Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect: Maimonides' Theory of Providence
Author(s): Charles M. Raffel
Source: *AJS Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 25-71
Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Association for Jewish Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1486393
Accessed: 18/05/2011 07:24

PROVIDENCE AS CONSEQUENT UPON THE INTELLECT: MAIMONIDES' THEORY OF PROVIDENCE

by

CHARLES M. RAFFEL

I. Introduction

Julius Guttmann, in his classic work on the history of Jewish philosophy, summarizes his understanding of Maimonides' theory of divine providence:

> Divine providence does not, therefore, mean interference with the external course of nature, but is transferred to the inner life of man, where it is founded on the natural connection between the human and the divine spirit. . . . Intellectual and not ethical factors are decisive for the role of divine providence.[1]

After having extracted this theory from the *Guide* III/17, Guttmann adds in a footnote that his reading of the theory as set forth in III/17 does not tell

1. Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism* (New York, 1973), p. 194.

the full story of Maimonides' views on providence, for chapters III/23 and III/51 contain "locutions which yield an exactly contrary theory to that indicated in chapter 17."[2] In *Philosophies of Judaism,* Guttmann is at a loss to explain the contradictions beyond the following remark: Maimonides "allowed opinions which were contradictory to each other to stand in various places in the book, thereby arousing the informed reader to discover his true doctrine."[3] This move, imputing an esoteric doctrine beyond the contradictions in the *Guide,* is characteristic of a school of thought on Maimonides which Guttmann aggressively opposed.[4] His apparent concession on the issue of providence reveals the perplexing, complicated nature of that theory in Maimonides' thought.

One would assume that the contradictory and complex nature of Maimonides' full expression on providence would have attracted a variety of interpretations of the relevant texts and related concepts. However, a review of the secondary literature on the subject shows that the dominant method in attempting to flesh out or clarify Maimonides' thinking has been through an uncovering or identification of his philosophic sources. Scholars have made only modest efforts to interpret Maimonides' view on providence, while devoting considerable study to an identification of its philosophic sources. Perhaps Maimonides himself invited this source-quest, for in his initial account of providence in III/17, he presents his own opinion only after reviewing the history of relevant speculation on the issue.

Maimonides ends chapter 16 of Part III of the *Guide* with the challenge of affirming, both as philosophically and traditionally correct, the notions of God's knowledge of and His providence over His creation and creatures. Maimonides begins the next chapter (17) with a review of five opinions on providence, the views of Epicurus, Aristotle, the Ashariya, Mu'tazila, and the Torah opinion, and then offers his own opinion. Shlomo Pines has shown, based on manuscript evidence, that the structure of this review and the substance of several of the opinions are based on Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise *On Governance.*[5]

2. Ibid., p. 502 n. 99.

3. Ibid.

4. For a summary of Guttmann's view on the "political interpretation" of Leo Strauss, see *Philosophies of Judaism,* pp. 503–504, n. 125. For an extended discussion, see Julius Guttmann, "Philosophie der Religion oder Philosophie des Gesetzes?" *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 5 (1976): 148–173.

5. Shlomo Pines, "A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 24 (1955): 123 ff. This discovery is incorporated and expanded upon in Pines's "Translator's Introduction" to *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago, 1963), pp. lxv–lxvii.

Maimonides' own opinion on providence emerges at the end of chapter 17 and is further elaborated in chapter 18 of the *Guide,* Part III. The theory is encapsulated in the phrase "providence according to the intellect." Aristotle had been presented by Maimonides (after Alexander) as denying individual providence in the sublunar sphere, but admitting a secondary "kind of providence" to the species of man and other animals. While Maimonides castigates Aristotle's denial of individual providence, the majority of scholars see in Maimonides' own opinion, "providence according to the intellect," an affinity to Aristotle which Maimonides is not willing to admit openly. The most radical claim, namely, that Maimonides' view is Aristotle's view (and is in agreement with the hidden view of the Torah), was offered by Joseph Ibn Caspi and was reaffirmed by a modern scholar, Norbert Samuelson. Samuelson writes on Ibn Caspi's analysis:

> . . . Maimonides' real view agrees with that of Aristotle, the view of both agrees with the hidden meaning of the Torah, and the explicit or overt meaning of the Torah, which is the belief of the Jewish masses, is never affirmed to be a dogma or root belief of rabbinic Judaism.[6]

While Ibn Caspi expresses this view on the three major theories in the *Guide,* creation, prophecy, and providence, Samuelson agrees definitively only on the last issue: "I am certain that he is right about the issue of divine providence."[7] A similar view, that Maimonides' opinion is fully consonant with Aristotle's opinion and, most probably, based on it, had been suggested by Samuel Ibn Tibbon in a letter written in 1199 to Maimonides, and argued for, independently, by Shlomo Pines.[8]

The identification of Maimonides' view with Aristotle's view involves a sophisticated reading of the text in III/17, for Maimonides both explicitly

6. Norbert Samuelson, Review of *Studies in Joseph Ibn Caspi* by Barry Mesch, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14 (1976): 108.

Joseph Ibn Caspi, *'Amude Kesef,* ed. S. Werbluner (Frankfurt, 1848). On creation, pp. 98–101. On prophecy, p. 113. On providence, pp. 126–128. The comment on providence is as follows: "Undoubtedly, Aristotle's and even his teacher Plato's opinion on this matter are equivalent to the Torah's view, according to the *Guide*'s interpretation" (p. 128).

See also Barry Mesch, *Studies in Joseph Ibn Caspi* (Leiden, 1975) p. 103.

For the alleged equivalence of Aristotle's and Maimonides' views, see also Shem Tov Ibn Shem Tov, *Commentary on the Guide* (in standard Hebrew translation of the *Guide*) on III/18 27b: "For Aristotle's view on providence is the Master's [Maimonides'], no more, no less."

7. Samuelson, "Review," p. 108.

8. Samuel Ibn Tibbon's position is reviewed below. For Pines, see "Translator's Introduction," pp. lxv–lxvii.

and implicitly denies that connection. The sophisticated reading of the text is ultimately connected to the view that Maimonides at times says what he doesn't mean and at other times means what he doesn't say. The champion of this view, which sees an esoteric-exoteric dualism in Maimonides' thought, has been Leo Strauss. On this particular issue Strauss, however, sees Plato rather than Aristotle behind Maimonides' treatment of providence.

Strauss's initial comment on Maimonides' theory, in his article on Maimonides' and al-Farabi's political science,[9] is that, both in structure and content, Maimonides' account of providence parallels Plato's account. Both state a public doctrine which affirms God's justice in rewarding and punishing all human behavior, and a private doctrine which restricts divine providence to an intellectual elite. Since Plato is unnamed and apparently unmentioned in Maimonides' historical review of speculation on providence in III/17, Strauss takes as his task the rehabilitation of Plato as the prime influence on Maimonides' thinking. Plato's statement in the *Laws* that God knows individuals and rewards and punishes justly was voiced for its political utility (according to Strauss). This Platonic move parallels, and perhaps determines, Maimonides' understanding of the biblical doctrine that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked.

The connection between Plato's exoteric theory of providence and Maimonides' theory is expanded upon by Strauss in his article "Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis."[10] His central concern, however, is not in explicating the theory of providence, but in demonstrating that the location of Maimonides' discussion demonstrates the overall structure of the *Guide*. Strauss's point is that the *Guide* is to be divided in two halves, a metaphysical section which includes Parts I, II, and III/1–7, and a political section, Part III/8–54. The location of the discussion of providence, which, according to Strauss, begins in chapter 8, is pivotal in that it initiates and determines the concerns of the second half of the *Guide*. The split between metaphysics and politics, between esoteric and exoteric concerns, places Maimonides not only in tune with Plato, but more immediately with the *fālāsīfa,* particularly al-Farabi and Avicenna.

Shlomo Pines, besides his discovery of the influence of Alexander of Aphrodisias on the structure of Maimonides' discussion, offers two inde-

9. Leo Strauss, "Quelques remarques sur la Science Politique de Maimonide et de Farabi," *Revue des études juives* 99–100 (1935–36): 1–37.

10. Leo Strauss, "Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 81 (1937): 93–105.

pendent analyses of the source for Maimonides' own opinion. In his treatment of the philosophic sources of the *Guide,* he writes:

> Thus Maimonides' opinion concerning providence appears to be a combination of the Aristotelian conception of the intellect with Alexander's version of what this commentator holds to be the Aristotelian view of providence. In other words, it is a combination of two Peripatetic doctrines.[11]

This assessment occurs in the section devoted to Alexander of Aphrodisias' influence on Maimonides. In the section on al-Farabi, Pines offers al-Farabi as the source for the same doctrine.

> It seems clear that al-Fārābī maintained that the fact that human individuals progressed toward, or attained, perfection can be equated with providence watching over them. This was Maimonides' own opinion, as he himself points in this context. In all probability, he took it over, with or without modifications, from al-Fārābī.[12]

Pines does not relate his remarks on the al-Farabi connection back to his remarks on the Aristotle-Alexander connection, and we can only guess at the intended cumulative effect of this double attribution. Perhaps Pines means that al-Farabi is Maimonides' direct link to the Peripatetic developments.

We mentioned above that these attributions of sources would require a "sophisticated reading" of the text in the *Guide,* reading beyond chapters 17–18, into chapter 23 and chapter 51, and considering at least those contradictory elements which Guttmann noted. The careful weighing of various passages and the assignment of rank, esoteric or exoteric value, to Maimonides' pronouncements would also seem to be required. The source figure, be it Plato, Aristotle, or al-Farabi, should also receive similarly careful treatment before the identification can be made or the comparison drawn. The scholarly treatments which we have examined, outside of Pines's work on the influence of Alexander's treatise on the structure of Maimonides' presentation, have not attempted to offer this kind of textual support.

Although the quest for sources has dominated the treatment given Maimonides' theory of providence, two major attempts at understanding

11. Pines, "Translator's Introduction," p. lxvii.
12. Ibid., pp. lxxix–lxxx.

what Maimonides means by providence have been made. While still involved in translating the *Guide,* Samuel Ibn Tibbon wrote Maimonides seeking clarification of a troubling point within the theory of providence.[13] In the course of that letter, he presents his own review of providence in the *Guide,* up to the section which perplexes him. He even suggests several possible interpretations, but turns finally to Maimonides for authoritative clarification. Unfortunately, no answer by Maimonides has survived, and Ibn Tibbon's letter serves now, not as an introduction to Maimonides' definitive response, but as a tentative interpretation of Maimonides' theory of providence. The second, full-fledged account, separated from Ibn Tibbon's by several centuries, is Alvin J. Reines's monograph, "Maimonides' Concepts of Providence and Theodicy,"[14] which in contrast to the trend of scholarship, ignores sources and is exclusively devoted to a rehabilitation and analysis of Maimonides' theories.

Samuel Ibn Tibbon's letter represents the most sustained and comprehensive treatment which Maimonides' theory of providence received at the hands of his medieval commentators. The heart of Samuel Ibn Tibbon's question is the apparent contradiction between the theory of providence expressed in the early chapters of Part III of the *Guide* (chapters 17–18, 22–23) and the treatment of special providence for the perfect man in chapter 51 of Part III. This special providence is described by Maimonides in the following passage from chapter 51: "If a man's thought is free from distraction, if he apprehends Him, may He be exalted, in the right way and rejoices in what he apprehends, that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind. For he is with God and God is with him."[15]

Ibn Tibbon reviews his own understanding of the earlier chapters and concludes that Maimonides' own theory of providence as a function of intellectual perfection is expanded and clarified in the chapters (22–23) which deal with the interpretation of Job. After experiencing intellectual knowledge of God, Job's attitude toward the evil and suffering of this world is transformed. After acquiring wisdom, Job's earthly misfortune, loss of

13. Zvi Diesendruck, "Samuel and Moses Ibn Tibbon on Maimonides' Theory of Providence," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 11 (1936): 341–356. See also Aviezer Ravitzky, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Character of *The Guide of the Perplexed,*" *AJS Review* 6 (1981): 87–123.

14. Alvin J. Reines, "Maimonides' Concepts of Providence and Theodicy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972): 169–205.

15. *The Guide of the Perplexed,* translated by Shlomo Pines (Chicago, 1963), III/51, p. 625. All subsequent page references are to the Pines translation.

wealth, health, and family, is insignificant in comparison to the fortune of ultimate felicity and immortality, and he may accept his earthly misfortune now as something beyond his understanding. Ibn Tibbon argues that Maimonides seems to contradict himself. The special providence for the perfect in chapter 51 involves physical immunity from evil, "that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind," while providence for the perfected Job involves only an intellectual immunity from evil or suffering. Ibn Tibbon poses the contradiction:

> Because [Maimonides] did not say that only before Job acquired certain knowledge of God was he susceptible to misfortune, while after he knew God it was impossible for misfortune to strike him. . . . But he did say in the *Guide* III/22 if he [Job] had been wise he would not have been affected by any of the [misfortunes] which overcame him.[16]

Ibn Tibbon devotes the next section of his letter to an attempt to prove that Maimonides' own theory of providence, as developed in chapters 17 and 18, is more consonant with general philosophic opinion than Maimonides himself admitted. Ibn Tibbon writes that Job's view of providence after acquiring wisdom may be seen as equivalent to Aristotle's own theory. (Maimonides himself identifies Job's initial, pre-enlightenment view with that of Aristotle: "The opinion attributed to Job is in keeping with the opinion of Aristotle.")[17] This attempt by Ibn Tibbon to stretch Aristotle's limited notion of providence from the translunar to the sublunar, however tenuous, is based on the assumption that a universal framework of individual contingencies may be conceived as built into the natural world order. While Maimonides distinguishes, against Aristotle, between the contingent fact of a ship's sinking and the providential act of the sailors' fate, Ibn Tibbon tries to prove that Aristotle himself could maintain this distinction. Furthermore, basing his argument on other passages in Maimonides' works and the citation of al-Farabi in chapter 18, Ibn Tibbon envisions a broad consensus of philosophers who share the notion that an individual's providence is mediated by the development of his intellect. Maimonides cites the

16. Diesendruck, "Samuel and Moses Ibn Tibbon," pp. 355–356. The translation from the Hebrew is my own. No attempt is made here to indicate the tentative nature of Ibn Tibbon's translation of the *Guide* at the time this letter was written. Rather, citations from the *Guide* are taken from the Pines translation. The following is the original:
כי לא אמר אדוננו ירום הודו שבעוד שלא ידע הבורא ידיעה אמתית באו עליו אותם הרעות אבל אחר שידע השם לא היה אפשר שיבואו עליו רעות. . . . וזה הוא אשר אמר אדוננו בפכ"ב כי אילו היה הוא חכם לא חשש בוא עליו שום דבר מכל מה שבא:

17. *Guide*, III/23, p. 494.

following from al-Farabi: "Those who have the capacity of making their soul pass from one moral qualilty to another are those of whom Plato has said that God's providence watches over them to a higher degree."[18] For Ibn Tibbon, the identification of Maimonides' theory with that of the philosophers is complete, if not total: "Apparently, all the philosophers agree that God's providence over individual men is consequent upon the intellect."[19]

After establishing Maimonides' own theory in chapters 17–23 as a thoroughgoing philosophic view, a harmonistic understanding of the providence for the perfect in chapter 51 seems impossible to Ibn Tibbon. A physical immunity from danger, "all evils are prevented from befalling him," is explicit from the plain meaning of Maimonides' words. How can such a physical immunity from suffering and evil be justified, asks Ibn Tibbon. The intellectual immunity which is Job's providence is acceptable philosophic doctrine, but physical immunity from misfortune can only be achieved through miraculous intervention, "through a miracle or a sign." If indeed Maimonides intends a miraculous intervention on behalf of the perfect man, then according to his theory of miracles (stipulated into the natural order at the world's creation), there would have to exist so many and so varied stipulations to protect each perfect man, that any coherent notion of a stable, permanent nature is violated. This notion of miraculous intervention, argues Samuel Ibn Tibbon, is certainly unacceptable to the philosophers, for whom this theory is especially offered; Maimonides hoped to dispel the "great doubt" of the philosophers concerning providence over human individuals with his formulation in chapter 51. If, on the other hand, Maimonides is making a sudden appeal to the religious sentiment, which would have no problem in accepting miraculous intervention, the rigorous intellectual requirement for intervention, in particular, and the philosophic framework of his basic theory, in general, would make such an appeal irrelevant. For according to the standard religious view, God intervenes for the morally pious who have not achieved intellectual perfection. Finally, given Ibn Tibbon's understanding, this chapter (51) satisfies neither the philosophic nor the religious position. The notions which it conveys are at once too sophisticated and too naive.

Since the plain meaning and context of Maimonides' words point

18. *Guide*, III/18, p. 476.
19. Diesendruck, "Samuel and Moses Ibn Tibbon," p. 357.
והנראה כי הפילוסופים כלם מודים בזה שמירת השם באישי האדם ר"ל השמירה ההוא באמצעות השכל.

"without a doubt"[20] to some sort of miraculous intervention which is unacceptable to a philosophic position, and, within Maimonides' rigorous intellectual framework, irrelevant to a religious position, Ibn Tibbon's search for other possible interpretations will involve a less than plain (literal) understanding of the text in III/51. Ibn Tibbon offers an interpretation which is consistent with the philosophical conception of the earlier chapters on providence. The supremely perfected intellect of the perfect man may enable him to perceive and thus escape any forthcoming evil "that the human intellect perceives during the mind's contemplation so that it enables him to guard himself from all possible evils, natural, accidental and moral and thus be saved from [them]."[21] Support is brought for this interpretation from Maimonides' own statement in chapter 17:

> . . . Divine providence is consequent upon the divine overflow; and the species with which this intellectual overflow is united, so that it became endowed with intellect and so that everything that is disclosed to it, is the one accompanied by divine providence which appraises all its actions from the point of view of reward and punishment.[22]

Finally, however, for Ibn Tibbon, this solution, a kind of rational divination, does not work. His consideration of Maimonides' tripartite division of evil in III/12, evil due to the deficiency of matter, evil that men inflict upon one another, and self-inflicted evil, limits the possible effects of this divination to the third kind of evil, self-inflicted. But the question from the text of III/51 returns, "no evil at all will befall him," and Ibn Tibbon sees no escape finally from the first two kinds of evil if not through miraculous intervention.

Ibn Tibbon offers another interpretation: "Our Master's [Maimonides'] intention in this wondrous matter is that while the wise man frees his mind from distractions and contemplates, he will not be affected by any misfortune which befalls him, be it death or suffering."[23] For Ibn Tibbon, this interpretation is a duplication of the theory of intellectual immunity offered

20. Ibid., p. 358.

21. Ibid., p. 359.

כי שכל האנוש ישיג בעת התבודדות מחשבתו עד שאפשר לו שישמר בו מכל הרעות המוצאות בכלל הדברים הטבעיים והמקריים והנבחרים וינצל מהם.

22. *Guide,* III/17, pp. 471–472.

23. Diesendruck, "Samuel and Moses Ibn Tibbon," p. 361.

כי כונת אדוננו היתה בזה הענין הנפלא כי בעת שיברר ויבחד אותו החכם מחשבתו לא יחוש לשום רע שישינהו יהיה מות או יסורין.

in the Job chapters. And for this reason the interpretation is rejected. Maimonides promises an innovative theory in III/51, "through which doubts may be dispelled and divine secrets revealed," not a duplication of his treatment of Job. Furthermore, argues Ibn Tibbon, Maimonides' scriptural proof-texts, particularly Psalm 91 (Song on mishaps), deal explicitly with dramatic physical escape, actual "physical" immunity, not "intellectual."

After exploring three ultimately unsuccessful possibilities—miraculous intervention, physical immunity through divination, and intellectual immunity—Ibn Tibbon explores a fourth possibility. Perhaps Maimonides is contradicting himself on purpose, in order to hide an esoteric doctrine, and our text, therefore, contains a contradiction of the kind which Maimonides describes in his *Introduction.*

> The seventh cause. In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and disclose others. Sometimes in the case of certain dicta this necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premise, whereas in another place necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of another premise contradicting the first one. In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware of the contradiction; the author accordingly uses some device to conceal it by all means.[24]

Although the treatment in the earlier chapters of the theory of providence contained numerous apparent inconsistencies, deeper reflection has resolved them, writes Ibn Tibbon. He cannot conceive of an esoteric doctrine which needs to be hidden by the text in chapter 51, but Ibn Tibbon leaves it up to Maimonides to rule out this final possibility.

Samuel Ibn Tibbon remains as the most comprehensive medieval review of Maimonides' formulation. The critical point which Ibn Tibbon uncovers is that Maimonides' theory of providence is multidimensional. He understands Maimonides' treatment to include a base theory, presented and argued for in chapters 17—18, an elaboration of that theory in chapters 22–23 (the Job chapters), and a further elaboration, however it is to be read, in chapter 51. What we shall adopt from Ibn Tibbon, for our own analysis, besides the challenge to provide a coherent reading of III/51, is the identification of three dimensions to Maimonides' account of providence in Part III. While the tentative nature of Ibn Tibbon's remarks does not offer a

24. *Guide,* I/Introduction, p. 18.

systematic treatment of the problem, his attempt to examine the inconsistencies and apparent contradictions is instructive as an overview of the complex nature of Maimonides' account.

Ibn Tibbon ends his letter with the possibility that the apparent contradictions in III/51 conceal an esoteric doctrine. A. J. Reines begins his monograph and bases his analysis on the realization of the assumption that as a "secret" doctrine, Maimonides' true views on providence and theodicy are concealed beneath the surface of the text. His analysis, then, involves a systematization of related concepts in the *Guide* and a rehabilitation of Maimonides' true opinion. The starting point in Reines's examination of Maimonides' theory is that providence is a "secret of the Law" and, as such, determines Maimonides' handling of the subject in two ways.

> First, that Maimonides' theory of providence differs essentially from providence as traditionally understood; and second that Maimonides will deliberately obscure his discussion of providence to conceal it from the unqualified reader.[25]

Reines takes "secret" to be virtually equivalent to "heresy," and maintains that the deliberately obscured doctrine is concealed by Maimonides predominantly through one device.

> Fragmenting a subject into its constituent parts and then scattering them throughout the *Moreh* is one of Maimonides' favorite devices for hiding his true view on a secret subject.[26]

Reines's reconstruction of Maimonides' account revolves around these two central elements: Maimonides' rejection of the traditional notion of providence and his affirmation of a secret or heretical doctrine.

Reines's evaluation of Maimonides' theory of individual providence, while attempting to be comprehensive and systematic, does not offer a sustained interpretation of the relevant passages in the *Guide* in which Maimonides both reveals and conceals his theory. If the theory is, in fact, concealed, for whatever reasons, simple systematization of related concepts will not reveal it. The text of the *Guide* can be consistently difficult and enigmatic, and Maimonides' style of writing demands an exactitude of

25. Reines, "Maimonides' Concepts of Providence and Theodicy," pp. 169–205.

26. Ibid., p. 170 n. 5. On p. 179 n. 43, Reines also mentions Maimonides' deliberately deceptive use of figurative language.

textual interpretation which Reines does not provide. Attempting to relate Reines's reconstruction back to the text of the *Guide* involves significant problems and questions which are not resolved by the blanket claim of a secret or heretical doctrine.

The goal of the present study is to examine Maimonides' presentation of his theory of providence and to substantiate and evaluate what he means by the phrase "providence is according to the intellect." The first task is to determine how Maimonides presents and differentiates his own view on providence from the competing views of other thinkers. This review will help focus the issues which have dominated the secondary literature on the topic, Maimonides' relationship to Aristotle's account, his relationship to the traditional account, and the nature of the interplay of philosophic and traditional elements in Maimonides' theory. The controlling factor in isolating Maimonides' own opinion on providence has been the notion that since providence is a secret doctrine, and the *Guide* a purposefully nonsystematic book, then, the most secretive, heretical doctrine that can be revealed must represent Maimonides' own true opinion. Commenting on the tenacity of this approach in finding what it sets out to find, Herbert Davidson has written:

> . . . Those who absolutely insist on discovering a non-traditional philosophic system concealed below the surface of Maimonides' professed system will be able to withstand any evidence to the contrary. Such evidence will merely illustrate to them Maimonides' skill in hiding his genuine views.[27]

Within the sections of the *Guide* on providence and God's knowledge, Maimonides has provided what may be a more authoritative key to unlocking his own thinking on these issues. In these sections of the *Guide,* Maimonides consistently distinguishes between his own opinion and the opinion of the Law, between "my opinion" and "our opinion."[28] The task of isolating his own opinion on providence or knowledge is by no means simple, for frequently the two opinions seem to be intertwined, and, of course, the interplay of these two opinions ("my" and "our") must be considered. But so far no attempt has been made to delineate the parameters of

27. Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides' Secret Position on Creation," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature,* ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, 1979), p. 16.

28. Initially, in the *Guide,* III/17, p. 469, Maimonides contrasts "our opinion" with "what I myself believe." The distinction between the "I" and the "we" seems to be consistently maintained in the discussion of providence and God's knowledge.

the "my" and the "our," of the I-opinion from the we-opinion on providence; such an attempt seems to hold the possibility of a more accurate and authoritative unfolding of Maimonides' true views on providence.[29]

The second task is to explain what Maimonides means when he says that "providence is according to the intellect" by examining the relevant sections on providence throughout the *Guide* and, as necessary background, Maimonides' own epistemological scheme.

II. The Dual Theory of Providence: "I" and "We"

In chapter 17 of Part III of the *Guide,* only after reviewing and criticizing other opinions on providence does Maimonides offer his own view. He claims that his view satisfies the dual criteria of making philosophic sense and safeguarding fundamental principles of the Law. In his own words: "This is the opinion that to my mind corresponds to the intelligible and to the texts of the Law."[30] These same dual criteria informed his review and criticism of earlier opinions. In this section, I propose to investigate the standards by which Maimonides criticized less coherent or acceptable theories and how, from these standards, his own opinion is formulated. This investigation will enable us to understand the background and birth of Maimonides' own theory, which is based initially on that which he finds acceptable in two antagonistic formulations, based on two distinct sets of criteria, the dictates of the Law and philosophic coherence.

A careful analysis of the *Guide* III/17 reveals not only the characters and opinions in Maimonides' review, but implicitly and explicitly Maimonides' own view concerning each character or opinion. The first opinion, "that there is no providence at all with regard to anything whatever in all that exists,"[31] is identified with Epicurus. A further identification is made with "those in Israel who were unbelievers," who shared this opinion, by reference to Jeremiah 5:12, "They have belied the Lord, and said: It is not He." The invalidation of this opinion follows immediately; Aristotle "has demonstrated that this opinion is inadmissible."[32]

29. For the same initial observation, see Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952), pp. 82–84.

30. *Guide,* III/17, p. 474.

31. *Guide,* III/17, p. 464.

32. Ibid.

The presentation of the first opinion sets a pattern which Maimonides follows in his discussion of the other views.

1. The opinion on providence.
2. The individual or group associated with this opinion.
3. The identification of any Israelites with this opinion through appropriate scriptural reference.
4. Criticism of the opinion.

The second opinion, "those who hold that providence watches over certain things and that these exist through the governance and the ordering of one who governs and orders, whereas other things are left to chance,"[33] is identified as Aristotle's opinion. Maimonides' exposition of Aristotle's view is more thorough than his simple statement of Epicurus' opinion. As formulated by Alexander of Aphrodisias,[34] Aristotle's view is that individual providence "ends at the sphere of the moon." Maimonides further identifies this doctrine as "a branch deriving from his root doctrine concerning the eternity of the world."[35] In regard to what is below the sphere of the moon, there exists, nevertheless, 'a kind of providence,' "an overflow from the providence in question, which overflow necessitates "the durability and permanence of the species,"[36] though the durability of the individual is not maintained. Individuals are not totally neglected by this overflow, for the faculties which ensure the permanence of the species are carried by individuals. After outlining Aristotle's position, Maimonides' criticism involves the failure of this theory to grant any special status to human circumstances.

33. Ibid.

34. Shlomo Pines has demonstrated that Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise *On Governance* (*Fi'l-tadbīr*), which is Maimonides' acknowledged source for his discussion of the range of philosophic opinion on God's knowledge in III/16, is the unacknowledged source for the parallel review of the range of opinion on providence in III/17. Pines points out that Alexander's formulation or elaboration of Aristotle's unarticulated view, that providence extends in the celestial sphere up to the sphere of the moon, but does not include the sublunar world, is in line with Aristotle's position. The view is marked by affirmation of the eternity of the cosmic order, "whose preservation may be attributed to divine providence," and the denial of providential intervention in regard to individual beings or events. Pines, "Translator's Introduction," pp. lxv–lxvii.

For the history of the formulation of a doctrine of providence within the Aristotelian school, see Paul Moraux, *D'Aristote à Bessarion: Trois Exposés sur l'histoire et latransmission de l'artistotelism grec* (Quebec, 1970), pp. 41–65.

35. *Guide,* III/17, p. 465.

36. Ibid.

Aristotle, according to Maimonides, sees no distinction in the following three sets:

1. The fall of a leaf or stone vs. the drowning of excellent and superior men on board ship.
2. An ox that kills a host of ants vs. a building which collapses on and kills people at prayer within it.
3. A cat devouring a mouse vs. a lion devouring a prophet.[37]

Aristotle's failure to make these distinctions is symptomatic of his theory's denial of providence beneath the sphere of the moon.

In summing up Aristotle's view that it is impossible that divine providence should accompany plants, animals, or human beings, Maimonides again demonstrates that this view derives inevitably from Aristotle's belief in the eternity of the world: "This is consequent upon his opinion concerning the eternity of the world and the impossibility of that which exists being in any respect different from what it is."[38] The Israelites who shared Aristotle's opinion, referred to in Ezekiel 9:9, are recognized by Maimonides as "deviating from our Law" for proclaiming, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth."[39]

While the authority of Aristotle (or Reason) was invoked to invalidate Epicurus, a second source of authority is now invoked to criticize those who have held Aristotle's opinion: the authority of the Law. Epicurus' notion failed explicitly, based on demonstration and, presumably, on the authority of the Law, although that additional stricture is not explicitly stated by Maimonides. How has Aristotle's theory failed? By denying individual providence over man, Aristotle's view "deviates from our Law." The philosophic rigor of Aristotle's view, however, has not been challenged. As we shall see in relation to two subsequent theories, Aristotle's theory is free from "incongruities and contradictions,"[40] which in Maimonides' terminology point to philosophic inconsistencies. Within the realm of philosophic discourse, Aristotle emerges relatively unscathed, perhaps because,

37. *Guide*, III/17, p. 466.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. In regard to the third opinion, "great incongruities are bound up with this opinion" (III/17, p. 466) is the phrase which introduces Maimonides' criticisms. "Incongruities and contradictions follow necessarily also from this opinion" (III/17, p. 468) is applied to the Mu'tazilite view within the fourth opinion.

in Maimonides' judgment, Aristotle determines and defines the standards of philosophic discourse.

The third opinion, "that in all that exists there is nothing either among universal or particular things that is in any respect due to chance,"[41] is stated, identified with the Ash'ariyya, exposed, and criticized. No scriptural correlation is offered. This opinion, according to Maimonides, involves "great incongruities," such as the denial of nature in favor of the ever-present will of God, denial of human free will, and the consequent undermining of the validity of the Law. This view, according to Maimonides' extended critique, makes neither philosophic nor prophetic sense.

The fourth opinion, "that man has the ability to act of his own accord," and that "all the actions of God are consequent upon wisdom, that injustice is not permissible for Him, and that He does not punish a man who does good,"[42] is formally ascribed to no individual or group. However, a substantially modified version in which man's ability to act is not absolute, and otherworldly compensation justifies God's wisdom, is ascribed to the Mu'tazila. The "incongruity" attached to this opinion, according to Maimonides, lies in the regrettable doctrine of compensation, in which the suffering of a child with birth defects is ascribed to God's wisdom, and the death of a righteous man is seen as justified by the maximization of his reward in the world-to-come. The doctrine of compensation in the otherworld is even extended to the animal kingdom, including in Maimonides' list, a flea, a louse, and a mouse. The "self-contradiction" involved with the fourth opinion is the simultaneous assertion of God's omniscience and man's free will: "For they believe both that He, may He be exalted, knows everything and that man has the ability to act; and this leads, as the slightest reflection should make clear, to self-contradiction."[43]

The third and fourth opinions both share the lack of any scriptural reference and identification of their views within the Israelite community.[44] For our own present purposes, we may simply deduce that these views held currency during Maimonides' own times and were, therefore, subject to his review. As expressed by their Kalam advocates, these opinions met only with contempt from Maimonides.

41. *Guide,* III/17, p. 466.
42. *Guide,* III/17, pp. 467–468.
43. *Guide,* III/17, p. 469.
44. On page 471, within discussion of the fifth opinion, identification of "some latter-day Gaonim" with the Mu'tazilite view is confirmed.

Before his presentation of the fifth opinion, Maimonides offers a curiously benign appraisal of the second, third, and fourth views. Within the individual presentation of each separate view, Aristotle was criticized, from the perspective of the Law, for failing to articulate a theory of individual providence, and the Ash'ariyya and Mu'tazila were more criticized than explained, being plagued by "great incongruities" and "incongruities and contradictions," respectively. But now, before revealing his own view, and perhaps signaling the complexity of the problem, Maimonides seeks to absolve the theoreticians of the three positions from any blame. All three theories followed good and honorable intentions—Aristotle "followed what is manifest in the nature of that which exists,"[45] the Ash'ariyya tried to avoid ascribing ignorance to God, and the Mu'tazila tried to avoid ascribing to Him injustice and wrongdoing.

It seems appropriate to ask here, along with Maimonides' summary review, what are the remains upon which he may build his own theory? No theory that he has surveyed has fulfilled the dual criteria of philosophic rigor and conformability to the dictates of the Law. Tackling the standards of the dual criteria separately, Aristotle's opinion, while deviating from the Law, satisfies (if not defines) philosophic rigor. The initial formulation of the fourth opinion, before the corrupting additions of the Mu'tazila, which asserted the justice of God's system of punishment and man's free will, is the only other opinion which survived or escaped Maimonides' total criticism.[46] Each opinion, Aristotle's and the unattributed fourth view, may satisfy separately one set of the dual criteria. Nevertheless, while Aristotle's opinion may define philosophic respectability, and the assertion of God's justice and man's free will may begin to define the Law's concerns, the two views taken together are mutually antagonistic. And neither one alone makes philosophic sense and also adheres to the fundamental principles of the Law.

How, then, does Maimonides compose, articulate, and defend a theory of providence which will satisfy the dual standards which have emerged from his review of other opinions? The answer lies within the account of the fifth opinion. The view, on first glance, contains opinions representing the

45. *Guide*, III/17, pp. 468–469.

46. The unattributed fourth view may share the "self-contradiction" involved in the Mu'tazilite conception. "For they believe both that He, may He be exalted, knows everything and that man has the ability to act; and this leads, as the slightest reflection should make clear, to self-contradiction" (*Guide*, III/17, p. 469).

following three layers of Jewish scholarship: the consensus ("multitude of our scholars"), the minority ("our latter-day scholars"), and Maimonides' own view ("I myself").[47] On closer examination, the fifth opinion reveals dual aspects of Maimonides' own theory of providence. It contains two views which represent different aspects of Maimonides' opinion—an "Our opinion, the opinion of our Law," of which the "multitude of our scholars" is a minimally acceptable subset and "our latter-day scholars" is an unacceptable one, and an "I" opinion. The our-opinion asserts root doctrines which reveal and define the Law's dictates on the question of providence, and the I-opinion presents a philosophic account of how providence may be said to operate over man. In partial answer to our question raised above, Maimonides negotiates the dual criteria which define coherent and acceptable thinking on the subject of providence by providing two distinct accounts—an our-account and an I-account.[48] The our-account is offered first, and its distinctive lines are quite clearly marked. It is formed essentially by the simultaneous assertion of two fundamental principles and is consistently presented as "our opinion." The following are the two fundamental principles asserted in III/17:

> It is a fundamental principle of the Law of Moses our Master, peace be on him, and of all those who follow it that man has an absolute ability to act;
>
> It is likewise one of the fundamental principles of the Law of Moses our Master that it is in no way possible that He, may He be exalted, should be unjust, and that all the calamities that befall men and the good things that come to men, be it a single individual or a group, are all of them determined according to the deserts of the men concerned through equitable judgment in which there is no injustice whatever.[49]

The third principle, which completes the our-account, is asserted in III/18.

> This matter is one of the fundamental principles of the Law, which is built

47. *Guide,* III/17, p. 469.

48. As mentioned in n. 29 above, Leo Strauss noted the phenomenon but did not apply it to a sustained treatment of Maimonides' theory. "The significance of the singular and the plural in Maimonidean usage comes out most clearly in the discussion of Providence. There, he distinguishes, with an unequivocalness which could hardly be surpassed, between '*our* opinion' and '*my* opinion.' " See Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* p. 83.

49. *Guide,* III/17, p. 469.

> upon it, I mean to say upon the principle that providence watches over each human individual in the manner proper to him.[50]

The combined assertions of man's absolute ability to act and God's justice in rewarding and punishing man according to his deserts form the substance of this opinion. The added disclaimer that God's system of judgment is beyond man's comprehension, buttressed by biblical support for this notion (Deut. 32:4, "For all His ways are judgment"), completes the initial presentation, in chapter 17, of this view.

The I-account evolves slowly out of the our-opinion, and initially appears to be identical with it. The first-person singular view is gradually unfolded in four steps. The first step involves a virtual repetition of the our-opinion marked by the forthright claim that only individuals of the human species are subject to divine providence.

> For I for one believe that in this lowly world—I mean that which is beneath the sphere of the moon—divine providence watches only over the individuals belonging to the human species and that in this species alone all the circumstances of the individuals and the good and evil that befall them are consequent upon the deserts, just as it says, "For all His ways are judgment."[51]

Maimonides confirms that, outside of the context of human circumstances, by denying providence to plants and animals, the negative half of his opinion is in accord with Aristotle. "But regarding all the other animals and, all the more, the plants and other things, my opinion is that of Aristotle."[52]

The second step involves Maimonides' initial formulation in regard to the *what* of divine providence and is presented as part of an ongoing process of reflection or interpretation. It seeems that Maimonides chose to present his I-opinion in the form of a gradual reinterpretation of the fundamental principles embedded in the our-opinion.

> According to me, as I consider the matter, divine providence is consequent upon the divine overflow; and the species with which this intellectual overflow

50. *Guide*, III/18, p. 475.
51. *Guide*, III/17, p. 471.
52. Ibid.

> is united, so that it became endowed with intellect and so that everything that is disclosed to a being endowed with the intellect was disclosed to it, is the one accompanied by divine providence, which appraises all its actions from the point of view of reward and punishment.[53]

This step of the I-opinion offers intellect as the distinctive factor which determines which species receives divine providence. This statement marks the birth of the distinctive element of Maimonides' own I-theory, the intellectualizing factor, which is encapsulated in the phrase "providence according to the intellect."

In the third step of the formulation, Maimonides provides scriptural evidence that individual providence extends only over human beings. The evidence is threefold.

1. There are clear texts concerning providence watching over all the human individuals and exercising a surveillance over all their actions (Ps. 33:15, Jer. 32:19, Job 34:21).
2. The Torah, too, sometimes makes explicit statements concerning providence watching over human individuals and exercising a surveillance over their actions (Exod. 32:34, 32:33, Lev. 23:30, 20:6).
3. Stories concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are an absolute proof of there being an individual providence.[54]

On the other side, the evidence for animals is negative. Basing his proof on Habakkuk 1:12–15, Maimonides agrees with Aristotle's position that the only providence left to the animals is the secondary form of providence's safeguards built into a species, the ability to move and react, etc.

The fourth and final step of the I-opinion's formulation in chapter 17 is offered as follows:

> But I believe that providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it. For providence can only come from an intelligent being, from One who is an intellect with a supreme perfection, than which there is no higher. Accordingly everyone with whom something of this overflow is united, will be reached by providence to the extent to which he is reached by the intellect.[55]

In chapter 18 Maimonides draws some conclusions from the intellec-

53. *Guide*, III/17, p. 472.
54. Ibid.
55. *Guide*, III/17, p. 474.

tualistic grounding of his I-theory and completes the initial presentation of his view. He begins by further rarefying or aristocratizing the category of the recipients of providence. While having first stated that individual providence is attached to the human species, Maimonides now qualifies that statement. By declaring himself a nominalist in regard to species, Maimonides sees providence as reaching only individuals, and furthermore, only those individuals who are prepared for it. The notion that "providence is graded as human perfection is graded"[56] receives scriptural support, is asserted as "one of the fundamental principles of the Law," and receives blanket endorsement by the philosophers.[57] This view of providence dovetails with Maimonides' theory of prophecy by establishing a hierarchy of both intellect and action: "For it is this measure of the overflow of the divine intellect that makes the prophets speak, guides the action of righteous men, and perfects the knowledge of excellent ones with regard to what they know."[58] The varying degrees of receptivity to the intellectual overflow create, in effect, a two-party system within the realm of the human species, the "haves" and the "have-nots," or more properly, "those who have more" and "those who have less." The "ignorant and disobedient" are neglected in proportion to their lack of intellectual perfection and, at the extreme, are on par with the animals of the nonhuman species.

To summarize, Maimonides' I-opinion is introduced in the following four stages:

56. *Guide,* III/18, p. 475.

57. This blanket philosophic endorsement emerges in the *Guide,* III/18, p. 476, where Maimonides quotes from the (lost) commentary of al-Farabi on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics:* "Those who have the capacity of making their soul pass from one moral quality to another are those of whom Plato has said that God's providence watches over them to a higher degree." Shlomo Pines sees in this citation probable proof that al-Farabi is the source of Maimonides' theory. He writes: "It seems clear that al-Fārābī maintained that the fact that human individuals progressed toward, or attained perfection can be equated with providence watching over them. This was Maimonides' own opinion, as he himself points in this context. In all probability, he took it over, with or without modifications, from al-Fārābī" ("Translator's Introduction," pp. lxxix–lxxx). But the text of al-Farabi's commentary speaks of an individual's soul "passing from one moral quality to another," of moral perfection and not of intellectual perfection. As he reveals in a footnote, Pines is well aware of this problem, but his attempted solution is unconvincing. On p. lxxx he writes, "Al-Fārābī apparently refers to moral perfection only, but he certainly had also (or rather first and foremost) in mind the perfection of the intellect" (n. 34).

The seeming emphasis on moral perfection does not reflect Maimonides' own theory, while, of course, it does not totally contradict it. The evidence of text and context suggests that Maimonides employs the al-Farabi citation as blanket philosophic support for a notion which his own I-theory may ultimately transcend.

58. *Guide,* III/18, p. 475.

1. Individuals of the human species alone are subject to divine providence.
2. Introduction of the intellectualizing factor.
3. Scriptural evidence that individual providence extends only over human beings.
4. "Providence is consequent upon the intellect."

The we-opinion asserts three "fundamental principles"—man's "absolute ability to act," the justice of God's system of reward and punishment, and "that providence watches over each human individual in the manner proper to him."

What emerges from this outline of the "we" and "I" accounts in the fifth opinion on providence is Maimonides' attempted solution to the problem of satisfying dual criteria—the simultaneous deployment of two views. The our-opinion asserts the fundamental principles which form the basis of the Law, and the I-account corresponds to the "intelligibles." The dual sets of requirements for an acceptable and coherent view of providence dominated Maimonides' review of available opinion. He conceded that uttering a coherent view on providence is a difficult task, but assessed ancient and contemporary opinion as either philosophically ludicrous or as inoperative for a religious-legal system. Maimonides' own opinion, given these dual standards, must satisfy the dual role of philosophic and prophetic sense.

In chapter 17, Maimonides characterizes his own view when he labels it "less disgraceful than the preceding opinions and nearer than they to intellectual reasoning."[59] Maimonides' previous criticisms of the other opinions have informed these standards with specific meanings and values. The disgraceful (or incongruous) aspects were involved in the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite conceptions. Aristotle's opinion was easily closest to intellectual reasoning, but fell short of offering an actual theory of individual providence.

Does Maimonides' conglomerate account satisfy the dual criteria which have dominated his presentation? Upon examination, each part of the account (I/we) seems to meet and articulate separately the standards Maimonides had used in evaluating other opinions. The our-account asserts the standards which conform to the dictates of the Law. The account ostensibly has its source in the consensus of right-thinking opinion within the religious community. But in the format of Maimonides' fundamental principles, it has received an obviously original presentation. By itself, the

59. *Guide*, III/17, p. 471.

account does not really offer a theory of providence. The assertions stop well short of explaining the *what* or *how* of providence, but profess that God's system of justice, the divine logic behind reward and punishment, is beyond human understanding: "But we are ignorant of the various modes of deserts."[60] If judged exclusively in regard to its conformability to the dictates of the Law, the our-account succeeds, not only because it asserts categorically that individual providence exists, but because it reveals authoritatively, as fundamental principle, the Law's concerns. These fundamental principles, while buttressed by scriptural evidence, are as axioms essentially self-validating in Maimonides' method of presentation.[61]

While the our-account asserts that individual providence exists, the I-view gradually stamps a distinctive element upon it by attempting to explain the substance and function of providence. The intellectualizing factor, that providence is according to the intellect, is the stuff of the I-view. How does Maimonides defend this part of his view?

In chapter 18, after refining his I-theory, Maimonides attempts to give his theory the stamp of authority through scriptural support. However, the verses cited, which refer in the most general way to God's watching over the patriarchs and Moses, hardly offer substantiation of the notion of providence according to the intellect—for example, the promise to Abraham, "I am thy shield" (Gen. 15:1), or to Isaac, "and I will be with thee, and will bless thee" (Gen. 26:3).[62] Maimonides would appear ready to admit this shortcoming. The scriptural evidence points to a certain conclusion, and "the point of view of speculation" helps to nail down that conclusion. After listing the verses concerning the patriarchs and Moses, Maimonides writes, "All these are explicit affirmations of providence watching over them according to the measure of their perfection."[63] Maimonides' apparent admission is that Scripture neither comments on nor excludes the intellec-

60. *Guide,* III/17, p. 469.

61. In order to understand the significance of "our opinion" for Maimonides' congolomerate theory, it is important to separate the content, style, and emphasis of the stated "our opinion" and the cruder version of this opinion which "the multitude of our scholars" expressed. While the example offered for the sages' view seems to suggest the role of God's direct mediation in parceling out appropriate rewards and punishments, Maimonides' own example for the our-account suggests that the operating principles of pain and pleasure would seem to conform to punishment and reward. The rabbinic support mustered for the version of the sages seems to be a consciously supplied weak link. At any rate, I take only the assertion of fundamental principles to comprise the authorized version of Maimonides' "our opinion."

62. *Guide,* III/18, p. 475.

63. Ibid.

tual dimension of "perfection." His reading the "intent"[64] of Scripture, then, involves his reading in the intellectualizing element. He summarizes his twofold concern, Scripture and speculation, as it pertains to providence, as follows:

> Consider how this kind of consideration has conducted us to the knowledge of the correctness of what all the prophets, may peace be upon them, have said concerning individual providence watching over each individual in particular according to the measure of his perfection, and how this consideration follows necessarily from the point of view of speculation, provided that, as we have mentioned, providence is consequent upon the intellect.[65]

Now within Maimonides' own hermeneutic system for interpreting Scripture, the demonstrative results of philosophic speculation can and do determine the meaning and intent of a particular verse. Much of the first part of the *Guide* is composed of the conclusions of just such a system. The justification for the intellectualizing element which makes up his I-theory falls, then, from the superficially objective "intent" of Scripture to philosophic speculation which determines that intent.

The philosophic justification for the notion of providence according to the intellect, within Maimonides' presentation of his own view, is presented as follows:

> But I believe that providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it. For providence can only come from an intelligent being, from one who is an intellect perfect with a supreme perfection, than which there is no higher.[66]

This justification has its source in Maimonides' own presentation of Aristotle's view on providence. While Maimonides has both vilified Aristotle's denial of individual providence and condoned his theory for following what is manifest,[67] his own I-discourse seems to have derived its philosophic rigor and authorization by adopting and modifying some elements of the Aris-

64. *Guide*, III/17, p. 471. "I am not relying upon the conclusion to which demonstration has led me, but upon what has clearly appeared as the *intentions* of the book of God and of the book of our prophets."

65. *Guide*, III/18, p. 476.

66. *Guide*, III/17, p. 474.

67. For the vilification, see *Guide* III/17, p. 474, "Those that are excessive . . . animals." For the benign appraisal, see *Guide*, III/17, p. 468, paragraph beginning "To my mind . . ."

totelian model. We have already seen that for Aristotle, as Maimonides presents his views, certain faculties, such as sensation and locomotion, serve a secondary kind of providential function by ensuring the durability of the species involved. Maimonides had presented part of Aristotle's view as follows:

> Every individual has been given that which the species he belongs to needs. Finally such portions of the matter in question that have been purified to the point of receiving the form of the intellect have been given another faculty through which every one of them, according to the perfection of the individual in question governs, thinks, and reflects on what may render possible the durability of himself as an individual and the preservation of the species.[68]

The validation or justification of Maimonides' I-account is ultimately based on the authority of Aristotle," the Chief of the philosophers."[69]

Although Maimonides' I-account expands upon Aristotelian lines, it is inextricably bound to an our-view which asserts fundamental principles diametrically opposed to the full Aristotelian conception of providence. By asserting as fundamental the existence of individual providence in his our-language, Maimonides is free in his I-language to extend and refine the philosophic model just to the cutting edge where it may conform to the Law's dictates. Simon Rawidowicz has noted Maimonides' desire to stay close to a rigorous philosophical model without abandoning the requirements of the Law as a consistent facet of his methodology.[70]

Maimonides' theory of providence, as articulated in chapters 17 and 18 of the *Guide,* is not simply a hybrid of the intersection of philosophy and Law, but an innovative coupling of previously antagonistic elements. Maimonides' goal, to conform to the Law's demands and to speak philosophic sense, has been attacked by presenting simultaneously two accounts. The method of combining antagonistic elements in order to produce a coherent theory is sustained by Maimonides' linguistic device—the oscillation between first-person singular and first-person plural pronouns. The Law's dictates, or fundamental principles, are consistently stated by "we" or "our." The philosophic description, "providence according to the intellect,"

68. *Guide,* III/17, p. 465.

69. See *Guide* I/5, p. 28.

See also Pines, "Translator's Introduction," p. lxi and n. 8 ad loc.

70. For Simon Rawidowicz's notion of Maimonides' method as "difficulty plus difficulty results in a solution," see his *Studies in Jewish Thought,* ed. Nahum Glatzer (Philadelphia, 1974), pp. 309–310.

is consistently argued by "I" or "my." In the *Guide* as a whole, this method seems to have been adopted only for the problems of providence and God's knowledge.[71]

Much confusion in attempting to understand Maimonides' theory of providence has been generated by both failing to note the distinction between the "I" and "we" accounts and failing to appreciate that "I" and "we" combine to form the basis of Maimonides' thinking. The investigation of this present study suggests that the dual languages are designed to satisfy separately the dual criteria of philosophic consistency and legal-religious axioms. The "I-we" theories are introduced together and, at first, appear interchangeable. Only slowly does the specific identity of the "I" evolve.

Maimonides makes the roots of his own I-theory clear enough to trace. In Aristotle's denial of individual providence lie some details which he adopts for his own theory which affirms individual providence. Rehabilitation or extension of an Aristotelian doctrine forms the basis of Maimonides' *I-persona,* but does not tell the whole story of Maimonides' theory or his method. Labeling Maimonides' theory Aristotelian exaggerates the extent to which Aristotle had actually articulated a theory of providence,[72] even according to Alexander of Aphrodisias, and excludes Maimonides' *we-persona,* the assertion of fundamental principles on providence which reverses the way in which Aristotle is now to be taken.

Maimonides saw in Aristotle a denial of individual providence, or more accurately, no theory of individual providence beneath the sphere of the moon, within a structure of general providence for the species of man and animals. While Maimonides could readily accept Aristotle's denial of individual providence vis-à-vis the kingdom of animals as consonant with the

71. In the second step of the formulation of the I-opinion, Maimonides points to the difference between his view and Aristotle's in regard to people killed in the sinking of a ship or the collapse of a roof. While according to Aristotle the accidents are acts of pure chance, according to Maimonides' view the decisions of the people to board the ship or remain in the house are "according to our opinion, not due to chance, but to divine will in accordance with the deserts of those people as determined in His judgments, the rule of which cannot be attained by our intellects" (III/17, p. 472). This reference, in the second step of the I-formulation, to "our opinion" is the single inconsistency in Maimonides' deployment of "I" and "we." The usage at this early stage of the I-account's formulation suggests, perhaps, the interdependency between the "I" and "our" opinions. The cumulative effect of the formulation is the divergence of the conglomerate I-we opinion from Aristotle's on the question of individual providence. Strictly speaking, one may not say, based on this passage, that Maimonides' own I-opinion is independently divergent from this detail of Aristotle's opinion.

72. See Moraux, *D'Aristote à Bessarion,* pp. 40–41.

dictates of the Law, and could embrace the structure of general providence, the dominant denial of individual providence over man makes Aristotle, as his theory stands, unacceptable and unavailable. When Maimonides returns to develop a philosophic model, he returns to Aristotle. After having asserted the existence of individual providence, and having formulated his own I-theory, Maimonides has, in effect, formulated a new theory. Only considering these severe limitations may one say that a part of Maimonides' base theory is "Aristotelian."

My understanding of Maimonides' dual theory as a solution to the problem of satisfying dual criteria represents a more primitive version of the double-truth theory,[73] long the classical model for understanding medieval philosophy. Rather than harmonizing conflicting conceptions, Maimonides has found a method for allowing antagonistic conceptions to coexist. Careful attention to Maimonides' presentation of his theory of providence in chapters 17 and 18 of Part III has shown that speaking two languages will resolve a problem that speaking one will not. By having his "we" assert the fundamental principles of God's justice and man's free will, and his "I" argue for "providence according to the intellect," Maimonides' dual theory has fared better with the dual criteria than any statements, rational or otherwise, which he had previously reviewed.

The analysis of Maimonides on individual providence begins rather than ends here. For not only has Maimonides left unexplained in chapters 17–18 of Part III of the *Guide* how providence works according to the intellect, but two further dimensions of providence, added to the base theory, Job's providence and the providence of the perfect individual, remain to be explored.

III. "Providence as Consequent upon the Intellect"

The purpose of the present section is to examine the further elaborations of the theory of providence in the Job chapters (22 and 23 of Part III) and chapter 51, and to substantiate and consolidate the core of Maimonides' I-theory, that "divine providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it." The goals are essentially twofold: to probe the relationship of the three levels within Maimonides' multidimensional account, from (1)

73. For the implications of an innovative reading of the double-truth theory in Averroes, see Alfred L. Ivry, "Towards a Unified View of Averroes' Philosophy," *Philosophical Forum* 4 (Fall 1972): 87, 107–111.

the base (dual) theory, (2) the Job theory, to (3) the perfect-providence theory, and to articulate what "providence according to the intellect" means within each level.

The second subsection of Maimonides' thematic account on providence, his treatment of Job in chapters 22–23 of Part III, serves a dual function: it consolidates, by way of traditional support, the structure and substance of Maimonides' presentation of the nexus of problems involved in the issue of God's providence and, by way of parable and ellipsis, breaks new ground in revealing further and different dimensions of Maimonides' thinking on providence.

The first chapter on Job, chapter 22, parallels Maimonides' own attack against the significance of the problem of the suffering of the righteous, first argued in chapter 16. According to Maimonides' analysis of philosophical speculation, the problem of the suffering of the righteous, which initiates the "problem" of God's providence, arises from a serious misconception.

> That which in the first place was mainly responsible for plunging them into, and impelling them toward, this opinion is what appears at first sight to be a lack of order in the circumstances of the human individuals and the fact that among the Adamites some excellent individuals are in a sorry and grievous plight whereas some wicked individuals are in good and pleasurable circumstances.[74]

The misunderstanding is one of confused values, of mistaking "good and pleasurable circumstances" for the ultimate good of intellectual perfection. This misconception led the philosophers, when given the necessary choice between God's ignorance and His negligence of human affairs, to opt for ignorance.[75]

Maimonides' prime resolution or deflection of this problem is based on his theory of evil as privation. Evil, he argues, is the absence of positive qualities of goodness, and, as such, is not something directly created by God. The popular misconceptions about evil which would seem to make God directly responsible for its existence are, according to Maimonides, based on the narrow perspective of man's selfish concerns, or more broadly

74. *Guide*, III/16, p. 461.
75. *Guide*, III/16, p. 462.

speaking, on the inaccurate perspective that the universe is man-centered and not God-centered.[76]

This theory of evil as privation is found by Maimonides to be fully present in the text of Job, implied by the semantic separation of Satan, evil's representative, from the rest of being.[77] The hint of this theory resolves immediately for Maimonides the problem of Job's suffering. For the "evil" which Job has suffered, loss of his fortune, death of his children, and excruciating physical pain, is not substantially evil, since substantial evil does not exist.

As part of his own attack on the problem of the suffering of the righteous, Maimonides attempted to show that a proper understanding of evil as privation deflated the problem. His first chapter on Job repeats that attempt, cast, of course, in a traditional mode. The first Job chapter seems to offer the reader a dramatization and proof-text for what had been argued earlier in chapter 16. Chapter 22 ends with Maimonides' curious claim—"As I see it now, I have analyzed the story of Job up to its ultimate end and conclusion."[78] Curious, because a longer chapter on Job is to follow immediately, But rightly so, the demonstrative account is over; if the proffered theodicy is accepted, the problem of Job's suffering is resolved. What remains to be discussed, consonant with Maimonides' own two-tiered account, is the rhetorical case, in which Job's suffering is accepted as substantial and his righteousness as true righteousness.

The process of Job's education and transformation from a suffering man to a man of providence is recounted in chapter 23. Maimonides aligns the various opinions of Job and his comforters with proponents of the opinions on providence which he reviewed in chapter 17. The opinion of Job is modeled after Aristotle, Eliphaz corresponds to the opinion of "our Law," Bildad with the Mu'tazila, and Zophar with the Ash'ariyya. The opinion of Elihu, by process of elimination and by tacit identification, seems to represent an extension of Maimonides' I-view on providence.

Job's transformation from a man lacking knowledge (*'ilm*) to a man blessed with knowledge and experience of the divine is achieved through

76. The theory of evil is presented in *Guide*, III/8–12. Maimonides vigorously attacks those who "consider that which exists only with reference to a human individual" (p. 442).

77. "The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, *and Satan came also among them*" (Job 1:6, 2:1; emphasis added).

78. *Guide*, III/22, p. 490.

Elihu's advice and personal prophetic revelation. The necessary interpretive task is to investigate the nature of Job and Elihu's thinking on providence. The upshot of Job's revelation points to a new dimension in Maimonides' theory, and the implications of Elihu's insights not only confirm Job's theory, but break new ground in clarifying the overarching relationship of providence to the intellect.

In the midst of his discussion of divine knowledge, at the end of chapter 20, Maimonides argued a familiar theme—the equivocality of terms applied to God and man. Part of his discussion of what and how God knows centers on the equivocality of the terms "knowledge," "purpose," and "providence" when applied to God and man. Now, dovetailing with this discovery, Job's revelation is explained by Maimonides to yield a "negative" theory of providence. Reason has its limits. The attempted apprehension of the production of "natural matters" is condemned to futility.

> The purpose of all these things is to show that our intellects do not reach the point of apprehending how these natural things that exist in the world of generation and corruption are produced in time and of conceiving how the existence of the natural force within them has originated them.[79]

The lesson to be learned, revealed to Job, is the disjunction in meaning between man's providence and God's providence, and between man's governance and God's governance.

> But the notion of His providence is not the same as the notion of our providence; nor is His notion of the governance of the things created by Him the same as the notion of our governance of that which we govern. The two notions are not comprised in one definition, contrary to what is thought by all those who are confused, and there is nothing in common between the two except the name alone.[80]

Maimonides summarizes the point of Job's discovery at the end of chapter 23 and includes the evidence from chapter 20: knowledge, purpose, providence, and governance are all equivocal terms, "so that you should not fall into error and seek to affirm in your imagination that His knowledge is like our knowledge or that His purpose and His providence and His governance are like our purpose and our providence and our governance."[81]

79. *Guide,* III/23, p. 496.
80. Ibid.
81. *Guide,* III/23, p. 497.

This is the knowledge which Job lacked, which he needed to end his suffering and which he received in prophetic revelation. This knowledge alleviates suffering, and rather than fostering man's doubts of God's knowledge or His providence, according to Maimonides' terse statement, adds to man's love of God. Job's acquisition of knowledge involved knowledge of a specific kind, the "negative" understanding that God's providence is not to be likened to man's providence, that God's ways are mysteriously incomprehensible. Job has become privileged to a kind of immunity from suffering, based on his understanding of the limits of human understanding.

The Job account appears to achieve for Maimonides contradictory aims. It at once confirms through duplication the structure and problematics of Maimonides' initial treatment of the problems of God's knowledge and providence: reiteration of the theory of evil as privation, assertion of the equivocality of terms such as "providence" and "governance," parallel accounts of the range of views on providence. But the substance of Job's own transformed opinion would seem to undermine the ability of Maimonides' base theory on providence to make any sense. How can one speak of God's providence when the ways of His providence are incomprehensible to man? Assuming for now that one can, or at least that one must try to, articulate a theory of providence, Job represents a thoroughly different man of providence than the model suggested by Maimonides' I-view. The Stoic dimension of Job's acceptance of what is conventionally termed "suffering" seems far removed from the base theory which preached avoidance of or protection from calamities and accidents, rather than training oneself to accept their consequences. For Job, the concept of reward and punishment is changed also, for what matters is not so much what has happened, but how one thinks and feels about it. Before evaluating these critical questions on the relationship of Job to the initial theory of providence, it is necessary to deepen and refine our understanding of what Maimonides' initial theory means. A few hints by Elihu, Job's ideal comforter, who represents a part of Maimonides' *I-persona,* will help establish the mechanics and implications of the initial formulation, "providence according to the intellect."

Although Elihu's message is announced by Maimonides to contain the utmost significance, the problem for our investigation lies in deciphering what Maimonides understood Elihu to be saying. For Maimonides presents elliptically what, in Maimonides' own admission, Elihu portrays "parabolically." The cumulative effect, of Maimonides through Elihu by Maimonides, is extremely hard to figure out. After much patient sifting, two key references emerge from Elihu's view: (1) "the intercession of an angel,"

and (2) "the how of prophecy."[82] Elihu's additional insight joins with Job's prophetic revelation to focus on "the description of natural matters," which suggests that the problem of the suffering of the righteous can be resolved when the universe is understood properly as God-centered and not man-centered. The inability of man to comprehend fully the origin and existence of these natural matters leads Elihu to appreciate the axiom of negative theology, of the ultimate mystery of God's providence. But the conclusion of negative theology is not pursued to its logical end, for Elihu still has something to tell us, or at least hint at, in regard to providence.

The two "added notions" by which Elihu distinguishes his view from his companions' are not elaborated upon, even in elliptical style. But the references have clear significations in a Maimonidean context. The relevance of the "intercession of an angel" points within Maimonides' own system to the Active Intellect,[83] but the elliptical reference here is significant both for its obtuseness and its tardiness. In his entire discussion of providence, this veiled reference is the only mention of the Active Intellect. The relevance of the "how of prophecy" points to a parallel phenomenon for possible clarification of the mechanics of providence. I believe it can be shown that these two clues point to Maimonides' epistemology as the proving ground for his theory of providence. This supposition is supported by the logical inference that the best place to understand "providence according to the intellect," outside of the discussion proper on providence, just may be the section on the intellect.

Maimonides' theory of knowledge is, as Leon Roth has noted,[84] part and parcel of his theory of prophecy. This latter theory, explained in the *Guide* II/32–48, finds its summary definition at the beginning of chapter 36.

> Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consist in its being an overflow overflowing from God, may He be cherished and honored, through

82. *Guide,* III/23, p. 495.

83. In *Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah,* chap. 2, Maimonides specifically identifies the intelligences as Angels.

In *Guide,* II/6, pp. 263–264, Maimonides explains the controversial nature of the concept of the Active Intellect. Al-Farabi clearly identifies the function of the Active Intellect with providence: "The function of the Active Intellect is to exercise providence [*'inayah*] over rational animals and to seek to make them reach the ultimate level of perfection that man can reach, i.e., ultimate happiness. This consists in man's attaining the level of the Active Intellect." Al-Farabi, *The Political Regime (Al-Siyasat al-Madaniyyah),* ed. Fauzi M. Najjar (Beirut, 1964), p. 32. Translation by Miriam S. Galston (unpublished, 1979).

84. Leon Roth, *The Guide for the Perplexed: Moses Maimonides* (New York, 1948), p. 80.

> the intermediation of the Active Intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty.[85]

The notion of "an overflow overflowing" is considered by Maimonides to be the best possible metaphor for explaining the action of something separate from matter. In this definition, God, through the agency of the Active Intellect, activates the human intellect from the capacity for thought to actual thinking. I propose to examine the categorization of prophets which Maimonides sets out in order to untangle the man of providence from the man of prophecy. By examining these prototypes, what separates "prophetic" thinking and action from "providential" thinking and action will emerge clearly.

The qualifications which Maimonides sets for prophecy involve three areas: the rational faculty, the imaginative faculty, and moral habit. Each one is achieved, in the order listed, by study, natural disposition, and "through the turning-away of thought from all bodily pleasure and the putting an end to the desire for the various kinds of ignorant and evil glorification."[86] Given sound moral character as a prerequisite for prophetic training, prophecy involves the perfection of an individual's rational and imaginative faculties. In a monograph on Maimonides' political philosophy, Miriam Galston has placed the definition of prophecy within its proper epistemological framework.

> The divine overflow to the rational faculty produces theoretical perfection; the overflow to the imaginative faculty imparts practical rational perfection. The latter enables its possessor both to arrive at particular judgements necessary for right conduct and to convey to laymen truths about the universe and morality in language and by means of images easy to comprehend.[87]

It is the imaginative faculty's ability to arrive at particular judgments which would seem to form the sphere of providential man's activity. But only after surveying the full range of "overflow" activities may we determine where the overflow overflowing from God, through the agency of the Active Intellect, produces a phenomenon called prophecy as opposed to a phenomenon called providence.

The ranks of various receivers of the divine overflow revolve around

85. *Guide,* II/36, p. 369.
86. *Guide,* II/36, p. 372.
87. Miriam Galston, "Philosopher King v. Prophet," *Israel Oriental Studies* 8 (1978): 205.

three criteria: (1) which faculty is affected, (2) the degree of perfection of the receiving faculty, and (3) the degree of the overflow.[88] The degree of one's moral character has apparently dropped out as a determinant of rank. The first two ranks listed by Maimonides are:

A. Overflow only to the rational faculty.

B. Overflow to both rational and imaginative faculties where the imaginative faculty is in a state of perfection.

Now each of these two ranks has two dimensions—an inner-directed *persona,* where the degree of overflow does not extend beyond the individual receiver, and an outer-directed *persona,* where it does extend beyond the individual. Within Class A, men of science engaged in speculation may either be moved to compose works and teach (i.e., extend the overflow) or not. And Class B, the class of prophets, includes either a public or a private dimension. As Maimonides writes:

> Sometimes the prophetic revelation that comes to a prophet renders him perfect and has no other effect. And sometimes the prophetic revelation that comes to him compels him to address a call to the people, teach them, and let his own perfection overflow toward them.[89]

The third class is:

C. Overflow only to the imaginative faculty, comprising "those who govern cities while being the legislators, the soothsayers, the augurers, and the dreamers of veridical dreams."[90]

Maimonides takes leave of this division of rank and introduces the faculties of courage and divination as a prelude to his discussion of the class of "true prophets." The faculty of courage, in Maimonides' understanding, seems to cover the range of human behavior from mere self-preservation to the extreme of Moses' bravery. The faculty of divination involves a quickening of one's ability to draw conclusions from certain premises. This faculty also entails the ability to give warnings of future events. The fourth class, of true prophets, is ranked as follows:

88. These ranks and classifications are all outlined and discussed in *Guide* II/37–38.
89. *Guide,* II/37, p. 375.
90. *Guide,* II/37, p. 374.

D. Overflow reaches both faculties where both the imaginative and rational faculties have achieved ultimate perfection.

It is the perfection of both faculties, the rational and the imaginative, which determines the final class of true prophets. Within the last two classes of prophets, the possible outline for the man of providence may begin to emerge. The same double dimension, inner- vs. outer-directed, applies to the third and fourth classes, as it did to the first two classes. By the distinction between public and private prophets, it seems to me, the separate class of "providential" man is born. Providence, then, according to Maimonides, is the effect of the divine overflow through the agency of the Active Intellect on the rational and/or imaginative faculties of an individual, insofar as it affects the private aspect, the individual himself.[91] Prophecy involves exercising one's own providence over others, of extending the overflow.

How these functions of the intellective faculties actually translate into providence may be best understood in light of Maimonides' classification of the components of the intellect. In chapter 1 of *Shemonah Perakim,* he offers the most complete overview.

> The rational part is the power found in man by which he perceives intelligibles, deliberates, acquires the sciences, and distinguishes between base and noble actions. Some of these activities are practical and some are theoretical. Of the practical, some are productive and some are reflective. By means of the theoretical, man knows the essence of the unchanging beings. These (theoretical activities) are called sciences without qualification. The productive is the power by means of which we acquire occupations, such as carpentry, agriculture, medicine and navigation. The reflective is that by which one deliberates about a thing he wishes to do at the time he wishes to do it—whether it is possible to do it or not and, if it is possible, how it ought to be done.[92]

The parallel between providence and prophecy which Maimonides offered has been exploited to show a welcome niche for a more compre-

91. The distinction between providential and prophetic experience is not drawn explicitly by Maimonides. The two phenomena, public prophecy and private providence, overlap. The exercising of providence over others is, in Maimonides' own terms, *tadbīr,* or "governance." Governance, while at times an extension of one's own personal providence, may at other times conflict with it. For example, the prophet who receives a divine command to address a call to the people, whether they listen or not, could conceivably suffer harm or even death.

92. *Ethical Writings of Maimonides,* trans. Raymond L. Weiss and Charles E. Butterworth (New York, 1975), pp. 63–64.

hensive model of providence within the parent theory of prophecy. The range of the intellect's activities, cited above, may enable us now to further flesh-out the terse, unadorned initial formulation of "providence as consequent upon, or according to, the intellect."

The exercising of one's own intellect on both a practical and a theoretical level enables one to preserve and perfect oneself as a human being. If we return to the original problem which motivated us to examine the implications of "providence according to the intellect," the relationship of the Job chapters to the initial theory, the two dimensions of intellect, practical and theoretical, suggest the crux of our solution: in the initial theory, Maimonides presents providence as a function of a practical intellect, while his Job theory presents providence as a function of theoretical wisdom. Now, how may we describe that providence operates "according to the intellect"? Considering the two dimensions of the intellect, Maimonides' treatment would yield two separate accounts.

1. Providence as consequent upon the practical intellect.
2. Providence as consequent upon the theoretical intellect.

In III/27 Maimonides outlines the relationship between the perfection of these two dimensions. The first involves the perfection of man as a moral being, from achieving and maintaining bodily health, satisfying bodily needs for food and shelter, to the performance of virtuous actions and the development of moral qualities. The second perfection, which is identified as the "ultimate" and as "indubitably more noble and as the only cause of permanent preservation," nevertheless depends on the achievement of the first perfection, which enables speculative learning to take place. While the first perfection consists of actions and moral qualities, the second (and ultimate) perfection consists of "opinions toward which speculation has led and that investigation has rendered compulsory."[93] Its goal is described as follows:

93. *Guide,* III/27, p. 511. For al-Farabi on the relationship of practical and theoretical wisdom, see *Aphorisms of the Statesman (Fusul al-Madani),* ed. and trans. by Douglas M. Dunlop (Cambridge, 1961), p. 48. That the *Fusul* had a strong influence on Maimonides has been documented in Herbert A. Davidson, "Maimonides' *Shemonah Peraqim* and Al-farabi's *Fusul Al-Madani,*" *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 31 (1963): 33–50. Apparently, al-Farabi also wrote a separate treatise *On Providence* which is no longer extant. See his own reference to it in his *Harmonization of the Opinions of Plato and Aristotle,* trans. Miriam Galston (unpublished, 1978), p. 39. Standard reference to the Dieterici edition is 26:2.

> . . . to become rational in actu, I mean to have an intellect in actu; this would consist in his knowing everything concerning all the beings that it is within the capacity of man to know in accordance with his ultimate perfection.[94]

These two perfections form the two distinct stages in Maimonides' theory of providence. The sphere of providential care described in Maimonides' initial theory (in chapters 17–18) concerns an individual's physical well-being, his actions, and his moral qualities. When we recollect the examples used in chapters 17–18 which implied providential care over certain individuals, we see that the cases include the avoidance of physical harm or death, guidance for "the actions of righteous men," and for the patriarchs, the full variety of all their activities, even including their acquisition of property.[95]

Considering the specific example of the fate of a passenger on a foundering ship, Maimonides argues that a man's decision to board the ship is not due to chance, but is based on intellect.[96] I take this to mean that the man's decision to board the ship or not is based on considerations and deliberations of the practical intellect, his appraisal of the ship's construction, of dangerous wind currents, the competency of the ship's crew, and given the "great dangers such as arise in sea voyages," the validity of his need to take this voyage. In the general statement in which the intellectual overflow offers guidance over the actions of righteous men,[97] providential care would seem to be subsumed by one's personal deployment of moral intelligence or practical wisdom. This interpretation understands providence to be a direct and natural result of the deliberations of one's own practical intellect.

The Aristotelian notion of *phronēsis,* translated variously as "practical reason," "practical wisdom," "practical intelligence," and "prudence," would seem to provide the springboard for Maimonides' theory. Aristotle is the source of Maimonides' distinction between the practical and theoretical components of man's rationality. *Phronēsis* is described by Aristotle in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics.*

> Practical reason . . . is concerned with human affairs and with matters about

94. *Guide,* III/27, p. 511.
95. *Guide,* III/17, p. 472; III/18, pp. 475–476.
96. *Guide,* III/17, p. 472.
97. *Guide,* III/18, p. 475: "For it is this overflow of the divine intellect that makes the prophet speak, guides the actions of righteous men, and perfects the knowledge of excellent men with regard to what they know."

> which deliberation is possible. . . . the most characteristic function of a man of practical reason is to deliberate well. In an unqualified sense, that man is good at deliberating who, by reasoning, can aim and hit the best thing attainable to man by action.[98]

The concept of practical reason explains how the intellect may be said to function as a providential agent by guiding the virtuous man to the right decision for action and ultimately toward perfection. For Maimonides, divine Law has consolidated and co-opted most, if not all, of the functions of practical reason at an operative level. While for Aristotle, on an individual basis, "practical reason issues commands: its end is to tell us what we ought to do and what we ought not to do,"[99] in Maimonides' system, divine commandments and prohibitions embody the divine practical reason. The distinction between Aristotle's fully employed concept of *phronēsis* and Maimonides' recessed view is important in appreciating why the actual operation of personal practical reason is downplayed in Maimonides' account. The extensiveness and expansiveness of the Law's dictates restrict the interplay of *phronēsis* on an individual level. Nevertheless in Maimonides' view the harnessing of intellect for right action is intimately related to the concept of practical reason on a conceptual level, and finds its full expression in proper observance of the commandments which embody it.[100]

In Maimonides' base theory, providential man operates within the world of human concerns, of "contingent facts," and strives to preserve himself, his family, and his community, and to maximize his own perfection. The nature of this sphere of activity ultimately determines the limitations of man's possible success. While experience counts in negotiating well within

98. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. Martin Ostwald, Library of Liberal Arts (New York, 1962), bk. 6, chap. 7, 1141b. I have replaced "practical reason" for "practical wisdom" in Ostwald's translation.

99. *Nicomachean Ethics,* bk. 6, chap. 10, 1143a.

100. Maimonides' own reticence on practical reason (*ta'aqqul*) in the *Guide* is striking. Within the framework of a religious system based on Law, however, the Law seems to take over for moral intelligence at an operative level. In fact, the placement within the *Guide* of the section on the reasons for the Law, inserted in between the second and third sections of the thematic account on providence, suggests the possibility that the Law, as protector of the health of the body and the mind, displaces *phronēsis*. For Averroes' intermittent reticence on *phronēsis* and its relationship to the legal system, see George F. Hourani, "Averroes on Good and Evil," *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962): 13–40. For a discussion of the implications of this issue for Maimonides' ethical system, see Marvin Fox, "The Doctrine of the Mean in Aristotle and Maimonides: A Comparative Study," in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann,* ed. S. Stein and R. Loewe (University, Ala., 1979), pp. 93–120.

the world of contingent events, error, either in understanding a general principle or in particular application, is not only possible but more than probable. While pain and suffering may be minimized, they may not be avoided, and death looms as inevitable. If the base theory presents an ideal system in which man is able to avoid harm and suffering by leading a virtuous life and making the right decisions, based on reason, the Job chapters present a challenging counterexample. Within the realm of human action, moral intelligence cannot ensure total or complete providence for man. Man decides to act on the basis of general principles and probabilities, and is subject to harm by the improbable and the rare occurrence, not to mention as the object or victim, intended or otherwise, of a purposefully disruptive act. Maimonides concedes the point, in his discussion of evil, that the victim gains little recourse in dealing with his attackers, when he writes that "the wronged man has no device against them."[101]

In summary, Maimonides' base theory (III/17–18) offers an explanation for individual providence over man as consequent upon the practical intellect, but falls short of explaining or accounting for all the evidence. The slack left after the limits of the I-theory's explanation (providence as consequent upon the intellect) is taken over, it seems, by the assertion, as fundamental principles which uphold the Law, that God's system of reward and punishment, although beyond human comprehension, is just.[102] While the base theory asserts God's justice, as part of its dual components, in the Job account, on a different level, Maimonides attempts to prove it.

Job's metamorphosis is representative of the transition from the lower stage of providence as consequent upon practical intellect to the ultimate stage of providence as consequent upon the acquisition of theoretical wisdom. Job is transformed from a man who displays "moral virtue and righteousness in action," but who suffers, to a man who "knew God with a certain knowledge," and transcended suffering. The "before" picture of Job is painted as follows:

> The most marvellous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that

101. *Guide,* III/12, p. 444.

Maimonides' discussion of evil actually includes two perspectives. From the ultimate and true perspective, evil has no real existence. From the narrow perspective of an individual human being (relative to his own existence and prosperity), evil exists, although Maimonides tries vigorously to limit its domain and extensiveness.

102. Maimonides' formulation of a theory of providence which satisfies both philosophic and religious-legal demands, as presented in *Guide* III/17–18, is detailed in Sec. II above.

> knowledge is not attributed in it to Job. He is not said to be a wise or a comprehending or an intelligent man. Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him. For if he had been wise, his situation would not have been obscure for him, as will become clear.[103]

He is consistently described as a "righteous and perfect man, who was just in his actions and is more careful to avoid sins," but nevertheless "was stricken—without his having committed a sin entailing this—by great and consecutive calamities with respect to his fortune, his children and his body."[104] Job is the parade example of the failure of practical intellect to guarantee complete providential care.

Complete providential care is achieved by Job when he achieves theoretical wisdom, which enables him to cope with his misfortunes. Job's intellectual conversion centers on the awareness that "the things thought to be happiness, such as health, wealth and children," are not "the ultimate goal." Maimonides describes the outcome of Job's knowledge of God:

> But when he knew God with a certain knowledge, he admitted that true happiness, which is the knowledge of the deity, is guaranteed to all who know Him and that a human being cannot be troubled in it by any of all the misfortunes in question.[105]

The switch to theoretical wisdom, the knowledge of "everything concerning all the beings that it is within the capacity of man to know,"[106] as the source for ultimate happiness and, as a result, ultimate providence has a clear Aristotelian breeding. In Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle attempts to outline and define a state of happiness for man that has permanence and completeness.

> The happy man will have the attribute of permanence which we are discussing, and he will remain happy throughout his life. For he will always or to the highest degree both do and contemplate what is in conformity with virtue; he will bear the vicissitudes of fortune most nobly and with perfect decorum under all circumstances, inasmuch as he is truly good and "four-square beyond reproach."[107]

103. *Guide,* III/22, p. 487.
104. *Guide,* III/22, p. 486.
105. *Guide,* III/23, p. 493.
106. *Guide,* III/27, p. 511.
107. *Nicomachean Ethics,* bk. 1, chap. 7, 1177b.

Aristotle continues to speculate to what degree misfortune and suffering can disturb supreme happiness. For the most part, a "noble and high-minded" man can bear "many great misfortunes with good grace." The happy man may be dislodged from his happiness "only by great and numerous disasters such as will make it impossible for him to become happy again in a short time."[108]

The discussion is resumed and the ambiguities resolved in the final book of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* in which Aristotle expresses the superiority of happiness as a result of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) over the happiness of moral action and virtue. While the life of moral action is plagued by the constrictions of human existence, a life of contemplation, guided by theoretical wisdom, transcends the merely human dimensions of existence: "So if it is true that intelligence is divine in comparison with man, then a life guided by intelligence is divine in comparison with human life."[109] The superiority of the life of theoretical wisdom is argued extensively by Aristotle: it is the divine element in us, it "surpasses everything else in power and value," it represents "each man's true self, since it is the controlling and better part."[110] Aristotle expands upon this last reason by arguing that man's identity is his knowledge of theoretical wisdom.

> In other words, a life guided by intelligence is the best and most pleasant for man, inasmuch as intelligence, above all else, is man. Consequently, this kind of life is the happiest.[111]

The contemplative life is further characterized as the one by which man can be truly self-sufficient.

These Aristotelian concerns help flesh-out the background of Maimonides' approach, for Maimonides has adapted the notion of happiness as the basis for his concept of ultimate providence. True and permanent providence is reserved for Job only after he has experienced the ultimate realm of theoretical wisdom and perfection. Maimonides' implicit argument in the Job chapters for preferring the life of theoretical wisdom, aside from the immediate therapeutic value for a person in Job's predicament, duplicates the range of Aristotle's justifications: Job achieves immunity from suffering and misfortune, he realizes the ultimate value of theoretical intellect and its

108. Ibid., bk. 1, chap. 10, 1101a.
109. Ibid., bk. 10, chap. 7, 1177b.
110. Ibid., bk. 10, chap. 7, 1177b–1178a.
111. Ibid., bk. 10, chap. 7, 1178a.

divine nature, and he has achieved a higher, if not the highest, degree of self-sufficiency.

The controlling reason for identifying man's ultimate happiness and his ultimate providence with theoretical wisdom is revealed by Maimonides at the end of the *Guide*. The description of man's ultimate perfection reveals not only its Aristotelian lineage but the ambiguity regarding the nature of human identity which underlies Maimonides' two accounts of practical and theoretical providence over man.[112]

> The fourth species is the true human perfection; it consists in the acquisition of the rational virtues—I refer to the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things. This is in true reality the ultimate end, this is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent perdurance; through it man is man.[113]

Man is here not the sum of his composite nature, his desires, virtues, and intelligence, but his identity is his theoretical mind. The happiness achieved and the providence associated with it pertain to man's mind. By limiting the focus of human personality to man's theoretical mind, Maimonides is able to articulate a theory of complete and permanent providence, for providence is here a direct, unmitigated function of the ability of man's intellect to achieve conjunction with God. If a man chooses to lead the contemplative life exclusively, he remains solitary and does not translate the "overflow" of his personal providence into prophetic activity. His practical needs are few, and his relationship to the community is aloof, if not contemptuous.

> If the perfect man who lives in solitude thinks of them [other people] at all, he does so only with a view to saving himself from the harm that may be caused by those among them who are harmful if he happens to associate with them, or to obtaining an advantage that may be obtained from them if he is forced to it by some of his needs.[114]

That an individual of this nature is rare and uncharacteristic of Maimo-

112. My analysis of Maimonides' shift on the nature of human identity was influenced by John M. Cooper's understanding of Aristotle's bipartite notion of the nature of human happiness. See his *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 144–180.

113. *Guide*, III/54, p. 635. For an analysis of Maimonides' conception of human perfection, see Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides' Four Perfections," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 15–24.

114. *Guide*, II/36, p. 372.

nides' thinking points to the transitional nature of individual providential experience as a prelude to the outer-directed, community-oriented activity of the prophet. As a role model, exclusively providential activity (based on the perfection of theoretical wisdom) remains rare and inaccessible.

Nevertheless, Job would appear to be such a model, for his happiness and providence exist on the level of theoretical wisdom only insofar as it affects his personal intellect. While the conceptual basis for Maimonides' preference for theoretical perfection is solid and clearly articulated, the example of Job lends a pragmatic or defensive note to the choice. Would not Job be happier with family, fortune, physical health, and theoretical wisdom? Can he sustain the life of contemplation beyond any and all misfortune? Job, it would seem, has no choice but to find happiness in a higher realm. Without questioning further the details of the Book of Job, which is, after all, a dramatized account, the underbelly of the Job account provides some sobering realizations. In dealing with the full realm of the human personality, human virtue cannot consistently surmount the world of accident, of contingent events, and cannot generate, in and of itself, permanent human happiness. As a result, the exclusive pursuit of theoretical wisdom is not only man's ultimate goal, but also his only refuge.

If, within the realm of man's actions, happiness cannot be assured as the natural end of virtue, why does Maimonides argue at all for the lower level of "providence as consequent upon the (practical) intellect"? The lower level of the theory has as its focus a broader spectrum of the range of human activity and personality, one's decision to take a sea voyage, to acquire property, to enter a building, to perform a certain action, etc. The full spectrum of man's activity and thought is, of course, the focus of the Law's concerns.[115] Maimonides' explanation of providence over the fuller range of human activity is therefore not expendable; but as it stands alone, it is incomplete. Given a realm of discussion in which no demonstration is possible, his theory, Maimonides would argue, explains at least the majority of the circumstances. Finally, Maimonides argues for both levels, practical and theoretical, not only because he affirms the dual concerns of the Law, but because of his own acceptance of the dual nature of man's identity. While theoretical intellect may be supreme, its successful and sustained exercise depends on the total well-being of man and his community for the maximalization of its true potential.

115. See the *Guide* III/27, which begins with the following formulation: "The Law as a whole aims at two things: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body."

In arguing his theory of providence over the whole range of man's activities, the realm of accident and misfortune, which is inherent in the world of contingent events, is not explained away by Maimonides' philosophic "I" language. The justice of reward and punishment, from the notion that man is punished (by the legal system) for his evil actions and rewarded for his good deeds to the notion that virtue is its own reward and evil its own punishment, is maintained by Maimonides' we-*persona* as fundamental principles which ground and uphold the Law. Viewed from the perspective of the ultimate (theoretical) side of providence, the base theory has a dual nature, since the philosophic "I" cannot offer completeness. The we-theory, consistent with Maimonides' method, asserts the principles which make the Law possible, in a realm in which demonstration is impossible.

The theoretical knowledge which Job acquired and the underlying assumption that the essence of man is to be identified with his intellect seem to offer man an emotional immunity from suffering or misfortune. The third and final dimension in Maimonides' thematic account of providence is presented in III/51 of the *Guide*. A considerably broader type of immunity from misfortune is outlined. Maimonides attempts to take his theory of providence as consequent upon the intellect to its logical end, and seems to have engendered some potentially illogical consequences.

Total intellectual perfection seems to generate total providence, not simply to the limit of emotional immunity: the man of total providence is assured complete protection from any and all evils so long as his mind is concentrated on knowledge of God.

> If a man's thought is free from distraction, if he apprehends Him, may He be exalted, in the right way and rejoices in what he apprehends, that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind. For he is with God and God is with him.[116]

Physical immunity for the perfect, argued as an extension of the original theory and as ultimately palatable to the philosophers, has appeared problematic to many commentators. The range of opinion may be glimpsed from Samuel Ibn Tibbon.[117] who, as we mentioned above, noted the problem in a letter to Maimonides and saw this extension as contradictory to the original

116. *Guide*, III/51, p. 625.

117. For Samuel Ibn Tibbon, see Diesendruck, "Samuel and Moses Ibn Tibbon," pp. 360–361, and the discussion in Section I above.

theory, to Julius Guttmann, who saw an elaboration of an "almost mystical idea that men whose mind is wholly in contact with God are, as long as that contact endures, lifted above all influence of the external world."[118]

I think the account is purposefully ambivalent and represents both a consistent conclusion to the notion of providence as consequent upon theoretical intellect and a triumphant, idealized flourish which caps Maimonides' thinking on providence. If the physical body, then, is not the "I" which escapes these evils, who or what is? Maimonides' shift on the nature of human identity, consummated in the Job account, prepares the reader to appreciate the hero of chapter 51, who is immune from any and all evils, not as a superhuman being, but as that which is essentially human, the intellect. The intellect emerges as the true self which survives all, and chapter 51 can be understood consistently as an allegory of the individual intellect's attempt at transcendence and conjunction with God. This final section of the theory describes not just providence for an individual through the intellect, but providence through the intellect for the intellect. This ultimate dimension of providence would dovetail with Maimonides' description of immortality, the details of which are not only beyond the scope of the present investigation, but beyond our grasp as well. The final section, in this sense, brings to a logical conclusion the implications of the theoretical-intellectualistic framework which surfaced and predominated in the Job account.

A contrary interpretation would focus not on the inner intent of the parable, but on the literal meaning and force of Maimonides' words, as he reflects on the scriptural account of a perfect man who "passes through thousands of killers and killed, under a thunder of swords and through bloodshed, as if he were walking through a peaceful glade."[119] This triumphant ideal would grant total providence, not only to man's mind, but to the whole of man, who now transcends the very limitations of his own nature, and is both perfectly and totally himself and yet "with God." The intensity of Maimonides' emotional and intellectual commitment to this final possibility is at least partially immune to any scholarly assessment.

What would seem to profit from further analyis is the shift in Maimonides' thinking on the problem of evil, implicit in his multidimensional

118. Julius Guttmann, Commentary to *The Guide of the Perplexed,* by Moses Maimonides, trans. Chaim Rabin (New York, 1947), p. 224 n. 85.

119. Ps. 91:7–8, which figures prominently in Maimonides' discussion (pp. 626–627), as paraphrased by Rawidowicz in his *Studies in Jewish Thought,* p. 284.

account of divine providence. Besides arguing for evil as privation, which Maimonides realizes postpones rather than solves the problem (since God is ultimately responsible for the creation of matter), Maimonides offered an alternative or additional explanation in chapter 12 of Part III. By cataloguing three types of evil, metaphysical, moral (inflicted by man on another), and moral (self-inflicted), he argues that God's responsibility for evil is minimal and man's maximal. Underlying this division is the assertion that existence is an absolute good and that the true necessities for man's survival and flourishing are fully available for all segments of mankind.

Maimonides attempted, it would seem, to attack the problem of evil from all angles, to surround it, if not solve it. It is my contention that a different theodicy also emerges from the body of the multidimensional treatment of providence. Within the discussion of providence, Maimonides abandons the refuge of a God-centered universe momentarily, and tries to argue for justice in the ordering of human circumstances from an enlightened human perspective. This implicit theodicy is multidimensional and corresponds to the three stages of the providence account. At the beginning of chapter 16 of Part III, the question of God's justice in the ordering of human circumstances is raised, and Maimonides does not refer the reader to his completed theodicy (chapters 8–12). Rather, his discussion of God's providence (and knowledge) is an attempt to re-solve the question of the apparent suffering of the righteous and the flourishing of the wicked. This solution is composed of the following three stages:

1. In the world of actions and choices, one succeeds or fails in accordance with the successful deployment or neglect of one's practical intellect.
2. As a response to probable and predictable results (which one does not desire), the intensity of pain or suffering is not absolute, but relative to one's attitude and ability to maximize or minimize or transcend the particular pain or suffering.
3. Within the theoretical realm which is intellect, one's own intellect may acquire an immunity from pain and suffering and transcend any and all evils.

The common thread of this scheme is man's freedom to avoid evil of any kind. Man is free (1) to maximize his flourishing and minimize his suffering, (2) to minimize the emotional destructiveness of unavoidable pain and suffering, and (3) to transcend evil ultimately. Within this discussion, Maimonides attempts to offer, beyond negative theology, beyond mere assertion of God's justice, beyond a partial explanation, beyond evidence from a major-

ity of the cases, an explanation that God's ordering of human circumstances is just. Stages 1 and 2 involve unavoidable probabilities and argue, at best, for the possibility of explaining God's justice. Stage 3 presents the ideal, though certainly rare case, whose existence confirms God's justice. Total perfection of the theoretical intellect commands total providence. The system, as best as we may understand it, is therefore just. Nevertheless, one must object that deployment of the theoretical intellect cannot be separated, even for the sake of this argument, from the necessities, accidents, fortuitous events, and hazards of practical existence. Stage 3 is therefore neither conclusive nor compelling.

Two inverse functions prevail in this scheme. As one moves from the practical to the theoretical, from Stage 1 to Stage 3, the degree of providential coverage and, thereby, the cogency of the system's justice, increase. In Stage 1, one's ability to negotiate the levels of reality and moral concern is influenced by many circumstances often beyond one's control. In Stage 2, one's ability to transcend emotionally one's suffering is solely dependent, in Maimonides' view, on the depth and intensity of one's intellectual-emotional make-up. Finally, in Stage 3, one's intellect and commitment are the only necessary determinants of one's fate. Inversely, as the degree of self-sufficiency increases or expands, the identity of the self, the recipient of providence, narrows as one moves from Stage 1 to Stage 3. First, the sphere of concern is the full range of human functions, secondly, the internal, practical emotional-intellectual "I," and thirdly, the theoretical intellect alone. Maimonides' best answer, technically speaking, to the question of justice within human circumstances is for total providence over the narrowest but most substantial area of human concern, intellect. On that immutable level, Maimonides would argue that God's justice could be proven.

Yeshiva University
New York, N.Y.