GUIDE 1:68
GOD'S MIND AND MAN'S MIND

God's way of thinking is no different from man's, except that God never stops thinking.

This radical doctrine is the core lesson of our chapter, Guide 1:68. It is the real meaning of the Torah's statement that God created man in His image. It overturns the extreme version of negative theology, which portrayed an unbridgeable distance between man and God, a position at odds with Maimonides' moderate negativism.

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, Maimonides teaches the philosophy of mind, as received by him from Aristotle through the Arabic philosophers Al-Fārābī (*c*.870-950), Avicenna (980-1037) and Ibn Bājja (Latin: Avempace, 1095-1138). The material in Aristotle comes from the *Metaphysics* 12:7-9 and *De Anima* 3:4-7.

He had already treated the subject summarily in the *Mishneh Torah*:

> "10. The Holy One, blessed be He, realizes His true being, and knows it as it is, not with a knowledge external to himself, as is our knowledge. For our knowledge and ourselves are separate. But, as for the Creator, blessed be He, His knowledge and His life are One, in all aspects, from every point of view, and however we conceive Unity. If the Creator lived as other living creatures live, and His knowledge were external to Himself, there would be a plurality of deities, namely, He Himself, His life, and His knowledge. This however, is not so. He is One in every aspect, from every angle, and in all ways in which unity is conceived. Hence the conclusion that God is the One who knows, is known, and is the knowledge of Himself (*hu ha-yodea v'hu ha-yadua v'hu ha-dea atsma*)—all these being One. This is beyond the power of speech to express, beyond the capacity of the ear to hear, and of the human mind to apprehend clearly. Scripture, accordingly says 'By the life (*khey*) of Pharaoh' (Genesis 42:15) and 'By the life (*khey*) of thy soul' (I Samuel 25:26), but *not* 'By the life (*khey*) of the Lord.' The phrase employed (by 1 Sam. 25:26) is 'As the Lord liveth' (*khay*; the passage reads: 'as the Lord liveth, and by the life of thy soul,' *khay ha-shem v' khey nafshekha*); because the Creator and His life are not dual, as is the case with the life of living bodies or of angels. Hence, too, God does not apprehend creatures and know them because of them, as we know them, but He knows them because of Himself. Knowing Himself, He knows everything, for everything is attached to Him, in His Being.
> 11. What has been said on this topic in these two chapters is but a drop in the ocean, compared with what has to be elucidated on this subject. The exposition of all the principles alluded to in these two chapters forms the so-called *Maaseh Mercabah*, 'Account of the Divine Chariot,' *hu ha-nikra maaseh merkava*." (*Ysodei Ha-Torah,* 2:10–11, Moses Hyamson translation, Yale, 1937.)

All of these themes occur in our chapter, except that he does not mention the hidden *Maaseh Merkava* character of this material. I will explain his daring esoteric notion in the course of this essay.

THE KNOWLEDGE, THE KNOWER, AND THE KNOWN

The divine mind is constantly in the act of comprehension, which is what it means to call it an "active intellect." It is "active" or "actual" in that it is not potential with respect to any object of comprehension. There is nothing that it does not yet know.

We learned from Aristotle that the divine mind is thought thinking itself, and therefore it is the knowledge, the knower and the known (I prefer Kapakh's *ha-dea, ha-yodea, ha-yadua* for the Judeo-Arabic אלעקל ואלעאקל ואלמעקול; he explains in footnote 3 that it is from Maimonides' own Hebrew in *Mishneh Torah,* quoted above.)

Since the divine mind must be one, without plurality, it follows that in God the knowledge, the knower and the known are one. There is no time when the divine mind is not in the act of comprehension. Or, to put it differently, the divine mind is the constant process of cognition.

In the *Mishneh Torah* extract quoted above, Maimonides noted how difficult it is to understand this. He therefore repeats it many times in our chapter, in many ways. At the end of the chapter, he acknowledges, "We have reiterated this idea in the present chapter because it is exceedingly abstruse." Some think it is beyond the limits of human knowledge: "Even amongst those who imagine that they are wise, many find this subject difficult, and are of the opinion that it is impossible for the mind to grasp the truth of this proposition."

He responds to this epistemological concern by reminding his reader that the subject was explained by the books of the "philosophers of religion" (*ha-filosofim ha-elohiim*), by which he probably means Aristotle, Al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājja. These books are readily available, and he expects the reader to know them. These philosophers produced proofs for the unity of mind in its active state. Maimonides reprises several of those proofs here. It is, therefore, unacceptable "for those who imagine they are wise" to say that our limited intellects cannot comprehend the subject.

Another kind of response comes from "fools." They think the phases of mind are just like corporeal things. They think the knowledge, the knower and the known are not different from "the white, the whitener, and the whitened." Since the "the white, the whitener, and the whitened" cannot possibly be one thing, they contend that neither can the knowledge, the knower and the known be one thing. But these fools have failed to understand that division only occurs in corporeal bodies. The knowledge, the knower and the known are incorporeal, and cannot be multiple.

I wonder at the cleverness of the men that Maimonides calls fools. He probably had in mind the Muslim theologians of the Kalam, who thought that there was an independent Logos inlibrated in the *Q'uran*. They contended that the Knower and His attribute of knowledge (Logos) were two separate beings. Most believed in the real existence of separate divine attributes. (See my treatment of Guide 1:9 for "inlibration").

Yehuda Even-Shmuel portrays a more sophisticated version of the fools' argument. Since the material objects of the world are concrete and the process of cognition is abstract, the attempt to equate the concrete and the abstract in cognition is absurd. He writes, explaining:

> "Since the cognition is purely abstract, it is difficult to conceive the identity of cognition and the object of cognition, since the object is a concrete existence and the cognition is merely an abstraction (*ha-sekhel ha-pashta b'alma*). When we tell a person who thinks this way that God is the knowledge, the knower and the known, he will take this as though you had said that the whitened, the whitener and the white were identical, by which he would mean that no unity exists with the abstract mind. For these fools rush to contradict the unity of knowledge, knower and known by this comparison to the whitened, the whitener and the white, and similar comparisons. They mean by this that if we were to accept the concept of the identity of the *whole* in the intellect, we would then have to reject it in concrete reality, and to see the whole as abstract [since the whole could only be abstract or concrete, and if it is entirely abstract, there would remain no concrete existences in the world]." (My trans. from Even-Shmuel's commentary on Guide 1:68, p. 358, brackets added).

This is typical of the sophistical arguments for which the Kalam were famous. Shem Tov examines a couple of similar fallacies and finds that they contain the same defect, which is the failure to grasp the process of abstraction (Shem Tov commentary, *ad loc.*, p. 102, column B). For example, I cognize Reuven's brown hair rather than Reuven himself. Rather than cognizing a substance, I have cognized one of its accidents, that is, not Reuven, but the color of his hair. Hair color is an accident, in that it is not a permanent defining requisite of Reuven. If, according to the doctrine of unity of mind, the intellect must identify with its object, the absurd result would be

that an immaterial substance would become a corporeal accident. A similar argument has us cognizing things that go through the strictly corporeal process of generation and corruption. But would not the constantly active incorporeal intellect then become mortal; i.e., would it not become death, life, and death again? A better version of this argument, which Averroes attributed to a lost work of Al-Fārābī, goes as follows. Anything generated is corruptible. The human intellect is generated and therefore corruptible. But the active intellect is incorruptible, and anything which is incorruptible cannot be made corruptible. Therefore the active intellect cannot unite with the human intellect since it would then be made corruptible (reported by Herbert A. Davidson, "Maimonides on Metaphysical Knowledge, *Maimonidean Studies*, v. 3, 60).

As for the latter argument, Maimonides would not disagree insofar as the "human intellect" refers to the *potential* intellect, but would disagree insofar as the *acquired* intellect is concerned (See below, "The Debate on the Nature of the Potential Intellect"**).** As to the Kalamic arguments, Shem Tov replies that their sophistries come from ignoring that the act of cognition is the *abstraction* of the universal form from the concrete individual object. The mind does not unite with hair color or corpses, but with the universal notions it abstracts from those concrete objects. It is only the abstraction that the intellect unites itself with, not the accidents or transient events in the life cycle of corporeal objects.

It is precisely in this way that our minds are like God's mind.

DIVINE AND HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

Maimonides proves the unity of the knowledge, the knower and the known in God by showing how that same unity exists in the mind of man. This is a *kal v'khomer* (*ad minori*) argument, proving the greater from the lesser. The man, Zaid ("Rueven" in Hebrew translations) has not yet "comprehended" a piece of wood. At this point, Zaid only potentially has the idea of the wood. With respect to the wood, his mind is "hylic," that is, in a state of potentiality with respect to comprehension of the wood. The term "hylic" comes from a Greek word that at bottom means wood, signifying a matter which is not yet shaped. This mind, still in a state of potency, is only the *material* of a mind, the "material mind" or "hylic mind" (*ha-sekhel ha-hayulit*, אלעקל אלהיולאני).

The next step will be difficult. In the ancient philosophy, when I "comprehend" a chair, the idea I have of it is the chair itself, less its materiality. My mind becomes the chair. Or, more accurately, it becomes the formal notion of the chair. This commonplace of the ancient philosophy, was, apparently, no more obvious in Maimonides' time than now, for he repeatedly explains it here.

Mental comprehension is similar to the "comprehension" of the imagination and of the sensory faculties. In this worldview, the formal notion of the chair, its "act," was more real than your own chair. Your chair is not eternal, while the idea of it is.

The same is true of the work of the senses and of the imagination. The visual impression of the chair is more abstract, and, therefore, more real than the particular chair. Its image in your imagination is even more real than its visual image, since it can be more enduring than the visual impression left by the momentary sight of the chair.

At the top of this ladder of actualization is the formal notion of the chair, its universal chair-ness. Just as the cognition of the chair constitutes the mind, so also the sensory apprehension of the chair constitutes the sense of vision. The chair that we see is the chair itself existing in the sense faculty, for "the act of the sensible object and the act of the sensation are one and the same act" (*De Anima* 3:2 425b 25-26).

It is therefore no surprise that sense-data receives strong epistemological approval from Maimonides and the Aristotelians. They are not sense-data skeptics. Similarly, they are not skeptics, in the Kantian sense, of our ability to know the objects of knowledge. Maimonides' doctrine, as announced in our chapter, had an impact on the history of philosophy when Solomon Maimon (1753-1800) used it to refute Kant's principle that we could not

know the thing-in-itself. He argued that the object of thoughts could not be outside consciousness unless they were unreal. (Kant responded that Maimon was the only one of his critics who really understood him).

The difference in what the mind comprehends and what the other senses comprehend is that the mind abstracts the *essence* of the object in the act of comprehension. By contrast, the imagination and the senses receive and abstract only the *image* of the chair, not its essential form.

We are what we do, therefore the mind is comprehension. This is because "whatever exists of necessity is in act" (*De Anima* 1:13 23a 21-26), meaning that the mind exists when it is comprehending. When Zaid comprehends the chair, his mind is the comprehension, the comprehension is the chair, and the mind is the chair. Three things become one in comprehension: 1) the knower, Zaid; 2) the knowledge, i.e., the idea of the chair; and 3) that which is known, i.e., the chair. At the moment of comprehension, the mind actualizes itself through the act of comprehension. The three are then one: the knowledge, the knower and the known. The material aspect of the chair is its least important aspect: it is its accidental, fluctuating and corruptible aspect. The real is the conjunction of idea, mind and essence: the knowledge, the knower and the known.

We could understand this by saying that the content of the mind is its store of comprehended essences, but it would be more accurate to say that these acquisitions *constitute* the mind, as it engages in its process of cognizing them.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAN'S MIND AND GOD'S MIND

In humans, "accidents" from outside the mind obstruct the move toward the oneness of the knowledge, the knower and the known. These frequent hindrances to comprehension leave the human mind in a state of potential comprehension only. These are accidents like sleep, confusion, lack of education, and so on. We call them accidents because they are not essential to the human mind and only characterize it from time to time. As the mind moves from potential cognition to actual cognition, it removes these external hindrances and recreates itself as the active intellect.

The difference between the human mind and the divine mind is that the divine mind is not affected by accidents. It is always active, never potential, and constantly comprehending. The divine mind is the constant unity of the knowledge, the knower and the known. The knowledge would appear to include the forms of all things, the totality that the philosophers call the Logos. But that Logos is merely an aspect of this unity of mind, not an eternal independent entity. There is nothing prior (*kodem*) to God. Nothing interferes with His unity.

The fascinating point is that this is the only difference that Maimonides finds between the structure of the mind of God and the structure of the mind of man. Only purely external accidents deprive human psychology of its equation to divine psychology.

Maimonides, surprisingly, does not assert the homonymity or equivocality of the term "intellect" when used in discussions of both divine and human psychology. Shlomo Pines, in the introduction to his translation of the Guide, *xcvii-xcviii*, noticed this, and also noticed that Maimonides was the first to put together Aristotelian material from the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*, thereby identifying human with divine psychology:

> "…It is evident that the statement that God cognizes, and the consequent assertions that He cognizes Himself, or Himself and the forms or essences assimilated to Himself, are positive statements and as such in contradiction with the spirit and tendency of negative theology. In the face of such statements any attempt to make out a case for God's cognition having nothing except homonymy in common with mans' cognition may easily seem mere quibbling; and yet only such an attempt can satisfy negative theology. Avicenna tacitly leaves the question open, for he does not make a comparison and indicate an essential similarity between God's knowledge and man's. Other Arabic philosophers do not, as far as I am aware,

do this either. Maimonides, on the other hand, goes out of his way to point out the similarity. In order to drive this home he shows the relatedness of two Aristotelian doctrines, which, as far as I know, nobody beforehand had regarded as closely connected. Nevertheless, Maimonides may be said to make his point.

"….Thus, as Maimonides explicitly states, man's intellect manifests when actualized exactly the same kind of threefold identity as God's. Obviously, this goes counter to negative theology. It may be recalled in this connection that in his Introduction to the Guide Maimonides states that for reasons given by him he deliberately inserted into this work contradictory theses (one false and one correct). Is this an instance of this didactic method, and if so, which of the two doctrines represents Maimonides' real opinion? *Prima facie* either of them is admissible.

"I should add that, while it is pretty clear that these are the evident consequences of Maimonides' view, it may be argued that he may have been guilty of that inconsistency of not having drawn these conclusions. In this particular case this point of view would amount to a grave and, in my opinion, very implausible accusation of muddle-headedness against Maimonides."

I sympathize more with Marvin Fox' *Interpreting Maimonides*, which discounts the frequent Straussian discovery of contradictions in the Guide (University Of Chicago Press, 1995). I do not think that Maimonides' negative theology was so radical. I have frequently highlighted passages where he departs from negative theology. Maimonides only uses the negative theology to destroy anthropomorphic references in scripture, not for its own sake. It is true that there are passages in the Guide where the *via negativa* is taken by itself as a meditational technique to advance the understanding of God's incorporeality, but Maimonides almost always qualified those passages with material tending away from divine nothingness or *Ayn Sof.* The truth is that, for him, there was no unbridgeable gap between man and God.

In this case, far from being a contradiction, I think it is the point of the chapter to declare the essential identity of divine and human psychology. But for the hindrances of the material world, mind is always just that—mind. That is what the unity of mind means. Perhaps we needed negative theology to clear obstructions that kept us from seeing this clearly.

HALAKHICALLY DRIVEN ESOTERICISM

More typically exemplary of Maimonides' esoteric strategy is his interjection:

"It is not our present intention to explain this subject (human psychology), but we will merely show that God alone, and none besides Him, is an intellect constantly in action…"

As though the whole point of the introduction of human psychology (about half the chapter!) was merely to act as an *ad minori* argument for the unity of divine psychology. But it was surely his "present intention" to discuss our minds. The demonstration of divine psychological unity was, after all, a well-known Aristotelian position, while the juxtaposition with human psychology was, as Pines rightly observes, unique. It was, therefore, of profound importance. Why would Maimonides want to conceal it, and why would he do so in such a transparent manner?

There is a hint of his thinking in the material quoted above from the *Mishneh Torah* 2:11, where he asserts the esoteric or *Maaseh Merkava* aspect of this material. This suggests that mass publication posed a halakhic problem: the problem of the prohibition of the public teaching of *Maaseh Merkava*, as expressed halakhically in the second chapter of Mishnah *Hagigah* (See my *Introduction I*, K, "The Flame of Knowledge.")

What is importantly esoteric must be kept from the less inquiring student by the patent diversion that "It is not our present intention to explain this subject." The more searching and therefore the more qualified student should notice the conflict between mental unity and hardcore negative theology.

The result, then, is almost the opposite of what Maimonides actually says. When he asserts that "it is not our present intention to explain" human psychology, it is, in fact, his entire intention. By demonstrating the unity of mind he points to a state of illumination which may be higher than that of "conjunction" (*ittiṣal*) with the active intellect. We must conceal this from the multitude who would take this to mean that each one of them is God. (But see my essay on Guide 1:21, Maimonides' cautious distinction between *ittiḥad* and *ittiṣal*)

An excellent brief discussion of this problematic is in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, the very popular philosophic Robinson Crusoe of Abu Bakr Ibn Tufayl (c. 1105 – 1185; in Lenn Evan Goodman's masterful trans. and notes, Los Angeles, 1996). Ibn Tufayl's immediate predecessor, Ibn Bājja, famously asserted the doctrine of unity of mind, was himself criticized by his student for not taking the mystical consequences of the doctrine as far as they could go. Indeed, Ibn Bājja "censured...the pursuit of this joy." But Ibn Tufayl saw no reason for living if he was to be prevented from pursuing this joy. Nonetheless, Ibn Tufayl recognized the danger that troubled his teacher, for he opens his fable with these cautions:

> "If he be the sort whose mind has not been sharpened by intellectual pursuits, he may speak unwisely. Thus, in this state one said 'Praise be to me, great am I!' Another said, 'I am the Truth'; another, 'There is within this robe nothing but God!'"

Those concerns were serious enough to warrant concealment. Nonetheless, thinkers, including Maimonides and Ibn Tufayl, held out hope of a higher encounter. This goal inspired their labors.

(Ibn Bājja was Ibn Tufayl's teacher only in a sense, since he never met him, *Hayy*, 100. See on all the foregoing, *Hayy*, 95-98. Maimonides probably knew this famous contemporary Andalusian work. He, arguably, makes subtle reference to it at the beginning of Guide 1:51. He explicitly cites Ibn Bājja in Guide 1:74 as the source of the doctrine of unity of mind.)

The stage of negative theology clearly does not complete the journey of the seeker. Up to a point, we let the student stay at the level of negative theology. However, he must at last surpass it, since the reality of the divine realm is absolute positivity. But Maimonides demands that his student approach the palace with the intellectual humility that Ibn Tufayl's unwise speakers did not possess. (On intellectual or educational humility, see Guide 1:33 and my treatment).

The *Maaseh Merkava* is the esoteric discussion of the work of providence, in which human and divine creativity coincide. They coincide because the structures of the human and divine mind are identical when the human mind is active. At that moment, it is in conjunction with the divine intellect, because thought is one. This is the radical message of the chapter.

THE DEBATE ON THE NATURE OF THE POTENTIAL INTELLECT

> "Thus every intellect in *potentia* (*dea b'koakh*) and potential cognizable objects (*v'yadua b'koakh*) are two things. Moreover, everything that is in *potentia* must undoubtedly have a substratum supporting this potentiality (*hekhrakhi sh'yehei lo nosei ha-nusa oto ha-koakh*), such a substratum (*nosei*) as, for instance, man (*k'adam*). Thus there are three things: the man who supports that potentiality and who is the intellectually cognizing subject in *potentia*; the potentiality that is the intellect in *potentia*; and the thing apt to be intellectually cognized, which is the potentially cognizable object. In the example in question, this would be as if you said: the man, the hylic intellect (*v'ha-dea ha-hayulit*), and the form of the piece of wood, these being three separate notions. When, however, the intellect is realized in *actu* (*husga ha-dea b'poel*), the three notions become one." (Pines' translation, Guide 1:68, p. 165)

Maimonides' commentators were attracted to his statement: "everything that is in *potentia* must undoubtedly have a substratum supporting this potentiality, such a substratum as, for instance, man."

His view hearkens back to one of the earliest of Aristotle's commentators, Alexander of Aphrodisias (*c.* 200 CE). Aristotle had said that the passive intellect (*nous pathetikos*) "is what it is by becoming all things" (*De Anima*, 3:5, 430 a10-25). Alexander understood this potential or hylic intellect as somehow mixed in or embodied in the person. Maimonides' assertion that the potential intellect requires a human substratum restates Alexander's view. It requires a human substratum because there can be no free-standing potentiality. Things may be potentially cognizable, but potentiality itself is not cognizable. The potential intellect, therefore, must be what Alexander would call a disposition of the body.

This was not a view commonly accepted by medieval intellectuals. Harry Wolfson explains how the problem arose:

> "This general insistence among medieval philosophers upon the separability of soul from body, or at least upon the separability of certain faculties of the soul from body, irrespective of their views as to the nature of the soul itself, had its origin, I believe, in three sources: first, the Biblical account of the origin of the soul as an inbreathìng from God in the human body, which in post-Biblical Judaism, and hence in Christianity, whether independently or under the influence of foreign ideas, developed into a dichotomy of soul and body; second, the Platonic view of the soul as something immaterial and eternal and distinct from body; third, the various attempts on the part of the commentators of Aristotle to make the rational faculty of the soul something separable from body—attempts which probably took rise in Aristotle's own statement that while 'the soul . . . cannot be separated from the body . . . there is, however, no reason why some parts should not be separated' (De Anima 2:1, 413a3-7). This attempt started with Themistius (*c.*390 CE), who considered the Aristotelian passive intellect (*nous pathetikos*) as something separable from body. An essentially similar, though much modified, view was held also by Averroes. It is against the latter [and like that of Alexander] that Thomas Aquinas maintains 'that the possible intellect of man is not a separate substance' (*Contra Gentiles*, 2:59). Even those [like Aquinas and Maimonides] who rejected this interpretation of the passive intellect [as wholly separate] have introduced between it and the active intellect the so-called acquired intellect 'which is not a power inherent in the body but is separated from the body with a true separation' (Guide 1:72). Though this acquired intellect is not mentioned in Aristotle, it was used in medieval expositions of the Aristotelian psychology as an interpretation of his views, and it may be considered as an outgrowth of Aristotle's actual intellect (*nous energeia* or *entelecheia*), to which Spinoza has referred ... by the term *intellectus actu*. It would seem that it was in accordance with the general line of the development of discussions of this kind that among the Renaissance philosophers a distinction grew up between *spiritus* and *animus* or *mens* and that those who denied the separability of *spiritus* from body admitted the separability of *animus* or *mens* from body, the latter two terms corresponding on the whole to the Aristotelìan rational faculty of the soul.
>
> "Now, all these views as to the separability of the soul or of the intellect come into play in almost any discussions of the nature of the soul by mediaeval philosophers, whether writing in Arabic, Hebrew, or in Latin, and irrespective of what the formal definition of the soul may be. The insistence upon the separability of the soul was essential for them, if they wanted to give a rational explanation of immortality." (*The Philosophy of Spinoza*, II, p. 54, Harvard, 1983. Brackets added.)

Wolfson's general point is that the medievals mostly accepted something like Themistius' view in order to save the notion of the immortality of the soul from Alexandrian push to make the soul a disposition of the body. However, Maimonides and Aquinas remained Alexandrians with respect to the nature of the potential intellect. This requires explanation.

The view of Themistius that Wolfson cited was itself a reaction against the view of Alexander. Alexander proposed a strict dichotomy between the active intellect, which he identified with God, and the potential intellect, which was a disposition of the body. Divine illumination causes the potential intellect to become an acquired intellect when actualized in the process of cognition. But this divine intervention must cease at death, because

after the dissolution of the body, no intellect remains which could still become actualized. As Wolfson says, this Alexandrian view had to be opposed if the medieval philosophers wanted to provide an account of immortality. It is then all the more remarkable that Maimonides did not oppose his conception of the hylic intellect as a disposition of the body.

Themistius opposed Alexander's view by proposing a three-soul theory that kept faith with both his Socratic and Aristotelian heritages. On the one hand, he brought the active intellect down from heaven and made it part of the human soul, just as Aristotle had famously relocated the Plato's forms in the earthy universals. Themistius' *active* intellect was the perfect expression of the human form. Yet, for him, the merely potential intellect was also entirely separate and unmixed. Like any of the entirely intellectual existents in the noetic world of the Socratics, it could not be part of any material body. It was human, but not any particular human. Themistius' *potential* intellect was, therefore, unlike Alexander's, imperishable. Finally, there remained for Themistius what might be called a Cartesian soul, which manifests its individuality as it reflects upon its own ability to think. This was his third intellect, the *common* intellect (*koinon nous*). It was "mixed with the body, and perishable with it."

These, then, were Themistius' three intellects: the actual, the potential, and the common. He relocated Alexander's potential intellect above the dispositions of the mortal body and left in its place a common intellect that was truly individual. He thereby saved the immortal soul, although this immortal soul was by no means an individual immortal soul.

Maimonides rejected Themistius' attempt to remove the potential intellect from its individual human substrate. The individual must be the necessary substrate for the potential intellect because there could be no such thing as an unattached potentiality.

The question then arises whether he subscribed to Alexander's rejection of any hope for the soul's immortality. Maimonides accepts the intermediate conception, the acquired intellect (*sekhel ha-nikna*,אלעקל אלמסתפאד; see Guide 1:72; Friedlander note 3, p. 307; Efros, *Philosophic Terms in the Moreh Nebukim*, 114). The acquired intellect is a rung between his embodied potential intellect, and the wholly disembodied active intellect. The acquired intellect is immortal.

When one acquires his intellect, he breaks free of temporal constraints. His moment of illumination seems eternal and boundless. And it is his own personal illumination. This universal experience of inspiration in learning is the source of Maimonides' conception of our intellectual path.

WHAT ABOUT INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY?

If this account of Maimonides' psychology is correct, and his purpose was to bring man to this illumination, the question then arises whether this "moment" of immortality is itself individuated. Is there immortality for the individual soul?

While Maimonides does not directly discuss this point, his answer may flow from his assertion of the unity of mind when actualized. There is only one important exception to this doctrine: the divine intellect is always actualized, while our minds meet external material hindrances. The individual soul must work to defeat those hindrances. The result, as we will see, is that the individual soul labors in life to make itself more real after death.

On the one hand, Maimonides conceives a tighter relationship between the divine and human intellect than does either Alexander or Themistius. On the other, the material hindrances to their conjunction individuate the acquired intellect. Zaid may, therefore, be able to reach a higher level than Amr.

In this vein, in Guide 2:4, Maimonides calls our attention to the sense we have of our own illuminations:

> "The existence of the [active intellect] is proved by the transition of our intellect from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, and by the same transition in the case of the forms of all transient beings. For whatever passes from potentiality into actuality, requires for that transition an external agent of the same kind as itself."

Here he begins with our own experience of actualization when we acquire our intellect. He then reasons that a separate active intellect must be the emanatory agent of that actualization of this intellectual potential. Every effect requires a more powerful cause of the same kind as itself. Who or what are these causes? Maimonides wants to reveal these intellectual mediators, and to determine how the soul can merge with them.

Maimonides discusses the existence of intellectual mediators in his next chapter, Guide 1:69, which canvasses his views on angelology. Read together with Guide 2:4 and Mishneh Torah, *Ysodei Ha-Torah* 2:7, we learn that the active intellect is indeed an angel, the tenth level of angels (*ishim*).

What happens to the individual after death? *Some* individual souls rise to something approximating the level of this angel. Mishneh Torah, *Teshuva*, 8:2, maintains that the souls of the righteous exist in the "world to come" without their corporeal bodies, "like the ministering angels," *ha-olam ha-ba ain bo guf v'gvia ele nafshot ha-tzadikim b'lvad b'lo guf k'malakhei ha-sharet.* Sinners do not receive this reward. This distinction between saints and sinners shows that some individuation must occur among souls.

Maimonides expands on this in *Teshuva*, 8:3, explaining that this righteous soul is unaffected by death because death only affects physical things. Finally, in 8:8 he explains that this world-to-come exists in our world of life as much as it does in our world after death, since this bliss is not subject to temporality (*hu mitsui v'omed*).

What emerges is a doctrine of individuation in the acquisition of intellect by means of the individual struggle for righteousness.

At the very highest level of that ascent, when there is conjunction between active intellect and the living soul, this individuation itself falls away. This can happen in this world, in the living individual. For a moment, which appears to him as though it were timeless, he finds his world-to-come in this world. The limit case is the "kiss of death," where the blissful soul shakes off its bodily restraint (see Guide 3:51). In the moment that he acquires his world-to-come his shard of a soul transforms into that which really is soul. "For the soul that remains after the death of man, is not the soul that lives in a man when he is born; the latter is a mere faculty, while that which has a separate existence after death, is a reality" (Guide 1:70).

Indeed, in Guide 1:74, Seventh Argument, he states that, at this lofty level, it is absurd to conceive of distinctions:

> "You must bear in mind that those abstract beings which are neither bodies nor forces dwelling in bodies, and which in fact are ideals—are altogether incapable of being represented as a plurality unless some ideals be the cause of the existence of others, and can be distinguished from each other by the specific difference that some are the efficient cause and others the effect [see Mishneh Torah, *Ysodai* 2:6]: but that which remains of Zaid [after his death] is neither the cause nor the effect of that which is left of Amr, and therefore the souls of all the departed form only one being (*v'l'fikakh yehieh ha-kol ekhad b'mispar*) as has been explained by Ibn Bekr Ibn Al-Zaig (Ibn Bājja), and others who ventured to speak on these profound subjects." (He refers to Ibn Bājja's doctrine of the unity of mind. See Friedlander note 1, p. 353; Pines notes 10 and 11, p. 221, and his "Translator's Introduction" *ciii – civ*; *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, 95 – 98.)

In this passage Maimonides begins by invoking his principle that the only distinction among intellectual entities is that some are causes and some effects, but otherwise the souls of the righteous departed "are altogether incapable of being represented as a plurality," because of Ibn Bājja's principle of unity of mind. Otherwise, all distinctions

flow from matter. When the soul abandons its earthen abode it returns to its home in this higher unity. The return to unity is the meaning of bliss. Nonetheless, it is a reward for the righteous individual who chooses to align his thought with divine thought.

Where does the individual bodily resurrection of the dead, Maimonides' Thirteenth Principle of Faith, fit into this structure? He views this stage as a miraculous moment *prior* to the soul's absorption into the "world to come." Since it is miraculous, no explanation was required; "it is not obscure, nor difficult to comprehend." It will be whatever it will be, and we will only know it when we see it. It is impossible to bring a proof to verify the truth of that impending miracle. Still, resurrection is not the ultimate stage in the soul's journey, only a way-station (*Maamar Tehiyat ha-Metim, Treatise on Resurrection*, Ch. 7. The Principles of Faith in Commentary on the Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 10:1).

Connecting all of this back to the debate between Alexander and Themistius on the nature of the potential intellect, we see that Maimonides arrays a number of stages as rungs on a ladder between the hylic embodied intellect and the fully separate active intellect. Perhaps each stage is a type of actualization (entelechy) of the one below it. We see something like this emerging in his eleven stages of non-Mosaic prophecy (Guide 2:45) and his ten levels of angels (Mishneh Torah, *Ysodei Ha-Torah* 2:7). Because of the ultimate unity of the structures of the divine and human mind, the individual human mind, in principle, can choose to ascend that ladder.

AGAINST THE MUTAKALLIMUN

At the end of the chapter, Maimonides warns his student, against confusing intellection with imagination:

> "I do not apprehend that the reader will confound intellectual comprehension with the representative faculty—with the reproduction of the material image in our imagination, since this work is designed only for those who have studied philosophy, and who know what has already been said on the soul and its faculties."

In his *Eight Chapters*, he explains the problem of confounding thought with imagination, and its connection to the Kalam, to which he will devote chapters 1:71-76 of the Guide:

> "The imagination is that faculty which retains impressions of things perceptible to the mind, after they have ceased to affect directly the senses which conceived them. This faculty, combining some of these impressions and differentiating among others, can construct new ideas which it has in fact never perceived, and which it could not possibly have perceived. For instance, one may imagine an iron ship floating in the air, or a man whose head reaches the heaven and whose feet rest on the earth, or an animal with a thousand eyes and many other similar impossibilities which the imagination may construct and endow with an existence that is fanciful. In this regard the *Mutakallimun* (the Kalam) have fallen into grievous and pernicious error, as a result of which their false theories form the cornerstone of a sophistical system which divides things into the necessary, the possible, the impossible; so that they believe, and have led others to believe, that all creations of the imagination are possible, not having in mind, as we have stated, that this faculty may attribute existence to that which cannot possibly exist." (*Eight Chapters, Shemona Perakim*, ch. 2, in Twersky, *Maimonides Reader*, p. 364. I particularly like the part about the iron ship.)

As explained above, the senses, the imagination, and the mind are alike in that they comprehend, and in the act of comprehension, they become the object of comprehension. The difference between imagination and mind is the way they abstract objects from corporeality. The imagination retains the sensual image of the object perceived, not the essence of the object. Only the mind actualizes itself by abstracting the universal concept of that particular object. The difference between the act of the mind and the act of the imagination is the very greatest of differences. It can be the difference between truth and fantasy.

The reason that the Kalam confuse the act of the mind with the act of the imagination is that they believe God can make impossible things possible. For them, there was no impossible thing that the divine could not accomplish. But the impossible exists as a possibility only in the imagination, not in the mind, as Maimonides will prove in the upcoming chapters on the Kalam.

The structure of the comprehending mind of man is identical to the structure of the mind of God, but this does not mean that man may foist his imaginative fantasies upon the mind of God.