GUIDE 1:75

THE FIVE KALĀM ARGUMENTS FOR THE UNITY OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

This brief, allusive chapter requires explanation (that Maimonides does not provide) to understand the five arguments against Polytheism used by Muslim Kalām theologians.

Why is Maimonides reticent? Because he has to make the argument he hates to make.

Divine oneness is one of his four necessary doctrines of religion (the others are creation *ex nihilo,* divine existence and divine incorporeality). The program he outlined for himself required that he show the weakness of the Kalām arguments for these four necessary doctrines of religion. This forced him to argue *against* divine unity, in order to attack the Kalām arguments *for* it. In other words, since the Kalām case for Monotheism is case against Polytheism, Maimonides reluctantly stands in for their Polytheist opponent.

Maimonides plays devil's advocate to reveal the flaws in the Kalām arguments for Monotheism.

Since the Kalām failed to make their case for Monotheism, he will have to make the case for it himself later (Guide 2:1). We will take an anticipatory look at his proofs at the end of this chapter.

MANICHAEISM

The important form of Polytheism remaining in Maimonides' time was Dualism. Its significant expression was Manichaeism, though by then it had few adherents. Christian emperors and Muslim Caliphs had suppressed the doctrine of Mani, its founder (210–276 CE). Nonetheless, this attractive doctrine persisted in secret or obscure cults. Its anti-biblical mysticism blamed the God of the Bible for the horrors of everyday life.

In its first several centuries, Manichaeism surged through the civilized world. Manichaeism competed with Christianity for the heart of the Roman Empire. There were Manichaean versions of Christianity. Augustine was a Manichaean *auditor* for nine years, and Mani's father was in an early Judeo-Christian baptizing sect. The spread of Mani's doctrine was partly due to its syncretism, featuring roles for Buddha, Zarathustra and Christ. In the world of Islam, the Abbasid Caliphs persecuted Muslim Manichaeans. While popular in the West, a major synthesis of Buddhism and Manichaeism rose in China and Tibet.

Mani grew up in Iraq, in the world of Christian Gnosticism. People sought a biblical religion without the rules and moral concerns of the Hebrew Bible. Mani translated those desires into a new biblical mythology that identified the moral things with the natural things.

All things exist in two mutually exclusive realms, the upper and lower. The upper world of light, goodness, excellent weather, intelligence and truth was entirely separate from and opposed to the lower world of darkness, evil, terrible weather, ignorance and duplicity. The god of upper world was utterly transcendent, having nothing to do with the lower world.

There is what we could call an anti-biblical aspect to their account of the lower god. The god of the lower world is the God of the Bible, reconceived as the demiurge, culpable for the ills of the corporeal world he formed (Gr.: *dēmiourgos*, the "craftsman" of pre-existent matter). Manicheans practiced inverse interpretation of the Bible, making God this evil deity.

> "Now he who spoke with Moses, the Jews and the priests…is the archont of darkness… he is not the God of truth."
>
> "Moses, a faithful servant, was a laughing-stock, having been named 'the friend,' since they perversely bore witness concerning him who never knew me."

The great scholar Hans Jonas recognized Gnostic/Manichaean use of biblical material, but asked:

> "What is the spirit of this use? Why, it is the spirit of vilification, of parody and caricature, of conscious perversion of meaning, wholesale reversal of value-signs, savage degrading of the sacred— of gleeful shocking blasphemy…" And, "It is defined by anti-Jewish animus with which it is saturated."

According to the Manichaean account, the realm of evil, always in a state of war with the good, attacked the realm of the good. In reprisal, the good deity created primordial man. But primordial man was kidnapped by evil, which stole his soul and corporealized it in Adam. Eve, who was even more physical, procreates with evil to produce Cain and Abel. But even with Adam she produces more people, that is, more *matter*, and therefore more evil. Heaven sends forth Buddha, several versions of Jesus, and, finally, Mani, to save men by teaching them the *gnosis,* i.e., the knowledge, so they can recognize the evil in all worldly things.

Manichaen discipline sought to liberate the soul from this darkness of corporeality. Man, who joins the spiritual and the corporeal, has the power to choose one over the other. He must free himself from matter through ascetic practices, including vegetarianism and celibacy.

The doctrine answered the moralists' theodicy (why bad things happen to good people). Since the moral things are of a piece with the natural things, all moral problems resolve when we come to know and reject the world's evil physicality. There would appear to be no need for a book of Job because the good deity did not cause Job's afflictions. The two gods are only powerful in their own spheres. No complicated justifications for the good allowing evil to exist are necessary, for the complete explanation is that the good is not omnipotent.

People chose the simplistic morality of Mani to avoid dealing with the real complexities of mans' culpability for sin.

Manichaean Dualism has always been the easy answer to the problem of evil.

(What Little We Know. It is frustratingly difficult to grasp the alleged species "Manichaeans," of the alleged genus "Gnostics." What little we know is from three sources. *First*, are the critiques penned by the Church fathers against "Christian" Gnostics and Manichaeans. These are antagonistic, often unfair, but necessarily form our consciousness of these phenomena over the past two millennia. For a similar Jewish response compare R. Abraham Bar Hiyya, 12th Century, in *Megillat Ha-Megilla*, 138:6-30, translated in *Abraham Bar Hiyya On Time, History, Exile and Redemption*, by Hannu Töyrylä, Brill, 2014. *Second*, the documents discovered in the last hundred years at Nag Hammadi, Turfan and Fayum. These are mostly myths, ritual materials, and poetry. They, however, tell little about who made them, when their scribal antecedents were produced, or why they came to be. *Third*, are the living traditions of the Mandaeans, a small sect under pressure due to the disintegration of Middle East polity. They are allegedly direct descendents of Gnostics and Manichaeans, but some scholars now doubt this. Quotations, above, in order, are from *Acta Archilai Mani*, fas.harvard.edu, PDF document, p. 68, a questionable early Christian source; *2nd Treatise of Seth*, gnosis.org/naghamm/2seth.html, a Gnostic source; the Hans Jonas'quotes are from "Response to G. Quispel," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. Hyatt, Nashville, 1965. On the Church fathers: Augustine, *Confessions*, especially Books III and V; Paula Fredrickson, "*Secundum Carnem*: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity*: *Essays in Honor of R.A. Markus*, eds. Klipshirn and Vessey, and Arbor, 1990; David Nirenberg *Anti-Judaism, the Western Tradition*, especially Chapter 3, Norton 2013. In General: Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 1958, Beacon Press,

is the classic typological/phenomenological study, placing Gnosticism and Manichaeism in existentialist context, as moments in the world history of alienation. Karen L. King attacks Jonas in *What is Gnosticism*? Harvard, 2003, a postmodern deconstructionist study. I am not favorable to existentialism or postmodernism, however the subject of Gnosticism/Manichaeism fairly screams for deconstructionism, since, based on the three types of sources that we have, our factual knowledge is small. Prof. King reviews past historians' approaches, including that of Jonas, his predecessors and successors, in the ambiguous light of recent discoveries. Her first chapter bears out the problem in its title, "Why is Gnosticism So Hard to Define?" Her answer is that it is nothing but an academic construct. Also see Andrew Philip Smith, *The Gnostics*, London, 2008, a frankly "New Age" rehabilitation of Gnosticism and Manichaeism, but this enthusiast does present much useful information clearly, particularly Chapter 7. Also see the long articles on Manichaeism in *Encyclopedia of Religion* and *Catholic Encyclopedia*.)

MAIMONIDES' ARISTOTELIANIZED VERSION OF MANICHAEISM

The Muslim world and its Kalām theology responded to the Dualist challenge with the arguments for Monotheism that Maimonides summarized in this chapter.

To show that their arguments were (with one possible exception) ineffective, Maimonides put forward his own heavily Aristotelianized version of Manichaeism. He created his Dualist to debate the Kalām proofs for Monotheism. I have not been able to identify his source, if any, for his Dualist.

Maimonides' Dualist scheme emphasizes the world's physical/cosmic aspect, thereby avoiding Manichaeism's moral challenge to Monotheism. This allows him to avoid explaining here why God seems to permit the existence of evil (but see Guide 3:10). His problem, after all, was the Kalām, not this decaying remnant of Paganism, and he did not want to revive that corpse.

In his sanitized Dualism, the two deities possess completely separate powers and realms. The upper deity rules the outer sphere, including its eternally rotating quintessent substance. The lower deity controls the sublunar universe, including the vertically moving four elements of matter: earth, air, fire and water.

This version of Dualism rejects the physical uniformity of the universe. The Kalām had insisted on the uniform atomic structure of everything. Maimonides, however, held it *proven* that the universe was made of two kinds of substances. The substance of the upper world acts differently than the substance of the lower world. He explained this in Guide 1:72:

> "The entire substance of this revolving fifth element is unlike the substance of those bodies which consist of the other four elements.... The spherical bodies, on the other hand, have life, possess a soul by which they move spontaneously; they have no properties by which they could at any time come to a state of rest: in their perpetual rotations they are not subject to any change, except that of position."

By contrast, the four lower hylic elements do not revolve, have no soul, always come to a state of rest, and continually change. This division of the elements of the universe becomes the basis for his Dualist's scheme.

Notice Maimonides' reticence in articulating his Dualist's position. He refrains from referring to "god" or "gods," instead relying on pronominal substitutes like "this one," "that one," "one," "the other" (this is particularly noticeable in the Kafiḥ Hebrew translation: *zeh, ekhad, sheni*, etc., I counted 38 instances). Rarely is he more explicit (four times). His account of each set of arguments and counter-arguments is slim, guarded, and allusive.

He is obviously uncomfortable playing devil's advocate, since by making Dualism's best case he might also be doing the devil's work.

THE FIRST ARGUMENT: MUTUAL HINDERING

Maimonides groups the five Kalām arguments for divine unity and against Dualism in two basic types. The first type he calls "mutual hindering" (*ha-akhuv l'khalufin*) and the second type he calls "mutual difference" or "specific difference" (*derekh ha-shuni*). In the first group, he places all the arguments except the Second Argument, which is the argument for "specific difference" (with which he sympathizes).

The First Argument of mutual hindering sets the framework and mood of the other three mutual hindering arguments, Arguments Three, Four and Five. Wolfson traces the argument of "mutual hindering" to the Christian scholar John of Damascus (c. 676-749 C.E; see H.A.Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām*, Harvard, 1976, pages 49-50). It was the Kalām's favorite argument for Monotheism.

Maimonides gives two examples. Hot and cold are contradictory accidents with the Kalām (they apparently did not regard *warm* as a continuum between hot and cold). One god commands the atom to be "Hot!" The other commands "Cold!" Their commands cancel out and there is *no* result. The substance does not come into existence, since it has no accidental characteristic. In his next example, motion and rest also cancel each other. Kafiḥ explains that the lack of *duration* of the accident is the basis for mutual hindering. If two gods command, *at every moment*, in contradiction to each other: "Exist!" and "Perish!" the commands would cancel each other and nothing would ever happen (Kafiḥ, note 5, p. 151, *ad loc.*). We conclude that only one God can create.

The basic format of the mutual hindering argument looks like this:

1. Any substance (atom) must take at least one of two possible contradictory accidents (e.g., rest vs. motion, hot versus cold);
2. Two deities are distinguished from each other because each creates one of the two contradictory accidental characteristics;
3. They must be equally powerful, otherwise only one is really God;
4. If substance takes neither of the contradictory accidents, then it cannot exist, since all substance must have at least one accident;
5. Substance cannot have two contradictory accidents in one place and time;
6. If the two deities create two contradictory accidents in one place and time, the accidents cancel out and they create nothing;
7. Therefore, only one God creates the particular accident attached to the atom.

Friedlander provides the following useful explanation of how this first Kalām argument for unity depends on the Kalām Propositions I, VI, and VII, from Chapter 1:73:

> "If Prop. I, *viz.*, that *all things consist of equal constituent atoms*, were not admitted, two Creators or more might be assumed for the different classes of things, as, e.g., for the sublunar world and for the heavenly spheres. Without Prop. VI, *viz.*, that *the accidents are constantly renewed*, it could not be shown that the existence of two Gods would lead to mutual neutralization in the creation of accidents [since some would have duration]. In the same manner, Prop. VII, *viz.*, that *the negative property is not merely absence of the positive, but a real property requiring an agent*, is indispensable; for without it, the negative property would only require non-creation; and two Gods being assumed, they would not neutralize each other, even if one desired an object to have a positive quality, the other a negative; the positive would be created." (Note 2, page 356, *ad loc.* My emphasis and bracketed comment)

Division Of Labor. The problem for the Kalām is that Maimonides' Dualist does not accept atomism. The Kalām argument fails to address a universe made of two different kinds of matter, a conclusion Maimonides deems demonstrated. They, therefore, failed to take the Dualist opponent seriously.

Maimonides' Dualist would explain that each god is restricted by its own definition. Each god is omnipotent only in its sphere. The upper power controls the super-lunar universe, dissociated from matter. The lower power controls our own material world.

This vaguely corresponds to Aristotle's cosmological motive powers. In his cosmos, the god of the universe, the unmoved mover, is the ultimate indirect cause of all motion, but the souls of the spheres are independent movers as well. Maimonides' Dualist *collapses* the souls of the spheres into a single god of the lower sphere. The upper god could not cause the accidents of matter because that god is completely divorced from matter. The two gods have a kind of division of labor. (Souls of the spheres: see H. A. Wolfson, "The Plurality of Immovable Movers in Aristotle, Averroes, and St. Thomas," *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, v.1, Harvard, 1973.)

The Permanent Nature of the Impossible. The upper god of the Dualist has no influence over what happens to matter. The Kalām object that this makes the upper deity *weak*. Since God must be omnipotent, the Dualist's impotent deity cannot be God.

Maimonides replies that God is not weak simply because He cannot do the impossible. This is Maimonides' doctrine of the *permanent nature of the impossible*. At the end of the chapter, he gives several examples of actions that are impossible even for God to perform. God cannot create another God like Himself, for there is nothing like Himself. God cannot corporealize His perfectly incorporeal self. He cannot make the diagonal of a square equal its side.

Maimonides' final example is the most telling: according to Kalām physics, atoms and accidents make up the universe, not matter and form. It follows that, for them, God Himself could not make things out of matter and form. Thus, even the Kalām must accept that there are things impossible for God that would not betray weakness or defect.

Heresy? There is an interesting feature in Friedlander's translation of this counter-argument. In his first edition, he translates:

> "Thus we, Monotheists, do not consider it a defect in God, that He does not combine two opposites in one object, nor do we test his omnipotence by the accomplishment of any *sinister* impossibility." (My emphasis, p. 357.)

In subsequent versions he replaces *sinister* with *similar* (Kafiḥ: *haduma*, Schwarz: *hadumim*.) The latter appears to be the correct translation, but the former is an inspired translation.

Friedlander meant that it is not *heretical* to say that God cannot do the impossible. R. Shlomo Ibn Adret (Rashba, 1235-1310) complained that Maimonides' doctrine was the doctrine of heretics (*kofrim*). Others accepted it with conditions, such as R. Chaim Vital (1542-1620), who distinguished logical impossibility from other kinds of powerlessness that could not be associated with God.

The foregoing examples of impossibility involved such logical definitional impossibility. A thing cannot be other than it is: God is God, never not-God; squares are squares, with all that entails about their diagonals.

(On Rashba: *Teshuvot Ha-Rashba* 1:9 36-4a; See R. Jose Faur, "Anti-Maimonidean Demons," note 57, p.16; note 11, p. 5, *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, 6:1, Leiden, 2003. On Vital: *Etz Khayim*, 64; cited in Friedlander, note 1, p. 360, *ad loc*. In Guide 3:15, Maimonides returns to the subject of impossibility.)

The Problem with Maimonides' Rejection of Mutual Hindering. Maimonides' division of labor counter-argument does not really respond to the Kalām's contention of mutual hindering in the accidents of the atom. Just as the Kalām failed to take a Dualist universe of matter and form seriously, Maimonides failed to take seriously the possibility that the universe is made of one atomic substance. In a structurally uniform atomic universe where the gods are active in the *same* sphere, they would mutually cancel each other's acts. In other words, the argument of mutual hindering could work in a world of Kalām physics where two gods compete to create contradictory accidents in each atom. Friedlander makes the same subtle point in criticism of Maimonides:

> "The proof [of mutual hindering] holds good for the Mutakallimūn, who believe that the spheres above and the things below consist of the same kind of atoms, and that, therefore, there is no reason to assume two creators." (Note 2, p. 357).

Mutual hindering depends on the belief in a single uniform atomic substance of the universe. Such a universe seems to have a built-in bias against the possibility of Dualism, which is not the case in a universe composed of matter and form. Maimonides seems to acknowledge this in his final comment on the Kalām argument that it "had some apparent support," *af al fi sh'ha'hekhrakh heviam l'kakh.*

Real Manichaeism Concealed. Maimonides' argument also conceals the Manichaean position. Let's change the example, and in place of Maimonides' Dualist we substitute a real Manichaean. Have him accept atomism (they did believe in light particles), but also Maimonides' division of labor. In this case, the Manichaean could still argue that the division of labor prevents mutual hindering.

In this scheme, the upper god controls the positive side of all contrary sets of atomic accidents but not the negative side. Thus, the upper god is always responsible for all good, positive, bright things; the lower god is always responsible for their contraries, the evil, negative, dark things. Neither god affects the other's "sphere," but man can choose which sphere to live in. In the face of a real Manichaean, the Kalām's mutual hindering argument collapses, even assuming a world made of atoms.

This system works without cancellation, especially since both the Kalām and the Manichaeans believe that evil is real, not merely the absence of good, as Maimonides believed. Despite the fact that this argument would be devastating to the Kalam's mutual hindering proof, Maimonides would not even suggest it. That would be carrying devil's advocacy too far.

In fact, there was a Mutakallem with a position only slightly altered from this. Ibrahim al-Nazzam (d. 845) had been a Dualist in his early life, and carried some of these thoughts with him into his own Monotheist Kalām. Nazzam reportedly said:

> "There must needs be *hatirani* (motive forces) of which one bids *advancing* and the other *desisting*, so that one's choice between them may be a genuine choice...(he had said that) the *hatir* of disobedience is from God except that God produced it for the sake of causing just action and not in order to stir up disobedience." (in Wolfson, *Kalām*, 628, and, generally, 624 – 644)

Nazzam's successors believed he absorbed influences foreign to Islam. H.A.Wolfson reviewed several possible sources of influence (including the Jewish *yetzer ha-ra*), but thinks that since Nazzam was once in the "sect of Dualists," he was most likely under Zoroastrian influence. What Nazzam accomplished with his *hatirani* was to remove the Dualists' straightforward absolution of the upper deity as the cause of evil. In its stead, he substituted a complex theodicy to explain the divine creation of the evil *hatir*.

(See *Kalām*, 632, 66, where Wolfson briefly considers a report that Nazzam's Dualism was Manichaean. Muslims were aware of Manichaeism from and after the time of R. Saadia Gaon (d. 942), and Manichaeans "were

to them still an object of vital discussion," see Wolfson, "Saadia on the Trinity and Incarnation," page 373, vol. 2, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*.)

THE THIRD ARGUMENT: MUTUAL HINDERING IN THE INDEPENDENT WILL

I will reproduce the Second Argument at the end: it requires different treatment because it is one of Maimonides' own arguments.

The Third Argument involves a concept of the Divine Will peculiar to the Mutazilite early Muslim theologians, particularly Abu Hudhayl (d. between 842 and 850 CE). These Mutazilites strongly objected to the real existence of divine attributes *within* God, who is simple and non-composite. But if God is simple, where did the universe come from?

In order to explain the creation of the universe, Abu Hudhayl said that God created at a particular time a Will, which decides for creation. That Will is not in God or in anything. It is not eternal, for otherwise it would be another god. This should call to mind the contention of some Mutazilites that there is a single free-floating accident of Destruction (Guide 1:73, Proposition VII). They advanced that doctrine to explain how God could create destruction and then be completely separate from it. Similarly, God creates an accident of Will entirely separate from Himself or from any material substrate (Abu Hudhayl's Will: see Wolfson, *Kalām*, p. 140).

The Third Argument is a version of mutual hindering: this one freestanding Will cannot determine two opposing characteristics in one atom without each canceling the other out. Maimonides' reaction was that the Mutazilites exchanged one incomprehensibility for a greater one, raising innumerable additional problems, such as: why God needs a Will to create; why this Will is created at a particular time; why not two Wills for two creators, and so on.

The key sentence in Maimonides' statement of the Kalām argument is nearly impossible to translate: with respect to this single unmoored Will "one cause cannot be the source of two laws for two essences," *lo t'hiyei illa akhat ha-mkhayevet shnei mishpatim l'shnei etzamim* (where *etzamim* can mean "essences" or "atoms"). But why couldn't one Will command "move" to one atom and "rest" to another atom? My guess is that the sentence should read: "one cause cannot be the source of two laws for two states *in one atom.*" In other words, one Will cannot accommodate the opposing commands of two gods (see Michael Shwarz' trans. of the Guide, v. 1, p. 237, note 19).

Differentiation. The explanation I just hazarded for Maimonides' cryptic sentence pushes the problem back one stage, to the opposing commands of two gods that funnel through the single freestanding will. But that would be the same as the First Argument: we are really back to the basic issue of two gods mutually hindering each other's contradictory determinations for one atom.

The problem the sentence masks is this. How can it be "mutual" hindering if there is only one Will? Others have wrestled with this sentence to discover why two gods could not impose contradictory determinations through one Will. Efodi (c. 1350 – c. 1415) and R. Shem Tov ben Yosef (b. 1461), *ad loc.*, explain it based on an argument which Herbert Davidson calls "differentiation."

The *differentiation* of two determinations (volitions) in *one* Will is impossible, for three reasons. 1) These determinations are incorporeal, but if they were differentiated, they would *be* in different places and times, like the separate Wills of Reuven and Shimon. There would no longer be a single freestanding Will. 2) Since any differentiation would add an element to the Will, this element would have the status of accident, but this incorporeal free-standing Will could not have added accidents without being corporealized. 3) Such an added element makes a composite, but an incorporeal Will could not be a composite.

Their point was that no distinction or differentiation could exist in a freestanding incorporeal Will. This Will cannot be *numerable* or *composite*. Numerosity implies corporeality, as does composition, but the Mutazilites' single freestanding Will could not be a composite of numerable determinations while remaining incorporeal.

(See Efodi and Shem Tov's commentaries, *ad loc.*, in the standard Ibn Tibbon Hebrew translations of the Guide; Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 170-171. Cf. the 5th century Christian Monothelitism controversy, over whether one Will could accommodate Christ's several natures.)

Maimonides notes that the majority of the Kalām opposed this concept of a single freestanding Will. That was because the Asharite Kalām of his day rejected the earlier Mutazilite anti-attributism. The Asharites accepted the will as just one more of the essential attributes of God, like wisdom or power. There was no need for them to make it separate and freestanding.

THE FOURTH ARGUMENT: CAUSATIVE AGENCY

The question that the Fourth Argument seeks to answer is: How many causes produce an effect? The argument has three steps, a three-part dialogue.

1) Sufficient Causation. All actions must have a cause. The causes cannot go on to infinity because an infinite regress is impossible. A single action results from *one* efficient cause. But if two agents acted together, should we treat them as the single efficient cause of that action, or, otherwise, as two separate causes?

The Kalam contended that the first option was true, that if two causes for the universe exist, we must consider them together as its single, sufficient cause. They contended that there was no reason to consider them separately.

2) The "Possibility" of Multiple Causes. The Dualist replied that more than one cause may *possibly* be necessary for the existence of the universe. Maimonides writes, "[Step I of the] argument does not seem to prove the nonexistence of a multitude of deities; it only shows that their number is unknown; the deity may [possibly] be one sole being, but may also include several divine beings."

3) The Rejection of "Possibility." The Kalām replied with the third stage of their argument, rejecting this *possibility* of plurality. They asserted that since God's existence is *absolute* and not contingent, there cannot be multiple *possible* deities.

The steps of this argument need to be unpacked.

Explanation of Step 1. Why would the Kalām consider two causes of one action as one unified cause?

Richard Taylor explained the point: "*A was the cause of B*, means that A was that set of conditions, among those and only those that occurred, which were individually necessary and jointly sufficient for B....From this point of view there is *never any plurality* of causes or of effects for things that actually occur." The reason this works was stated by Richard McKeon: "Every effect is convertible with the principle or cause from which it proceeds." Think of the case of two billiard balls, one from the northwest and the other from the northeast, that together as one strike a third ball and force it to the south. We treat the two moving balls together as the single combined cause of the third ball's reaction. (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Causation," Richard Taylor, v. 2, p. 63, McMillan 1967, emphasis added. Richard McKeon, *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, Glossary, "*Effectus*," 2:449, Scribners, 1958)

Maimonides restates this point: "The existence of an action is necessarily positive evidence (*mora*) of the existence of an *agens*, but does not prove the existence of more than one *agens.*" He means that an *effect* proves the existence of an efficient cause and only one efficient cause.

The Kalām wants us to accept that if there is only one cause, there must only be one God. Davidson sums up the Kalām argument in Step 1 in the following terms. Every effect must have a cause. Therefore, there must be a Creator: "The requirement is satisfied as soon as a single creator is acknowledged; hence a single creator is all that should be posited" (Davidson, *Proofs*, p. 170).

This argument recalls "Ockham's Razor," of William of Ockham (*c*. 1285-1347). Ockham's doctrine, that "plurality is not to be assumed without necessity" actually goes back to Aristotle (*De Incessu Animalium*, 2:711a, 17-19; 2:704b, 15-17). If there must be a cause for every effect, and there is no plurality of causes, nor any infinite regress, then there must be *a* creator. Once we posit a single creator we need no more, therefore, only *one* exists. It is a principle of parsimony.

Explanation of Step 2. But in the Dualist's divided world wouldn't it be possible for there to be two causes, one for action above and the other for action below? Maimonides' Dualist replied that it is just as *possible* that there are many deities as it is *possible* that there is one. The existence of a single ultimate cause is not a proof against multiple gods. They could still *possibly* exist.

The Dualist thus asserts the classic reply to Ockham's razor. We need as many causes as are necessary. Where fewer entities are not possible, we must posit more. It is just as possible that multiple gods are necessary to the proper functioning of the universe. Maimonides writes: "…It being possible that there is only one, and it being possible that there are many…" (Pines' translation).

Explanation of Step 3. In Step 3, the Kalām rejected such "possibility" in divine existence. God's existence is, by definition, absolute, not contingent. On this basis, they denied the assertion that there could be several possible deities. If they were "possible," they could not be necessary. But God is the necessary existence, who confers existence upon the contingent existents. In the minds of the Kalām doctors, this was the clinching argument.

Maimonides' protests that the Kalām use of the term "possible" commits the fallacy of equivocation, i.e., "possible" has two meanings: intellectual possibility and existential possibility. An *intellectual possibility* is not the same thing as *possible existence*. Our *ideas* of the different possibilities of what may be the true existence of divinity should not predispose us to one of those possibilities. Nothing that we actually *know* of divine existence disposes us for or against Dualism. The commentator Yehuda Even-Shmuel asked, "Who will guarantee that our knowledge corresponds to reality?" The notional likelihood of Monotheism is no proof against the existence of multiple gods. Indeed, Maimonides surprisingly admits that Trinitarianism is just as *intellectually possible* as Monotheism. The possibilities we *think* of do not decide what *actually* exists.

The answer to Ockham's Razor is that there have to be as many gods as are necessary. (Some call this last rejoinder "Kant's Shaving Bowl." *Entium varietate non temere esse minuendas*, the variety of beings should not be rashly diminished. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans., N.K. Smith, 1950, p. 541: A656, B684).

THE FIFTH ARGUMENT: NEED

The Fifth Kalām argument for divine unity seems like a direct response to this last riposte, that there have to be as many gods as necessary. It tries to show that if there were more than one God, those "gods" would not qualify as true gods, just because of that "necessity." Bound by necessity, these "gods" are too weak to be God.

Wolfson attributed this argument to Shahrastani (d. 1153). It has two steps. 1) If it would only take one god to create the world, it is superfluous to posit the existence of two gods without necessity. 2) But if it did require two beings to create the world, one must need the other. Neither, therefore, can be God, because, by definition, God does not "need" anything. He is complete in Himself. (The argument also appears in R. Saadia Gaon, *Book of Opinions and Beliefs*, *Emunot v'Deot*, Rosenblatt, 2:2, 97-98; and R. Bakhya Ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Hearts*, *Khovot ha-Levavot*, Feldheim, 1:7:7, 104-107).

We considered this contrast between need and necessity in the First Argument when we discussed the doctrine of the permanent nature of the impossible. Maimonides replied that impossibility does not imply weakness, nor does necessity imply need. Since, according to the Dualist, neither god alone could affect *both* the corporeal and non-corporeal parts of creation, we must have both gods.

The first step of the argument is another application of Ockham's Razor. Why posit two when one will do? Maimonides, speaking for his Dualist, replied with an "anti-razor." Where one entity does not suffice, posit more. In a world of strict bifurcation of matter and mind, Dualism might not be an unwarranted assumption. In such a divided world, each god is powerful in its own sphere, but cannot be thought "weak" in the other sphere.

THE SECOND ARGUMENT: SPECIFIC DIFFERENCE, AN ARGUMENT THAT MAIMONIDES FAVORS

The Second Kalām Argument is the argument of "specific" or "mutual difference," which Maimonides conditionally approves. He barely sketches this argument:

> "If there were two Gods, there would necessarily be some element common to both, whilst some element present in the one would be absent in the other, and constitute the specific difference between them."

That constitutes his entire statement. Here is what he meant. The "element common to both" would be divinity, *elohut*. The "specific difference" would be that one is the god of the heavens and the other the god of the sublunary sphere. Still, he leaves out the final term of the argument. That is, there must only be one God, since otherwise God would be subject to *composition*. Friedlander explained:

> "The conclusion can easily be supplied, namely, that neither of the two gods could be the Primal Cause, because each of them is a combination of several forces or properties and thus requires again a cause for that combination." (Note 3, p. 357, *ad loc.*)

In this case, the combination of the *genus*: "divinity" with the *difference*: "of the sublunar sphere," requires a higher combiner. But then that combiner would require another combiner. At some point, to avoid infinite regress, you must come to the ultimate combiner, God.

The meaning of the "elements common to both" and the "specific difference" is that these are the required terms in any definition. According to Aristotelian logic (explained by Maimonides in *Treatise on Logic*, chapter 10), *definitions* require a genus and a difference. In the Aristotelian scheme, the definition is the essential form of an entity. The parts of any definition (the genus and specific difference) constitute the *formal causes* of the entity.

The critical idea, however, is that we cannot define God: He belongs to no genus from which anything else could be differentiated. Clearly, just because they are definable, the Dualist's deities cannot be God.

The very duality of Dualism, therefore, seems to imply corporeality, because the deities are composite. But God is incorporeal, neither numerable nor composite. It follows that God is one.

The power of the argument is its grasp of the essential nature of such putative gods.

This is one of Maimonides' minor arguments for divine unity in Guide 2:1, but it does not rise to the level of his four major arguments announced in that chapter. (See below, "Maimonides' Arguments for Divine Unity")

The Hypocrisy of the Kalām Attributists. The Kalām used this *differentiation* (or *composition*) argument against Dualism. Maimonides objects to their use of this argument. Since the (Asharite) Kalām believed in the real existence of essential attributes in God, like wisdom and power, their deity would be subject to composition:

> "For according to their opinion, the Primal Cause includes many different elements (attributes). They represent its wisdom and its omnipotence as two different things, and, again, the omnipotence as different from the will. Consequently it would not be impossible that either of the two divine beings possessed several properties, some of which would be common to both, and some peculiar to only one of them."

Being subject to composition, it follows that Allah would be subject to matter, number, and the existence of some other who composed that composition. These are the very defects the Kalām hypocritically saddle on the Dualist's gods.

Maimonides argued in the attribute chapters (Guide 1:51-1:60) that since terms like wisdom and power are homonymous, no one actually shares God's unique wisdom or power except in the mere sound of those terms. If the Kalām's deity possessed real non-homonymous attributes, like wisdom and power, that deity would participate in those classes of attributes. Thus, God's wisdom would be just another sort of wisdom, part of God's definition as the supreme member of the genus of wise beings. The Kalām, therefore, had no right to apply the differentiation argument against the Dualists. They should not have been heard to object that the Dualists' gods were definable, corporeal, numerable and composite, and therefore not God, since they have themselves committed the same offenses against the one true undefinable God.

(We must qualify all of this by the fact that Kalām theology, despite Maimonides' portrayal of it, was by no means uniform. The early Mutazilite Kalām never agreed to the doctrine of attributes adopted by the later Asharite Kalām. However, by Maimonides' time, Asharism was dominant, which is why we can accept his Asharite caricature of "Kalām." Wolfson objected that for the Asharites the attributes were "neither God nor other than God," i.e., that they were "modes," not essences, *Kalām*, 211-214. Yehuda Even-Shmuel said that Asharites themselves actually denied that multiple attributes required composition, see his note, *ad loc*. to his commentary, page 510. However, Wolfson noted the debate in later Kalām between neo-orthodoxy and paleo-orthodoxy on whether Ashari changed his views on this after his conversion to orthodoxy. The best conclusion to this murky issue is that Maimonides provides a snapshot of the dominant sect of Kalam Asharites that he knew.)

Why the Kalām's Second Argument Was Not One of Maimonides' Principal Arguments for Unity.

Let's take another look at Kalām's Second Argument of divine undefinability, ignoring for the moment the Asharite embrace of divine attributes. Maimonides admits here that the Second Argument is a "philosophic and sound argument."

However, in Guide 2:1, Maimonides outlines four proofs for the unity of God that he explicitly calls "philosophic." He did not include the Second Kalām Argument as a philosophic argument. In that chapter, immediately following his account of his four "philosophic" proofs, he lists three arguments that he calls "demonstrative," but which he does not call "philosophic." Friedlander calls attention to this distinction in footnotes to Guide 2:1 (note 3, page 11 and note 1, page 22). One of those non-philosophical demonstrations is the Kalām's Second Argument.

The likely reason that Maimonides did not list this as a philosophic argument in Guide 2:1 was because he recognized its flaw (later pointed out by both R. Shem Tov and Efodi, page 130a, *ad loc.*).

If we take the Dualist position seriously, we have to admit that two completely separate universes could exist. Now recall Maimonides' account of the Second Argument. He had said, "if there were two gods there would necessarily be some element common to both..." We had identified that shared element as divinity. But in a pure Dualism there would be no shared element. The upper god shares no definitional element with the lower god. The term *elokut* would be a homonymous term, meaning something completely different in each universe. Each god would have a different way of conducting his own different sphere. There would be no "element common to both." The demonstration of the Second Kalām Argument must fail, since each god would be undefinable in its own special way.

Now if R. Shem Tov and Efodi both recognized this flaw (that the gods would share no definitional element), there is no reason to suppose that Maimonides overlooked it here. He had suggested that they shared no genus in his previous paragraph when he wrote, "As the Dualists assert, there are two divine beings, one of whom rules this world without influencing the spheres, whilst the other governs the world above without interfering with this world..." Even the sense that they are both "rulers," and share in "rulership," would merely be our subjective conception of their different systems. The two gods would each, in its own way, be undefinable, and thus elude the Second Argument for Monotheism. (Cf. the stark division reported in the Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 39a, "a Magi once said...from the middle of thy body upwards thou belongest to Ormuzd, from the middle downwards, to Ahriman.")

However, for Maimonides, as long as no one looked too closely at the problem posed by real Manichaean Dualism, the Kalām Second Argument of Differentiation or Composition remained a good rhetorical "demonstration" for divine unity, if not an airtight philosophical proof.

MAIMONIDES' OWN ARGUMENTS FOR DIVINE UNITY

Having demolished the Kalam's proofs for the existence of only one God, it is fair to ask what Maimonides' proofs were. They come from philosophic sources, unlike the Kalam's ineffective arguments, which came ultimately from early Christian theologians. Maimonides listed his arguments in Guide 2:1, but I preview them here.

He explicitly calls his first four arguments for unity "philosophic," by which he means that they are logical proofs. Here are their basic ideas (stripped of their intricacies):

I. *The cosmological argument for a single unmoved mover*. Given a Ptolemaic/Aristotelian cosmos, in which a sphere made up of the fifth element continually churns the four material elements of the sublunar sphere, there must exist a single unmoved mover with a greater motive force than the things that are eternally moved. This argument would not survive the Copernican destruction of the earth-centered universe. The next three philosophic arguments could conceivably endure that paradigm shift.

II. *The physical argument for a single mover.* This is the infinite regress argument. We recognize that since we see a final action at the end of the causal chain, there must be a series of intermediate actions preceding it. The final cause presupposes the existence of an initial, non-intermediate, cause. Since this initial actor could not be subject to any other movers, it must follow that it is unmoved, and, being unmoved, must be incorporeal and indivisibly single.

III. *The metaphysical argument for divine unity, from necessary and contingent existences.* Things exist either necessarily or contingently. If all things were contingent in their moment to moment existence, like the Kalām atoms, and if there were no God to maintain them, then nothing could continue to exist. This is due to the all-

important proposition XXIII of Maimonides' 26 Aristotelian Propositions (Introduction to Book II of the Guide), which states "everything that exists potentially and whose essence includes a certain state of possibility may at some time be without actual existence." There must be a necessary existent to create and preserve the contingent existences. Such a necessary existent must, for various reasons, be single and incorporeal. (See Maimonides' Aristotelian Propositions XX, XXI, and XXII).

IV. *The argument for divine unity from dynamism*. Since no entity can be its own agent, it requires another agent to actualize its potentiality (Greek: *dunamis*), and since there is no infinite regress of agents, there must be a single incorporeal God at the inception of that chain of actualizers. This is a more abstract version of Argument II. Maimonides drew that argument from physics, while this one, its metaphysical reflection, comes from the Aristotelian division between the potential and the actual in all things.

Maimonides then includes three "demonstrative proofs," that do not rise to the philosophic level.

A). *Differentiation*. The first of these rhetorical arguments is the Kalām Second Argument for divine unity in our chapter. As we showed above, that argument would collapse in the face of completely dichotomous Dualistic universes.

B). *Organicism*. The second of these purely rhetorical proofs follows from Maimonides' assertion, in Guide 1:72, that the world is one organic unity (see my discussion there). The argument is that one God only would produce one organically interconnected world. Again, this argument would fail if there were two different universes.

C). *Enumeration*. The third rhetorical argument was a sub-argument of all the other arguments. Since incorporeal things are never subject to plurality or number, and since God is incorporeal, there can be but one God. It follows from Ibn Bajja's postulate of the unity of mind (see Guide 1:68). We call this the argument from *enumeration.*

Maimonides sums up the argument in Guide 2:Introduction, Prop. XVI: "Incorporeal bodies can only be numbered when they are forces situated in a body; the several forces must then be counted together with [corporeal] substances."

Here is the original version of the argument of *enumeration* from Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. The argument of this passage is that numerosity is always a feature of matter:

> "Evidently there is but one heaven (Gr. *ouranos*—universe). For if there are many heavens as there are many men, the moving principles, of which each heaven will have one, will be one in form but in number many. But *all things that are many in number have matter*; for one and the same definition, e.g., that of man, applies to many things [and is therefore incorporeal], while Socrates is one [and therefore a particular materialization of that universal]. But the primary essence has not matter [and therefore no potentiality]; for it is complete reality [in *actu*]. So the unmovable first mover is one both in definition and in number; so too, therefore, is that which is moved always and continuously; therefore there is one heaven alone." (W.D. Ross, trans., 1074a 33-37, my bracketed comments and emphasis.)

In other words, the "oneness" of the cosmos is due to the incorporeality of its mover. Though Aristotle's objective was to show that there is just one cosmos, his successors usually took this passage to show that there is only one first unmoved mover. The necessarily incorporeal first cause must be one, but "one" taken in the sense of a *non-numerical* unity, i.e, it is un-enumerated because it is non-numerable.

WEARINESS

At the end of our chapter, Maimonides complains that the Kalām had so destroyed our concept of the physical nature of the world that we could draw no conclusions from our study of the world. This was because they rejected the very process of drawing conclusions from natural cause and effect. They considered causation to be merely our subjective interpretation of apparent patterns in random atomic collisions. Kafiḥ comments that the Mutakallimūn called any scientific observations optical illusions (Note 38, p. 153, *ad loc*.). If you believe that the world is irrational, you cannot learn anything from it (Guide 1:73). Note the troubling parallels in existentialism and postmodernism.

Maimonides had shown that the Muslim theologians were not the paragons of monotheism that they claimed to be. The Kalām doctors consigned religious man to permanent perplexity. Their arguments were so bad, and their outlook so destructive to science, that the only rational recourse was to rely on faith, and to cede the ground of thought to the secular philosophers. Under the circumstances, should we criticize faithful adherents of the law who avoided rational inquiry? Maimonides declared:

> "Some of the Mutakallimūn, *weary* (*ayef*) of these arguments (Pines: 'tricks'), declared that the Unity of God is a doctrine which must be received as a matter of faith, but most of them rejected this theory, and reviled its authors. I, however, hold, that those who accept this theory are right-minded (*tamim ha-makhshava*; Jud.Ar.: מסדד אלד'הן), and shrink from admitting an erroneous opinion; when they do not perceive any cogency in the arguments, and find that the proofs advanced in favor of the doctrine are inconclusive, they prefer to assume that it could only be received as a matter of faith."

These simple men of faith may be right-minded, but Maimonides still calls them Mutakallimūn. He does not call them wise. They left the four necessary doctrines of religion unsupported. This is a disastrous outcome, and quite unnecessary. Having abandoned rationality, nothing restrains the perplexed imagination from multiplying gods. Rejecting Kalām arguments, but seeing no alternatives, they let the Dualists win the argument by default. He sighs:

> "We can only appeal to the Almighty and to those intelligent persons who confess their error when they discover it."

* * *

Dare I say that Maimonides suffers weariness? The outline of his program demanded that he have three chapters exposing the weakness of the Kalām proofs of the four necessary doctrines of religion, but after Chapter 1:75, I think his heart went out of the project, and he was eager to proceed to his Aristotelian controversy.

First, he needed to bring his audience up to the level of Book II, which required many preliminaries. He also had to respond to his student, Rabbi Joseph, who had asked for Maimonides' opinion on the dominant Muslim trend of their day, the Kalām. But these requirements forced him to act as the devil's advocate for Dualism (and, in the last chapter, for Eternalism), and this has made him "weary."

Living in the historical moment when the Asharite Kalām conquered Islamic philosophy, he wearily resigned himself to all the consequences of that climactic change.