Providence means justice in reward and punishment, and it presupposes precisely a law, the fulfillment of which is rewarded and the violation of which is punished.¹⁴ Now, since the doctrine of the Law presupposes the doctrine of prophecy, which in turn presupposes the doctrine of the angels (the separate intelligences), and which itself finally presupposes the doctrine of God,¹⁵ there arises a necessity (which Maimonides has especially taken into account in the *Guide* as well) [98] to present the doctrine of providence for the first time only after the treatment of each of the four preceding doctrines. In the structure of his above-mentioned work, Saadia, for his part, follows the *Mu'tazilite kalâm*. The Islamic-Jewish *kalâm* tradition, however, prescribed not only the late treatment of the doctrine of providence but also, and at the same time, the formal division of the entire matter of discussion into two parts (doctrine of the unity of God and doctrine of God's justice), in accordance with which the doctrine of providence—just as already the doctrine of law and prophecy earlier—belonged to the second part.¹⁶ Thus, the arrangement deriving from this tradition is always, within certain limits, acknowledged by Maimonides,¹⁷ even in his philosophical explanations. That is to say, this arrangement is a reliable foundation for him, upon which he can build, or rather the exoteric foreground, which requires and at the same time conceals an esoteric background. For the attribution of the doctrine of providence to the doctrine of the justice of God is one thing, the attribution of that doctrine to political science is another. In other words, the conception of the doctrine of providence as a theme of politics does not go back to the Islamic-Jewish *kalâm* tradition but to a genuine philosophic tradition. [99]

The doctrine of providence becomes, then, a theme of politics when the preceding doctrines of prophecy and law are attributed to politics. This last attribution is found from the beginning in the

¹⁴ Compare *Guide* III 17 (34b–35a) [468–9] with the 11th Article of Faith in the *Commentary on the Mishnah* (*Sanhedrin* X).

¹⁵ *Guide* III 45 (98b–99a) [576].

¹⁶ See Jacob Guttman, "Die Religionsphilosophie des Saadia," Göttingen 1882, 131, and S. Pines, *OLZ* [*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*], 1935, col. 623.

falâsifa, the so-called Islamic Aristotelians. They understand the prophet, the prophetic lawgiver, as a philosopher-king in the Platonic sense, as a founder of an ideal, Platonic city¹⁸ (either in the sense of the *Republic* or in the sense of the *Laws*). That the doctrine of providence is also and at the same time handed over to politics¹⁹ does not follow, then, simply from the adherence to a traditional order ("providence after law and prophecy") but also directly from the transformation, or reformation, of the doctrine of providence itself, which necessarily takes place with the turn to philosophy. Maimonides carries out this transformation in the *Guide* in the manner in which he expressly

¹⁷ How much Maimonides is indebted to this tradition, one recognizes if one (radicalizing the suggestion of Pines, *OLZ*, 1935, col. 623) compares the structure of the *Emunot ve-Deot* [*Book of Beliefs and Opinions*] with the corresponding arrangements in Maimonides: (1) The enumeration of the "Articles of Faith" in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, (2) the parallels (which are also in agreement with *Sanhedrin* X) in *H. Teshuvah* III 6–8, (3) the structure of the *Sefer ha-Madda* [*Book of Knowledge*] and of the *Mishneh Torah* as a whole, (4) the structure of the *Guide*. It must be stressed in our context that in all four arrangements Maimonides brings up providence *after* he brings up prophecy in general and the prophecy of Moses in particular. The comparison teaches above all that the "Articles of Faith" concerning the Law (the 8th and 9th) find their counterpart in *Guide* II 39–40, not in III 25–50—as I had mistakenly assumed in *REJ*, 1936, 15 [Bartlett, 12]—and that therefore in the *Guide* also the doctrine of the Law (II 39–40) precedes the doctrine of providence (III 8–24). Compare especially the reference to Deuteronomy 29:28 and 30:12 on the duration of the Torah provided in II 39 (84b) [380] with *Yesodei ha-Torah* IX 1.

¹⁸ Averroes states this in his paraphrase of the *Republic*: "Quae omnia, ut a Platone de . . . optima Republica, deque optimo . . . viro dicta sunt, videre est in antiqua illa Arabum Reipublicae administratione, quae haud dubie optimam Platonis Rempublicam imitari putabat"; *Opp. Aristot.*, Venet. 1550, III, fol 188a, col. 2, 1. 33–50. ["You may understand what Plato says concerning . . . the virtuous governance . . . and . . . the virtuous individual . . . from the case of the governance of the Arabs in early times, for they were used to imitate the virtuous governance." *Averroes on Plato's "Republic"*, trans. Ralph Lerner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 121.]—The Platonic-political origin of Maimonides's prophetology is usually not appreciated. One is led to the origin of this failure of appreciation if one considers the way in which that prophetology was received in Christian Scholasticism: Thomas Aquinas completely separates the doctrine of prophecy from the doctrine of divine Law; he treats the divine Law in the general section on morality (*Summa Theologica* I-II, q. 91 and following); prophecy, however, in the specific section, namely in the discussion of those *virtutes, quae specialiter ad aliquos homines pertinent* (II-II, q. 171 *in princ.*) ["virtues, which apply in particular to certain men"].

¹⁹ That this handing-over is not carried out everywhere by the later *falâsifa* has been made clear in footnote 13.

distinguishes between the doctrine of providence “of our Law” and the right doctrine of providence, which he himself follows.²⁰ Through this [100] distinction, as goes without saying, he does not give expression to a rebellion against the Law—rather, he finds also his own doc-

²⁰ Compare III 23 (49b) [493] with 17 (34b and 35b) [468 and 470]. In order to assess the meaning and importance of this distinction, one must consider that Maimonides (1) does not make such a distinction in the two other enumerations that occur in the *Guide* (the opinions on creation and on prophecy), and (2) that he elaborates that distinction in a covert manner. In order merely to “hint at” his view, he enumerates twice the different views on providence (of which there are five): in III 17, that is, the chapter with which the doctrine of providence formally begins, and in III 23, that is, in the interpretation of the Book of Job, with which the teaching on providence formally ends. In III 17: the opinions of Epicurus, Aristotle, the Asharites, the Mu’tazilites, and of “our Law”; in III 23: the opinions of Aristotle, “our Law,” the Mu’tazilites, the Asharites, and the right opinion (Elihu’s opinion in the Book of Job, or Job’s own opinion after the final revelation). The two enumerations are distinguished by two seemingly minor, but in truth decisive, moments: (1) Whereas in the first, initial, and provisional enumeration the traditional Jewish opinion and the right opinion (Maimonides’s own opinion) seem to be subordinate to the opinion of “our Law,” in the second, concluding, and authoritative enumeration, the opinion of “our Law” is explicitly distinguished from the right opinion (see also the sharp break after the discussion of the traditional Jewish opinion in the first enumeration: III 17; (35a–b) [469–70]); (2) the opinion of Epicurus is explicitly mentioned in the first enumeration, but shortly thereafter (III 17; 34a and 35b) [468 and 470] it is silently dropped as not worth mentioning, whereas in the enumerations of the opinions on creation and prophecy Epicurus’ opinion was explicitly dropped as not worth mentioning (II 13; 29a, [284] and II 32; 72b [360]). Epicurus’ opinion is not mentioned at all in the second enumeration of the opinions on providence: in the first enumeration it was mentioned only so that the external correspondence between the two enumerations (they both concern five opinions) can conceal their internal discrepancy. Maimonides himself finds the principle of repeating the vulgar (initial) view with apparently minor, but in truth decisive, deviations to be at work in the procedure of Elihu, the representative of the right view (III 23; 50a [494]); this remark on Elihu’s way of presentation conveys an authentic indication of Maimonides’s own way of presentation. To be explained in a corresponding way, is the fact that Maimonides claims at first (III 17; 35b [470]) with complete explicitness that the right view is based primarily not on the insight of understanding but on Scripture, whereas at the end (III 23; 48b [492]) Job’s conversion to right opinion is traced back to the fact that Job, who initially has at his disposal only traditional, that is, vulgar, knowledge of God, is at the end led to true (that is, philosophical) knowledge of God: Maimonides lets his reader repeat Job’s path. The decisive rationalism of Maimonides thus shows itself only *at the end*—which, as may be parenthetically remarked, distinguishes him from modern rationalism—and it is in fact not shown openly in Maimonides’s presentation of his own teaching (in III 17), but only in his interpretation of the Book of Job.

trine of providence in the Law²¹—but merely to the view according to which the doctrine found in the foreground of the Law, and which [101] characterizes the Law as such, is simply of an exoteric character. The Law teaches that everything good (bad) that befalls men is reward (punishment) for their good (bad) *actions*.²² Maimonides's own teaching, which thus coincides with the esoteric teaching of the Law, states that "providence is consequent upon the *intellect*."²³ The decisive difference between the two teachings consists in the following: the exoteric teaching asserts the *correspondence* between moral virtue and external happiness; the esoteric teaching, on the other hand, asserts the *identity* of true happiness with knowledge of God. Accordingly, the esoteric doctrine of providence coincides with the understanding of the essence of happiness, with the fundamental and logically necessary distinction between true and merely supposed happiness.²⁴ Now, the teaching on happiness belongs essentially to political science, as Maimonides²⁵ contends in unison with Farabi.²⁶ On the other hand, what concerns the exoteric doctrine of providence—the doctrine of divine reward and punishment—also belongs, and as exoteric doctrine indeed as such, to politics. For what are exoteric doctrines other than such doctrines of faith that are not true but "whose acceptance is necessary for the health of the affairs of the city"?²⁷ And in conceiving the doctrine of divine reward and

²¹ III 17 (36a and 37b) [471 and 474].

²² III 17 (34a–35b) [468–70] and 23 (49a) [492].

²³ III 17 (37b) [474].

²⁴ Compare III 23 (48b) [492] with 22 (45b) [487].

²⁵ See above p. 96 [in the original].

²⁶ Compare the so-to-speak programmatic definitions in *Ihsâ al-'ulûm* [*The Enumeration of the Sciences*; this is available in English translation in *Alfarabi, the Political Writings: "Selected Aphorisms" and Other Texts*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)], chap. 5, and *k. tahsîl al-sa'âda* [*The Attainment of Happiness*], Hyderabad, 1345, 16 [available in English translation as the first chapter of *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002)] with the structure of the *Political Regime* (*Hathchalot hanimzaot*) and the so-called *Musterstaat* ["ideal city"]; in the *Musterstaat* the doctrine of happiness is treated only *after* the doctrine of the "first leader" and of the "perfect city"; the doctrine of "providence," which is found in the theoretical sections of both of Farabi's theological-political works, coincides with the doctrine of general providence, which occurs in the theoretical section of the *Guide*; compare p. 95 [in the original] above.

²⁷ III 28 (61a) [512]. Compare I Introd. (7a) [12].

punishment as an exoteric doctrine, [102] Maimonides is also in agreement with Farabi.²⁸ This conception is an essential component of Platonic politics: inasmuch as Maimonides, just like Farabi and the other *falâsifa*, adopts Platonic politics, he at the same time makes the doctrine of providence of the *Laws*, in the sense of the *Laws*, his own.²⁹

[103] The preceding explanation is confirmed by the structure of the *Sefer ha-Madda'* [*Book of Knowledge*], the first and most philosophic part of the *Mishneh Torah*. There Maimonides first treats metaphysics (*H. Yesodei ha-Torah* [*The Laws (which are) the Foundations of the Torah*] I–II), then physics (ibid. III–IV), and then—only after the formal conclusion of metaphysics and physics, that is, after the formal conclusion of theoretical philosophy—prophecy and the Law (ibid. VII–X). Prophecy and law are themes, not of theoretical philosophy, but of politics. The discussion of the scientific foundations of the Torah, of the four fundamental doctrines susceptible of proof ([*arâ' usuliyya*]) concludes thus: God, angels, prophecy, and Law.³⁰ Only after this, that is, more particularly, after politics, does Maimonides treat ethics (*H. Deot* [*Laws Concerning Character Traits*]),³¹ which is of a lower scientific dignity.³² The doctrine of providence is found in full at the conclusion of the *Sefer ha-Madda'* [*Book of Knowledge*]: Maimonides discusses the compatibility of divine omniscience and omnipotence with human free will in the fifth and sixth chapter of *H. Teshuvah* [*Laws of Repentance*]; reward and

²⁸ That Farabi regards this teaching as exoteric is already shown by the fact that it occurs in neither of his two main theological-political works. It is found, however, in his "Harmonization of the Opinions of Plato and Aristotle" (*Philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. Dieterici, 32 and following), an exoteric work that is dedicated to the defense of philosophy (that is, Platonic–Aristotelian philosophy), especially against an orthodox attacker [Translators' note: an English translation of this work is available as "The Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle," in *Alfarabi, the Political Writings*, 115–67]. According to Ibn Sina, the teaching of reward and punishment after death, and especially of bodily resurrection, belongs not to the "roots," but to the "branches" of metaphysics (compare Avicennae, *De anima etc.*, ab. A. Alpago . . . in latinum versa, Venet. 1546, fol. 144, or Falakera, *Reshit Hokmah*, ed. David, 55). What is meant by that is shown by Maimonides's remark in the *M. Techiat ha-Metim* [*Treatise on Resurrection*]: his opponent quotes positions from Ibn Sina's treatise on retaliation and regards them as philosophical remarks! In the third chapter of his *k. al-ma'ad* (Alpagues, fol. 48f) [*The Destination* = *The State of the Human Soul*], Ibn Sina says that the doctrine of resurrection is not actually true but is necessary for the essential, practical accomplishment of the goals of the Law's will.

punishment in the world to come in the eighth chapter; reward and punishment in this world or the messianic age in the ninth chapter; the true happiness in the tenth chapter, with which the *Sefer ha-Madda'* [*Book of Knowledge*] concludes. Maimonides, in bringing forward the doctrine of providence in the context of an explanation of the commandment to conversion, that is, in an edifying context and not in a discussion of the (philosophic) foundations of the Torah, shows that he is guided by the view that this teaching is a necessary supplement

²⁹ The doctrine of providence in the *Laws* was perhaps known to Maimonides through Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Providentia* (compare *REJ*, 1936, 32 and following [Bartlett, 22]). Otherwise, the fact that the doctrine of providence belongs to politics could be understood from Galen, who explicitly relies on Plato for his overall view. He asserts: the question of providence is actually in opposition to the genuine metaphysical questions (concerning the nature of the gods and of the soul, the having-come-into-being and the not-having-come-into-being [Translators' note: *Gewordenheit* as a noun formed from the verb *werden*, "to become," literally means "having-become-ness," *Ungewordenheit*, "un-having-become-ness"] of the universe, the immortality of the soul, and so on), while it is of the utmost importance for "ethical and political philosophy" and soluble by scientific means; compare in particular, *De plac. Hipp. et Pl.* [*De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis libri novem*] IX (V 780 and following and 791 and following pages, Kühn) [Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, ed. Phillip de Lacy, 2d part; bks. 6–9 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980), 588 and following and 598 and following] and *De subst. facult. natur.* [*On the Natural Faculties*] (IV 764 Kühn). That Maimonides had Galen's statements of this kind in front of him as he wrote the *Guide* is shown by II 15 (33b) [292]. The fact that in "middle Platonism," the genuine Platonic view concerning the place of the doctrine of providence is not fully superseded by the Stoic view, according to which the doctrine of providence belongs to physics or theology (compare Cicero, *De natura deorum* [*On the Nature of the Gods*], II 1, 3 and 65, 164 and following, as well as Diogenes Laertius VII 149 and 151), is shown also by Diogenes Laertius' report of the Platonic teaching (III 67–80). In that account, which is structured according to the scheme physics (theology)-ethics-dialectics, divine supervision of the human things is not spoken of in the presentation of physics and theology (67–77) but only in the presentation of ethics (78), and divine punitive justice is mentioned only after dialectics (in 79–80), that is, at the very end and indeed with the clear indication of the exoteric character of that teaching. Above all, however, one should recall Cicero, who, perhaps under the influence of his platonizing teacher, took a similar position, as a comparison of *De republica* [*The Republic*] and *De legibus* [*The Laws*], on the one hand, and of *De natura deorum* [*On the Nature of the Gods*] and *De divinatione* [*On Divination*], on the other, brings out.

³⁰ Compare III 35 beginning and 36 beginning with 45 (98b–99a) [575–7].

³¹ The sequence politics-ethics(-economics) is commonly found in the time of Maimonides; see *REJ*, 1936, 11 n. 5 [Bartlett, 10–11].

³² I 2 (14a) [24]. Compare p. 96 [in the original] above.

to politics. For edification is nothing other than didactic politics, and for Maimonides there is [104] no politics that is not primarily didactic that would be primarily “Realpolitik.”

The structure of the *Guide* is less transparent because in fact in this work the political doctrine of prophecy and Law appears to be classified under metaphysics. This deviation from the most obvious arrangement is not explained solely by the fact that prophetology is indispensable for the interpretation of the *ma'aseh merkabah*,³³ but also, and above all, it is explained by the fundamental character of the *Guide*. This work intends, as Maimonides explains at the beginning, to offer nothing other than the “science of the Law.”³⁴ The Law—which, according to both the usual view and the one accepted by Maimonides, is only one among many philosophic themes, a theme of only one philosophic discipline among others, namely, political science—is the only theme in the *Guide*: It is because and only because the *Guide* is not less “political” but more “political” than, for example, Ibn Sina’s *Metaphysics*, that Maimonides can treat prophecy in the *Guide* apparently within the framework of metaphysics, whereas Ibn Sina treats it within the framework of politics. For it is because the *Guide* is entirely devoted to the science of the Law that its structure is not arranged according to the order of the philosophic [105] disciplines, but according to the order of the Law itself.³⁵ According to this order, the doctrine of prophecy and law as a true and demonstrable

³³ See, for example, II 43 end.

³⁴ I Introd. (3a) [5]. It is perhaps with a view to this position that in his autobiography (Berlin 1793, II, 15), S. Maimon has entitled the first chapter of his lecture on the *Guide* as follows: “*Moreh Nebuchim* [*The Guide of the Perplexed*], its plan, goal, and method is *Theologia politica*.” Maimon quotes the above-mentioned passage from the Introduction to the *Guide* and then has the following comment: The *Guide* “should simply lay the foundation for the science of lawgiving (the wisdom of the Laws)” (ibid., 20).

³⁵ The Law serves two purposes: the health of the soul and the health of the body; the health of the soul is attained through true *opinions*, the health of the body through the political order, which is based on the rightness of *actions*. The true opinions, whose goal is the *love* of God, lead back to the four fundamental doctrines susceptible of proof (concerning God, angels, prophecy, and Law); those in the *Mishneh Torah* in the *H. Yesodei ha-Torah* are explained by Maimonides in the first section of the *Guide* (I 1–III 7); that the deepest break in the *Guide* is found at the end of III 7, has been shown at the beginning of the present essay. The right actions, which as such lead to the *fear* of God, are called forth (1) through opinions which are not true but are necessary for the sake of the political order (to these opinions belongs above

fundamental doctrine belongs to the first part, which is devoted to the explanation of those fundamental doctrines, whereas the doctrine of providence as an edifying doctrine belongs to the first subdivision of the second part, which treats the “necessary” doctrines.

In this early work of Maimonides, Strauss scrupulously reassembles some of the scattered “chapter headings” in the *Guide of the Perplexed*. He is thus able to uncover Maimonides’s “decisive rationalism (p. 832 n. 20) and to show strikingly that for Maimonides the question of (particular) providence is a theme of political philosophy in accord with “a genuine philosophic tradition” (pp. 828–9, 831). This article plays a notable role, among Strauss’s eleven essays and chapters on Maimonides published over forty years, in elucidating why for Strauss, as he puts it elsewhere, Maimonides was “the truly natural model, the standard that must be guarded against every distortion, and the stumbling-block on which modern rationalism falls” (*Philosophy and Law*, opening paragraph).—S. M.

all the opinion that one must *fear* God, along with the corollary that He has pity), and (2) through all the commandments and prohibitions. Accordingly, the second section of the *Guide* is divided into two subsections: (1) an explanation of the “necessary” opinions (that is, the most important of these opinions, the doctrine of divine reward and punishment) = III 8–24, and (2) an explanation of all commandments and prohibitions = III 25–50. Maimonides’s explicit division of the Law is found in III 27–8 and 52 (130a bottom–end) [629]. For the division of “religion” into opinions and actions, compare Farabi, *Ihsâ al-‘ulûm* [*The Enumeration of the Sciences*], chap. 5 (or Falak-*era*, *Reshit Hokhmah*, 59, 9). Note the first word of III 25.