

Some Remarks on the Political Science of Maimonides and Farabi

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The recent appearance in English of Leo Strauss's *Philosophie und Gesetz* (*Philosophy and Law: Essays toward the Understanding of Maimonides and his Predecessors*, trans. Fred Baumann [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1987]) has served to underscore the importance of Moses Maimonides to Strauss's thought. For it was surely Maimonides who aided him most in grappling with the "theological-political problem," with the incompatible claims of Faith and Reason as to the best way of life. Because Maimonides' rationalism refuses to avail itself of either mockery or obfuscation to skirt the difficulties posed to it by Revelation, it is for Strauss "the truly natural model, the standard that must be carefully guarded against every counterfeit, and the touchstone which puts modern rationalism to shame" (p. 3).

The following article was originally published as "Quelques Remarques sur la Science Politique de Maïmonide et de Farabi" in *Revue des Etudes Juives* (100 [1936] 1–37) and may be considered a necessary supplement to *Philosophy and Law* in that it both breaks new ground as well as explores more deeply areas previously mined. The present essay is, for example, the first to make clear the importance of Farabi's thought in general and his political science in particular for understanding Maimonides (cf. Shlomo Pines, "Introductory Essay," in *Guide of the Perplexed* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], p. lxxxix, n. 56). In addition, it expands upon the argument that the classical and especially the Platonic conception of law serves as the foundation of Maimonides' science of the Torah. For it was in trying to understand the revealed Law—its reasonable end and its natural conditions—that Maimonides turned to the philosophical account of law set out by Plato, who had anticipated fully the possibility and meaning of the divine legislation without its being present to him. The Mosaic Law means to establish the righteous nation in this world and with human nature—"the heart of the sons of man"—unchanged; it must thus be viewed as a prescription of the highest political order and hence as a political reality. Divine in origin and thus perfect in fact, the Law promises to bring about in deed precisely what Plato and Aristotle brought about in speech, the "best regime," or the political community "in accord with what one would pray for": the philosopher-kings are the Platonic counterpart to the prophet-legislators of Judaism and Islam.

Maimonides' example above all others may supply us with a means to approach the

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otherwise intractable conflict between Reason and Revelation, a conflict which, prior to its satisfactory resolution, leaves in doubt the possibility and worth of the life of Reason.

For ease of reading as well as to include information on relevant material published since the original appearance of the article, many of the notes have been consolidated. Nothing has been deleted, and additions are enclosed in brackets.

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There is, in the philosophy of Maimonides as well as in that of his Muslim masters and his Jewish disciples, a political science. The principal teaching of this science is summarized in the following theses: Men need, in order to live, guidance and, as a result, a law; they need, in order to live well, to attain happiness, a divine law which guides them not only, like the human law, toward peace and moral perfection, but further toward the understanding of the supreme truths and thereby toward supreme perfection; the divine law is given to men by (the intermediary of) a man who is a “prophet,” i.e., one who combines in his person all the essential qualities of the philosopher as well as those of the legislator and king; the activity proper to the prophet is legislation. (Cf. *Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes*, ed. M.J. Muller [Munich, 1859], p. 98, 15–18 and p. 102, 2–3.)

The importance of this political science is, at first sight, rather slight. Maimonides, for example, does not appear to have devoted more than four or five chapters of his *Guide of the Perplexed* to it. But given the position religion occupies in medieval thought—that is to say, revealed religion, more precisely the revealed law, the Torah or the Shari’a—it must be inferred that political science, which is the only philosophical discipline treating this law as law, is of capital importance. It is only in their political doctrine that the medieval philosophers discuss the basis of their thought, the most profound presupposition by which they distinguish themselves from ancient thinkers on the one hand and from modern thinkers on the other: their belief in Revelation.

The medieval character of the politics of Maimonides and the *falasifa* is not contradicted by the fact that it is nothing other than a modification, however considerable, of an ancient conception. For there is a profound agreement between Jewish and Muslim thought on the one hand and ancient thought on the other: it is not the Bible and the Koran, but perhaps the New Testament, and

certainly the Reformation and modern philosophy, which brought about the break with ancient thought. The guiding idea upon which the Greeks and the Jews agree is precisely the idea of the divine law as a single and total law which is at the same time religious law, civil law and moral law. And it is indeed a Greek philosophy of the divine law which is the basis of the Jewish and Muslim philosophy of the Torah or the Shari'a; according to Avicenna, Plato's *Laws* is the classic work on prophecy and the Shari'a.¹ The prophet occupies in this medieval politics the same place the philosopher-kings occupy in Platonic politics: by fulfilling the essential conditions of the philosopher-kings, enumerated by Plato, he founds the perfect city, i.e., the ideal Platonic city.

The facts just sketched and studied more closely in a previous study have not always received the attention they merit. Let us note only that S. Munk mentions in the table of contents to his edition and translation of the *Guide of the Perplexed* neither "city," "politics," "government," "governance," "legislator," "economics," nor even "ethics" or "morality," i.e., those words which are encountered rather frequently and, what is more, are of considerable importance in the *Guide*. For Munk and for those others who have followed him, the doctrine of Maimonides and the *falasifa* is an Aristotelianism contaminated or corrected by neo-Platonic conceptions. This opinion is not false, but it is superficial. As soon as it has been uttered, one is obliged to give an account of the relation between the Aristotelian elements and those of a neo-Platonic origin and to pose this question: Why does the Aristotelianism of Maimonides and the *falasifa* admit of such a great influence from neo-Platonism (or vice versa)? It does not suffice to reply that this amalgam was something brought about before the advent of Muslim and Jewish philosophy—at least not until one proves in advance (as no one has yet done) that the *falasifa* were conquering barbarians who took what they found and not philosophers who were searching. But for what were they searching? Let us take as an example a phenomenon apparently as independent of any choice and, above all, as far removed from theologico-political presuppositions, as the commentative activity of Averroes. Now, if one compares the commentaries of Averroes with the works of Aristotle himself, one immediately sees that two of Aristotle's treatises have not been commented on by the Commentator: the *Politics* on the one hand and the treatise on dreams and divination by dreams on the other. This choice is not due to chance: Averroes was unable to comment on these treatises of Aristotle because their reception would have made impossible the philosophical explication of the Shari'a. For this explication, which is rather a justification, is based on the supposition that the prophet, whose prognostic faculty is related to "true dreams," is the founder of the ideal city in the sense of the *Republic* or the *Laws*. It was to justify the *Shari'a* against the objections of heretics or skeptics, or rather to give a reasonable, truly philosophical direction to Shi'ite hopes concerning the Imam, that, at the beginning of Muslim philosophy, Farabi

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opted for Platonic politics, perhaps moved by philosophical convictions not very different from those Plato had in going to Syracuse; and this is the reason that, at the end of the epoch in question, Averroes came to comment on Plato's *Republic* instead of Aristotle's *Politics* and to give an explication of "true dreams" which accords better with such passages of Plato than with the treatise—so matter-of-fact—of Aristotle.²

It is only by beginning from the Platonizing politics of Farabi—and not at all by beginning either from modern conceptions or from the analogies, however remarkable, which scholasticism properly speaking provides—that one can hope to arrive at a true comprehension of the Muslim and Jewish philosophies of the Middle Ages. It is difficult to believe that no one has profited, so far as we know, from the testimony given by Maimonides himself ([Cf. now Rosenthal, loc. cit.] [Brackets original—trans.]). He writes to Samuel Ibn-Tibbon: "Do not concern yourself with logic books except those composed by the wise Abu Nasr al-Farabi; for what he has composed in general, and in particular his book *The Principles of Beings*—all of this is of the purest flour." And he adds immediately that the books of Avicenna, though of merit, are not comparable to Farabi's. This testimony, sufficiently precise in itself, gains a decisive importance if one recalls that the authentic title of the book of Farabi's particularly praised by Maimonides is *The Political Governments*; that this book contains metaphysics (theology) as well as politics; that the politics therein is based directly on the politics of Plato whose *Laws* were commented on by Farabi; and that his metaphysics is inseparable from Platonizing politics: true metaphysics is the collection of the "opinions of the people of the perfect city." In a century which was not considerably less "enlightened" than that of the sophists and Socrates, where the very bases of human life, i.e., political life, had been shaken by Chiliastic convulsions on the one hand and, on the other, by a critique of religion the radicalism of which recalls the free-thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Farabi had rediscovered in the politics of Plato the golden mean equally removed from a naturalism which aims only at sanctioning the savage and destructive instincts of "natural" man, the instincts of the master and the conqueror; and from a supernaturalism which tends to become the basis of slave morality—a golden mean which is neither a compromise nor a synthesis, which is hence not based on the two opposed positions, but which suppresses them both, uproots them by a prior, more profound question, by raising a more fundamental problem, the work of a truly critical philosophy.³

The Platonizing politics of Farabi is the point of departure for anyone who wishes to understand (and not merely record) the neo-Platonism of the *falasifa* and Maimonides which in the last analysis is—like the neo-Platonism of Plotinus himself—a modification of authentic Platonism, i.e., of a philosophy the primordial intention of which is the search for the perfect city. And it is again by beginning from the exigencies of Farabi's Platonizing politics that one

can and must understand the reception of Aristotle's physics: Platonism did not give (or appeared not to give) sufficient guarantees against the superstitions of dying antiquity; the rebirth, menaced by hybrid speculations, of Platonic politics was not possible without the aid of Aristotle's physics, which preserved the basis of Socrates' and Plato's inquiry, the world of common sense.

The motives which guided Farabi in his work of restoration are not more clearly visible in the thinkers who followed him: They maintained only his results. In these circumstances, one cannot hope for a satisfactory analysis of any phenomenon of Jewish⁴ and Muslim philosophy before the reconstitution of the philosophy of Farabi. This reconstitution can only be successful through a close collaboration between Arabists, Hebraists, and historians of philosophy. One can only hope to begin this work in the following pages by showing the influence exercised on Maimonides by the Platonizing politics of Farabi.

I

Maimonides treats of political science as such in what one may call his encyclopedia of the sciences, which is found in the last chapter of his summary of logic, entitled *Millot ha-higgayon*, written in his early youth. This is what he says: Philosophy is divided into two parts, speculative philosophy and practical philosophy, which is also called human philosophy or again political wisdom. Political wisdom is divided into four parts: (1) governance of man by himself, (2) governance of the household, (3) governance of the city, (4) governance of the great nation or nations. The first fosters virtues as much moral as intellectual, and as regards it, "the philosophers have many books on mores." The three other parts of political science form a unity in opposition to the first: While the one (ethics) is concerned with the governance of man by himself, the others treat of prescriptions (*Hukim*), i.e., the regimes by which man governs other men. The second part (economics) conduces to the proper ordering of domestic affairs. The third part (the governance of the city) makes known happiness and its acquisition; it is this which teaches one to distinguish between true happiness and evil and imaginary happiness and evil; it is this which establishes the rules of justice by which human societies are well ordered; it is by this that the wise of the perfect nations establish the laws (*Nemusim*); by these laws, the nations subject to the wise are governed; "the philosophers have many books, accessible in Arabic, on all these matters . . . , but we have no need, in these times, of all that, that is, of the prescriptions (*Hukim*), the ordinances (*Datot*), the laws (*Nemusim*), the governance of those men in divine matters."⁵

Despite the difficulties in the text, one thing is beyond doubt: Maimonides distinctly declares that "we have no need, in these times, of all that," i.e., of

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politics properly speaking, and even of economics. The final words indicate rather clearly the reason why they are not needed: politics contains rules concerning “the divine matters.” Now, we—we Jews—we have the Torah which governs us in a perfect manner in all political matters, and especially in the divine matters related to them: It is the Torah which renders superfluous politics properly speaking and economics.⁶

To understand better this important declaration, it must be noted that Maimonides does not make a similar remark concerning ethics (he says simply that the philosophers have many books on it), logic, or speculative philosophy. That he did not judge as useless or superfluous the books of the philosophers on all these sciences, that he recommended the study of these books many times, is too well known to require proof. It suffices to remark that the judgment in question concerning politics is found in a summary of logic, based on the “books of the philosophers.” Here, then, is the complete meaning of Maimonides’ declaration: Of all the philosophical disciplines, it is only politics properly speaking and economics which are rendered superfluous by the Torah.

On this point, the teaching of the *Guide of the Perplexed* scarcely differs from that of the *Millot ha-higgayon*. Maimonides says there that the Torah gives only some summary indications concerning speculative matters, whereas, regarding political matters, “everything has been done to render it (what concerns the governance of the city) precise in all its details” (*Guide* III, 27. Cf. III, 54 (p. 132a) [pp. 632–33 of the Shlomo Pines translation, hereafter cited in brackets] and I, 33 (p. 37a) [p. 71]). One needs, then, the “books of the philosophers” on the speculative sciences; but one may do without their books on politics, since all the necessary information regarding politics and economics⁷ is found in the Torah (cf. the remark on the guiding interest of the Rabbis in *Guide* I, Intro. (p. 11a) [p. 19]). Here is the reason why Maimonides, when speaking of the studies which must precede the study of metaphysics, does not mention politics, or even ethics, although the “perfection concerning political governments” is according to him one of the essential conditions to be fulfilled by him who wants to be initiated into metaphysics (*Guide* I, 34 (p. 41a) [p. 78]). The first degree of the studies is the study of the Torah (*Guide* III, 54 (p. 132b) [p. 633]): it replaces the study of politics (and perhaps also that of ethics) because the Torah has rendered politics superfluous.

Whether or not this is Maimonides’ last word on political science, we must draw all the information on the matter from the few phrases he devotes in the *Millot* to this science of doubtful utility. That he divides philosophy into speculative philosophy and practical philosophy, that he calls the latter political or human philosophy, that he divides it into ethics, economics, and politics properly speaking, all this is well explained by the Aristotelian tradition whose influence on his thought is known. But here are the facts which strike the present-day reader (1) Maimonides does not mention happiness when speaking of ethics, he does so only when speaking of politics properly so-called; (2) he

begins by dividing practical or political philosophy into four parts but, later on, he distinguishes among only three; the distinction between the governance of the city on the one hand and the governance of the great nation or nations on the other, made with such clarity at first, appears to be of no consequence; why then is it made? (3) without any prior justification, Maimonides attributes to politics strictly speaking the treatment of the “divine matters.”

[1] It would not be possible to resolve these difficulties without recourse to Maimonides’ immediate source, the political writings of Farabi. Farabi also sometimes divides practical or political (*madaniyya*) philosophy into ethics (*kholqiyya*) and philosophy of government (*siyasiyya*). But this division does not correspond to his guiding idea. Ethics is concerned with the distinction between good and bad actions, and between the virtues and the vices; now, this distinction is made in relation to the final end of man, happiness: the virtues are good only to the extent that they are means to acquire happiness; as a result, the search for happiness, the distinction between true and imaginary happiness must precede the distinction between the virtues and vices, between good actions and bad. But there is happiness only in and through political communities (*k. tahsil al-sa’ada*, p. 14.—*Musterstaat*, pp. 53–54. [Cf. citations in n. 8 below]). This is why Farabi, in his dissertation on political governments, only speaks of happiness and, with all the more reason, of the virtues after having explained the necessity and general structure of political communities; and this is also why he teaches there that happy men are those who are governed by the ideal Chief of the ideal community; the Chief of the ideal community establishes the ordering of the actions by means of which men are able to attain happiness. Since happiness depends on the political community, it is no longer necessary, it is no longer even possible, to distinguish between ethics and politics; in his encyclopedia of the sciences, Farabi does not even mention ethics (cf. also *k. tahsil al-sa’ada*, pp. 14 and 16.) And—what is perhaps weightier still—in his enumeration of the opinions which each member of the perfect community must have, Farabi immediately passes from the opinions concerning God and the world to opinions concerning the perfect community and happiness without saying a word about the virtues in the entire enumeration in question. In the final analysis, there is not in Farabi an ethics which precedes politics or which is separable from it. In any case, it is in following Farabi that Maimonides attributes the discussion of happiness to politics strictly speaking. Compared to the corresponding doctrine of Farabi, the order of the practical sciences in Maimonides—an order according to which the discussion of happiness is connected with politics strictly speaking, and the discussion of the virtues with ethics—presents itself as a compromise between the conception of Farabi and that of Aristotle: Maimonides, it seems, while accepting Farabi’s point of view, is intent on preserving a certain independence for ethics as a *medicina mentis* [spiritual medicine] (cf. *Shemoneh Perakim* III. [See “Eight Chapters,” in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, Raymond L. Weiss and Charles Butter-

worth, eds. (New York: Dover, 1983)]; this is why the books of the philosophers on ethics retain their value for him; but, as regards happiness, he too judges that it is the object only of politics properly speaking—(2) According to Farabi, there are three classes of complete communities: the small, which is the city; the intermediate, which is the nation; the large which is the union of many nations (or “the nations”) (*Musterstaat*, p. 53, 17–19—*Siyasat*, p. 39.—Cf. *k. tahsil*, beg. and pp. 21–23). The difference between the complete (*kamila*) communities regarding their size does not imply a difference regarding their internal structure: the city may be as perfect (*fadila*), i.e., directed by an ideal Chief toward happiness, as the nation or the nations (*Musterstaat*, p. 54, 5–10.—*Siyasat*, p. 50). Always there is at least a theoretical preference for the city: it is not by chance that Farabi entitled his most complete political treatise *The Perfect City* and not *The Perfect Nation* (cf. also *Musterstaat*, p. 69, 17–19; this passage could be the direct source of the respective passage of Maimonides). One might say that the perfect city is the ancient core, borrowed from Plato’s *Republic*, that Farabi tries to guard and leave intact, however he may be compelled by the theologico-political presuppositions of his time to enlarge the Platonic framework, to acknowledge the political unities larger than the city: the nation or nations. It is equally then in following Farabi that Maimonides distinguishes between the governance of the city on the one hand and the governance of the great nation or nations on the other, a distinction he neglects later on in order to speak of a preference for the governance of the city.—(3) If it is political science which makes happiness known, and if there is no true happiness in this life, but only in the next (*Ihsa al-'ulum*, p. 64), in other words, if there is no true beatitude without the knowledge of the beings separated from matter (*K. tahsil*, pp. 2 and 16; *tanbih*, p. 22), of God and the Angels, political science must be concerned with the “divine things.” This is why the most important of Farabi’s political books, *The Perfect City* and *The Political Governments*, are at the same time metaphysical treatises. There is still another connection between the politics of Farabi and “divine things.” Farabi teaches that the “first Chief” of the perfect city must be a “prophet” and “Imam.” “First Chief,” “Imam,” and “legislator” are identical terms (*K. tahsil*, p. 43); the “first Chief” is as such a founder of a religion (see *Musterstaat*, p. 70, 10, and context). As a result, it is not possible to separate the political things from the divine. Farabi drew this consequence by subordinating the religious sciences, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and apologetics (*kalam*), to politics.⁸

It is, then, Farabi’s doctrine that Maimonides has in mind when he speaks, in the *Millot*, of politics. Now the politics of Farabi, for its part, is a modification of the politics of Plato: The “first Chief” is, according to Farabi, not only Imam, prophet, legislator, and king, he is also and above all a philosopher (*Musterstaat*, p. 58, 18–59, 5; *k. tahsil*, pp. 42–43); he must by nature have at his disposal all the qualities which characterize, according to Plato, the governors of the ideal city; he is Plato’s king-philosopher.⁹ As a result, the judgment

passed by Maimonides on political science accords with Platonic politics, or at least with a Platonizing politics. And this judgment means: Philosophical politics, which is the search for the ideal city governed by the philosophers, or for the ideal law, is now superfluous, because the Torah, given by (the intermediary of) a prophet whose faculties surpass those of the greatest philosopher, leads men towards happiness in a manner infinitely more certain and perfect than the political regimes imagined by the philosophers.

But it is one thing to search for the ideal law when it is not yet known, quite another to understand the given ideal law. It may well be that political science, while being superfluous for the former, is indispensable for the latter. Two things are certain before any subsequent examination of the texts. First, Maimonides' judgment that politics, and only politics, and especially Platonizing politics, is rendered superfluous by the Torah implies: the Torah is first and foremost a political fact, a political order, a law; it is the ideal law, the perfect *nomos*, of which all other laws are more or less imitations¹⁰ And second: being a philosopher, Maimonides must pose for himself the question of knowing what the *raison d'être* of the Torah is, what are its reasonable end and its natural conditions. He needs, then, a philosophical discipline the subject of which will be the Torah, the divine law as such; as the Torah is a law and hence a political fact, this discipline must be political science. And as the political science known to and judged by Maimonides to merit some attention is a Platonizing politics, it will be, in the final analysis, the doctrines of the *Republic* and the *Laws* which will determine the manner in which Maimonides understands the Torah.

II

Before interpreting any passage of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, one must remember that this work is an esoteric book. Maimonides has concealed his thought, so his book must be read with particular attention; its subtle allusions are perhaps more important than the doctrines developed in an explicit manner.

The divine law occupies the last place among the main subjects discussed in the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides takes up the subject only after having ended the discussion of the purely speculative themes—whose conclusion is clearly marked by the interpretation of the *ma'aseh merkabah* [account of the chariot], which sums up, to a certain extent, all of metaphysics¹¹—and of the problems of providence and of evil which, being the conditions closest to practical problems, mark the passage from the speculative to the practical domain. The part of the *Guide* treating of the divine law is therefore (if one abstracts from the last chapters—III 51–54—which contain more of a conclusion to the work in general than the discussion of a new subject) the only practical part of the work: there is no treatise on morality included in it. It will perhaps be said

that it is not possible to draw any conclusion from this, the *Guide* being neither a “system of philosophy” nor even a “summa theologica” but simply a “guide of the perplexed,” i.e., it does not contain a complete exposition of Maimonides’ opinions. But precisely because Maimonides’ philosophical work is a “guide of the perplexed,” because it treats among the philosophical questions only those that have a decisive importance for the philosophizing Jew, the fact that it does not contain a treatise on morality, but, in its place, an analysis of divine law, merits noting: Morality, as distinguished from the divine law, is not of capital importance for Maimonides (as regards the similar attitude of Farabi concerning morality, cf. above).

The discussion of the divine law (*Guide* III 25–50) contains nothing other than, first, the proof that a divine law insofar as it is a divine law must be reasonable, having a manifest utility, and, second, the search for the reasonable ends of the given divine law, that of Moses. The fundamental questions, why is a (divine) law necessary and how is a divine law distinguished from a human law, are almost not taken up. The reason for this is that they have been treated sufficiently in a preceding part of the *Guide*, in the theory of prophecy (*Guide* II 32ff.) The foundations of the theory of the law are hence not found anywhere else than in the doctrine of prophecy. It could not be otherwise: “It is known that the belief in prophecy precedes the belief in the law; for if there is no prophet, there is no law” (*Guide* III, 45 (p. 98b) [p. 576]).

It is difficult to understand the exact meaning of Maimonides’ prophetology if one does not know first the philosophical place of this doctrine. By treating prophecy before formally ending the metaphysical discussions by the interpretation of the *ma’aseh merkabah*, Maimonides seems to indicate that prophetology is connected with metaphysics, and this conclusion seems to be confirmed by the fact that Avicenna expressly attributes the theory of prophecy to metaphysics. However, Avicenna does not count prophetology as an integral part of metaphysics; according to him, the doctrine of prophecy as well as that of life after death are but “branches” of metaphysics (see the Latin translation of his “Division of the Sciences” ap. *Avicennae compendium de anima* etc., ab Andrea Alpagio . . . *ex arabico in latinum versa*, Venetiis 1546, pp. 143 b–144 b). Further, he clearly declares that it is politics which explains the necessity of prophecy and the law, as well as the difference between true prophets and pseudo-prophets (loc. cit., pp. 138 b–139a; cf. Strauss, *Philosophy and Law*, pp. 99–103). But, to understand Maimonides, Farabi’s view is much more important than Avicenna’s. Now Farabi mentions belief in revelation only after the belief in the “first Chief” (*Musterstaat*, p. 69, 15). Let us add that Averroes himself sees prophecy as an essentially political fact: the action proper to the prophet is legislation (see above). There is then a perfect agreement among the most important *falasifa* regarding the essentially political character of prophecy and, as a result, regarding the connection between prophetology and political science. Maimonides did not have the slightest reason to separate himself here

from the *falasifa*, of whose principal theses concerning prophecy he approves. There is a direct proof of this: In the summary of the philosophical principles found at the beginning of the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides speaks of prophecy and of the law only after having formally ended the summary of metaphysics (*ma'aseh merkabah*) and physics (*ma'aseh bereshit*). In so doing, he expresses the opinion that prophecy is not a subject of speculative philosophy, but of practical or political philosophy. In the *Guide*, it is true, this opinion does not reveal itself by the composition; in this work, prophetology is treated before metaphysics is formally ended; but this alteration of the usual order is, as will be seen, the necessary order, easily explained by the end, peculiar to the prophetology of the *Guide*, of establishing the foundation of the philosophical exegesis of Scripture.¹²

Maimonides takes up the theory of prophecy by discussing the different opinions concerning it, and by establishing, against the vulgar opinion, the principle that prophecy is linked to certain natural conditions, especially to the perfection, acquired by studies, of the intellect (*Guide* II 32–34). He then explains that there is an essential difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets: The whole doctrine of prophecy, developed in the following chapters, does not address the prophecy of Moses (ch. 35). It is only after these preliminary clarifications that Maimonides defines prophecy; “the essence of prophecy,” he says, “is an emanation from God, which spreads, by the intermediary of the Active Intellect, first to the rational faculty and then to the imaginative faculty” (ch. 36). To understand better this far too “scholastic” definition, one must pose the following question: What does this emanation produce if it spreads, not to the two faculties together, but only to one of them? Here is Maimonides’ answer: “If this intellectual emanation spreads only to the rational faculty, without having spread to the imaginative faculty . . . it is this (which constitutes) the class of knowers, of the men of speculation. . . . If the emanation spreads only to the imaginative faculty . . . the class thereby constituted are the governors of the cities and the legislators and the diviners and the augers and those who have true dreams, and similarly those who effect miracles by extraordinary artifices and the occult arts without being knowers . . .” (ch. 37).¹³ Now the prophecy which results from the emanation spreading to the two faculties together must unite in itself the effects produced if the emanation spreads to only one of them. As a result, the prophet is a philosopher and statesman (governor or legislator), and at the same time a diviner and magician. As for the magical faculty of the prophet—a theme dear to Avicenna—Maimonides has little interest in it. What characterizes the prophet, according to him, is the union (which is at the same time a considerable augmentation) of the faculties of the philosopher, statesman, and diviner: the prophet is a philosopher-statesman-diviner.

That this is Maimonides’ opinion is proved, moreover, by the fact that he adds to the two chapters treating the essence and the conditions of prophecy a

third (ch. 38), in which he explains that the prophet necessarily possesses the following three faculties: the faculty of courage, the faculty of divination, and the immediate knowledge of speculative truths without knowledge of the premises. Now this last, while being an essential expansion of philosophical knowledge, nonetheless remains a speculative faculty; we have then only to show that the faculty of courage which characterizes the prophet represents or indicates his political function. Maimonides would not speak of extraordinary courage as an essential condition of prophecy if he did not believe that the prophet as such is exposed to the gravest dangers. Now if the prophet received his inspiration, whether of a speculative order (concerning God and the Angels) or a practical order (concerning future matters), only for his own perfection, he would not be exposed to dangers as a prophet. It is then of the essence of the prophet that he receive inspiration, that he “ascend” precisely so as to “descend,” to guide and instruct men (*Guide* I, 15); for, as a result of this social function which necessarily displeases unjust men, he is in perpetual danger. Although this danger is inevitable even if the prophet restricts himself to instructing men, it is much more menacing when the prophet opposes, as a guide of just men, the injustices of tyrants or the multitude. This is why the first example of prophetic courage cited by Maimonides is the example of Moses who, “a lone man, presented himself courageously, with his staff, before a great king *to deliver a nation from the slavery imposed by him*” (*Guide* II, 38 (p. 82b) [p. 376]).¹⁴

The triad philosopher-statesman-diviner immediately calls to mind the politics of Farabi according to which the “first Chief” of the perfect city must be a philosopher and diviner (“prophet”). It remains to be seen whether Maimonides also regards the founding of the perfect city as the *raison d’être* of revelation. It has been thought that the principal end of revelation according to him was the proclamation of the most important truths, above all those not accessible to human reason. But if this is the precise meaning of Maimonides’ opinion, why does he say that the divine law is limited to teaching these truths in a summary and enigmatic manner, while in political matters, “every effort has been made to render precise what concerns the governance of the cities in all its details” (*Guide* III, 27–28. Cf. I, 33 (p. 37a) [p. 71]; *H. Yesode ha-Torah* IV, 13; see also Falaquera, *Sefer ha-ma’alot*, ed. Venetianer [Berlin, 1894] pp. 48, 7–9)? And, above all, why do these truths form a part—certainly the most noble part, but all the same a part—of a *law*? Not only the proclamation and the propagation of the most important truths but also and above all the founding of a perfect nation is “the end of the efforts of the patriarchs and Moses during their whole lives”¹⁵. The founding of a perfect nation, and consequently the proclamation of a perfect law which must serve as a constitution to the perfect nation is, according to Maimonides, the *raison d’être* of prophecy. The proof of this is the fact which even seems to render doubtful all of our argumentation: the distinction between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets. Indeed, if the prophetology of Maimonides has as its object only the latter, as he

expressly intends, what reason has one to suppose that precisely the political character of “ordinary” prophecy is in any way found in the prophecy of Moses? To this question, which any attentive reader of *Guide* II 35–38 would not be able to avoid, Maimonides responds in the following chapter (39). He says: “After having spoken of the essence of prophecy, made known its true state, and shown that the prophecy of Moses, our master, is distinguished from the prophecy of the other (prophets), we will say that it is this (prophetic) perception (of Moses’) alone which has had the necessary consequence of calling us to the law.” The rest of the chapter in question may be summarized by saying that the prophets prior to Moses prepared, and those who followed him protected or confirmed, the divine legislation accomplished by (the intermediary of) Moses (cf. also *H. Yesode ha-Torah* IX, 2) which is the most perfect legislation there is. Moses, chief of the prophets, is hence not less but more a statesman than the other prophets: He alone is the founder of the perfect political community. This is the reason why Maimonides affirms so clearly and repeatedly that the prophecy of Moses is superior to that of the other prophets, even to that of the patriarchs. This affirmation is not the repetition of something commonplace: it betrays a specific tendency. The passage of the *Mishneh Torah* which treats of the difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets is based on a similar passage of the *Mishnat R. Eliezer* (cf. the remarks of M. Guttman, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* [1935], pp. 150–51). Now in this source of Maimonides’, it is affirmed in an immediately preceding passage that the prophecy of the patriarchs is superior to that of Moses and the other prophets. And from this passage Maimonides has borrowed nothing. On the contrary, his prophetology implies a critique of the principle of the point of view which dominates the prophetology of the *Mishnat R. Eliezer*: he affirms explicitly that the prophecy of Moses is superior to that of the patriarchs (cf. above all the contrary interpretation of Exodus VI, 3 in Maimonides’ source [*Mishnat R. Eliezer*, ed. Enelow (New York, 1933) p. 112, 20–23] and in Maimonides himself [*Guide* II, 35, p. 77a (p. 367)]). As regards the efficient cause of the superiority of the prophecy of Moses over that of the patriarchs, he expresses himself only by allusions; but he shows without any reserve the “consequence” of this superiority, or rather its final cause: Only the prophecy of Moses is legislative.

This means that only Moses is the philosopher-legislator in Plato’s sense or the “first Chief” in Farabi’s sense. But Maimonides does not say this explicitly:¹⁶ he limits himself to indicating the signs which suffice for one “who will understand,” for an attentive and duly instructed reader; and let us never forget that Maimonides would not have considered sufficiently instructed to understand the *Guide* anyone who did not know Farabi, and especially his treatise on political governments. He had reasons, not only apologetical, but also and above all philosophical, to be reserved when speaking of the prophecy of Moses, i.e., of the legislative prophecy: He neither wished nor was able, nor

had any need, to lift the veil which conceals the origins of the Torah, the foundation of the perfect nation. Whether the Torah is a miracle or a natural fact, whether the Torah came from heaven or not—as soon as it is given, it is “not in heaven” but “very nigh unto thee, in your mouth and in your heart, that thou mayest do it” [*Deuteronomy* 30:12, 14]. Not the mystery of its origin, the search for which leads either to theosophy or “Epicureanism,” but its end, the comprehension of which guarantees obedience to the Torah, is accessible to human reason. Guided by this conception, Maimonides, after having explained that the prophecy of Moses, qua legislative prophecy, is distinguished from that of all the other prophets, takes up in the following chapter (40) the fundamental question concerning the end, the reason of the law.

Why is the law—the law in general and the divine law in particular—necessary? Man is naturally a political being, and he can only live when united with other men (*Guide* I, 72 (p. 103a)[p. 191]). But man is at the same time much less naturally capable of political life than any other animal; the differences between the individuals of the human species being much greater than those between the individuals of other species, one does not see how a community of men would be possible. Farabi had responded to this question by showing that it is precisely as a result of the natural inequality among men that political life becomes possible: inequality is only the reverse side of what is, properly speaking, a graduated order (*K. al-siyasat*, pp. 45–48). Maimonides follows a somewhat different path. From the extraordinary variation between human individuals, he draws the consequence that men who are so unequal, so different from one another, can only live together if they have a guide who corrects the vicious extremes, either by supplying what is lacking or by moderating what is in excess. This guide prescribes the actions and mores all must continually practice, in accord with the same rule; he establishes, in opposition to the natural variety of vicious extremes, the conventional harmony of a reasonable milieu; he establishes an “equal” law, as equally removed from excess as deficiency (*Guide* II, 40 (p. 85a–b)[pp. 381–82] and II, 39 (p. 84b)[p. 380]). The task of the legislator, then, is to establish harmony between men of opposed dispositions by reducing the extremes to a just and identical milieu by means of a single and identical law which will never be changed. Of these opposed dispositions, Maimonides cites as an example the opposition between hardness and softness: “the hardness of an individual who will go so far as to cut the throat of his young son on account of the violence of his anger, while another feels pity for the violent death of a gnat or a reptile, having a soul too tender for that” (*Guide* II, 40 (p. 85b)[p. 382]). Although this is but an example, it merits some attention as being the only one adduced by Maimonides. Now, it is precisely the opposition between hardness or ferocity on the one hand, and weakness or softness on the other, which is of decisive importance in the politics of Plato: it is the end of the true legislator to make a “fabric” out of the opposed dispositions of the naturally brave man and the naturally moderate man, dispo-

sitions which would degenerate, if they were not disciplined, into ferocity or hardness and weakness or cowardice; the city, then, needs a supervisor who forges a harmonious alliance out of these two disharmonious dispositions¹⁷: this end may be achieved either in a city governed by philosophers, or in a city governed by reasonable laws; in the latter case, the laws must always remain the same in opposition to the unregulated pleasures which are never the same and which are never in relation to the same things (*Laws* 660 B–C).

A law, to be truly “equal,” must not be purely human. By human law is meant a law which aims only at the well-being of the body or, in other words, a law which “has no other end than putting in good order the city and its affairs, and keeping injustice and rivalry from it” so that “men may obtain some sort of imaginary happiness, which corresponds to the view of the respective legislator.” The author of a law of this sort possesses only the perfection of the “imagination” (*Guide* II, 40 (p. 86b)[p. 384] and III, 27 (p. 59b) [p. 510]); he is not and cannot be a philosopher (and still less a prophet), he is “ignorant”: he does not know true happiness which is always one and the same, he searches for, and causes others to search for, one of the different forms of imaginary happiness. Farabi also had spoken of the “ignorant” governors who do not need philosophy, who can achieve their ends by means of the “experimental faculty” alone, by means of a “sensual aptitude”¹⁸; and their end—the end of the “ignorant city”—is an imaginary happiness: either what is necessary for the preservation of the body, or wealth, pleasures, glory, victory, or liberty (cf. *Musterstaat*, p. 61, 19–62, 20 and *Ihsa al-ulum*, pp. 64–65 and 68–69). True happiness consists in the well-being of the soul, i.e., in the knowledge, as perfect as possible, of all that exists and above all of the most perfect beings, of God and the Angels; it is at this that the perfect city aims according to Farabi, the divine law according to Maimonides. But as true happiness can only be obtained after man has achieved the “well-being of the body which consists in the city’s being well governed,” “the divine law has as an end two things, namely the well-being of the soul and that of the body” (*Guide* II, 40 (p. 86b)[p. 384] and III, 27). That Maimonides characterizes a law which aims at the perfection of the intelligence as a “divine law” appears, at first glance, surprising: cannot a law of this sort be the work of a philosopher? was knowledge not the end in relation to which the Platonic legislator established his laws? Let us recall, however, that Plato began his dialogue on the laws with the word “God”—this dialogue, and no other work—and that according to him the true law aims not only at “human” goods, i.e., at bodily goods, but also and above all at “divine” goods, the first of which is knowledge (*Laws* 631 B–D. Cf. 624 A and 630 D–E). Maimonides is then in perfect accord with Plato in seeing as the trait characteristic of the divine law the fact that it aims at the perfection of knowledge.

The perfect law (“*Al-shari’ a al-kamila*”—*Guide* III, 46 [p. 586]), given by the prophet-legislator who unites in his person all the essential qualities of the philosopher and the statesman while surpassing them in a miraculous manner,

can only be understood and transmitted by men who also have at their disposal the qualities of the philosopher and the statesman, although in a much more imperfect manner: The “secrets of the Torah” ought only to be confided to a man who is perfect “regarding political governments and the speculative sciences (and who possesses) with this a natural penetration, intelligence, and eloquence in order to present the subjects in such a way that they may be glimpsed.” These “conditions” to be fulfilled by the rabbi-philosopher recall the “conditions” (*Musterstaat*, p. 60, 14 and 18 and 59, 5; *k. tahsil*, p. 44) enumerated by Farabi to be fulfilled by the “first Chief,”¹⁹ which, for their part, are derived from the conditions required by Plato of the philosopher-kings. The rabbi-philosopher must fulfill at least some of the conditions of the king-philosopher, since he is the authentic interpreter of the work of the legislator (prophet)-philosopher who, for his part, has realized what the philosopher Plato could only postulate: the divine legislation. It is the rabbi-philosopher who must guide, as vicar of the legislator-philosopher, those who are not capable of understanding the esoteric teaching of the legislator; if these refuse to submit to his direction, they render themselves without excuse.²⁰ As regards the “political governments” that the rabbi-philosopher must know, there can be no doubt that they are the juridical norms contained in the written and oral Torah: It is then by beginning from the Platonic conception of the philosopher-king that Maimonides arrives at the philosophical justification of the study of the *halakha* [sacred Law].

In his treatise on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, Farabi, when summarizing Plato’s *Republic*, had said: “Insofar as man lives in association with men of this (sc., corrupt) nation, his life will not be a human life; but if he separates himself from them and distances himself from their way of living by striving to attain perfection, his life will be miserable and he will never attain what he wishes, for one of two things will happen to him: either he will be killed, or he will be deprived of perfection. This is why he needs another nation, different from that which exists during his time; this is why he (Plato) made the search for this other nation. He began by discussing justice and what true justice is; he discussed conventional justice, practiced in the cities; and after having discussed it, he acknowledged that this was true injustice and extreme malice, and that these evils would endure for as long as there are cities. This is why he had to organize another city in which true justice and the goods which are goods in truth would be found, and in which nothing of the things necessary to attain happiness would be lacking, of which the philosophers would be the principal part . . .” (Falaquera, *Reshit hokhma*, ed. David, p. 76). Now, the search for the perfect city had been rendered superfluous by the divine legislation; and as the divine law had not been given to a city but a nation, it was above all the idea of the perfect city which had to fall into desuetude, to become a symbol (Cf., however the prediction concerning the “faithful city” in Isaiah I, 21–26). One finds the perfect city, the city of God,

as subject of a parable in *Guide* III, 51. Munk remarked in one of his notes to this chapter: "It seems evident to me that here, as in many other passages of these last chapters, Maimonides has taken as a model the citizen of the ideal State, whose depiction Farabi has given us in his treatise, *The Principles of Beings* . . . and the philosopher presented by Ibn-Badja, in his *Governance of the Solitary*. . . . In the two works we just indicated, many traits are borrowed from Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics*" (*Le Guide des Egarés*, III, p. 438 n. 4). Farabi had said in the treatise indicated by Munk: "Naturally bestial men are not city dwellers, and by no means do they gather together in a city-dwelling (political) way; but they resemble in part domestic animals, in part wild animals. (There are some who) are found in the extremities of the inhabited earth, either in the extreme North or the extreme South. These must be treated as beasts. Those among them who are more human and who can be more useful in the cities, are to be spared and employed as beasts are employed. Those among them who cannot be useful or who are harmful are treated like the other harmful animals. One must proceed in the same manner if it happens that someone bestial is born among the inhabitants of the cities" (*K. al-siyasat*, pp. 57–58). Maimonides takes this description up again; he also speaks of men living "outside the city" like "the most distant of the Turks who live in the far North and the Negroes who live in the far South, and those who resemble them in our climate; these are considered as irrational animals; I do not place them among the ranks of man, for they occupy among the beings a rank inferior to that of man and superior to that of the ape . . ." (*Guide* III, 51 (p. 123b)[p. 618]). But Maimonides characterizes these men as nonpolitical men, living "outside the city" only in a metaphorical sense: These barbaric men, devoid of and even incapable of all intellectual culture, live "outside the city" because they do not have the least understanding of the sovereign of the "city," i.e., of God.

However, the search for the perfect city—the problem of Plato resolved by the divine legislation—could not be forgotten by the Jew. The Jewish nation which is the perfect nation to the extent that it is constituted by the perfect law and provided that it obeys that law, did not obey it. Thus the prophets themselves had run the same risks in Jerusalem as Socrates in Athens. They had shown by their actions or by their speech that the man who loves perfection and justice must leave the cities inhabited exclusively by the wicked, to search for a city inhabited by good men, and that he must prefer, if he does not know of such a city or if he is prevented from bringing one about, wandering in the desert or in caverns to the association with evil men. This manner of acting is obligatory for the Jew, as Maimonides explains it, basing himself on the teaching of the Jewish tradition and relying on a verse of Jeremiah (IX, 1) (see *H. deot* VI, 1. Cf. also *Shemoneh Perakim* IV [ed. Wolff (Leiden: Brill, 1903) pp. 10–11] where the same verse is cited.—Cf. Farabi, *k. al-siyasat*, p. 50). And it is this same passage that Falaquera has in mind when translating the

passage of the Farabian summary of the *Republic* which describes the fate of Socrates and all those who, living in an unjust city, search for perfection (*Reshit hokhma*, p. 77. Cf. above).

But it is not only for the city inhabited by good men that the Jew must look. Through the loss of its political liberty, the Jewish nation equally lost the means of practicing the law to the full extent. The members of the perfect nation being dispersed among pagan, idolator, "ignorant" nations, the question of Plato surfaced anew. The answer was supplied there by the hope of the Messiah. The Messiah is king; this means that his rank is inferior to that of the legislator-prophet: While the former has proclaimed the divine law, the king compels men to obey the law (cf. *H. melakhim* XI, 4 with *Guide* II, 40 p. 85b [p. 382]). The king-Messiah will thus change nothing of the law of Moses, but, devoting his life to the study of the Torah, attending to the commandments according to the written and oral Torah, and compelling Israel to follow it, he will reestablish the execution of all the prescriptions which cannot be practiced during captivity (*H. melakhim* XI, 1 and 4). The days of the Messiah, then, will be situated in this world, the natural course of which will not be changed (cf. *H. teshovah* IX, 2 and *H. melakhim* XII, 1). Not that the goal of the Messianic regime is the well-being of the body or earthly happiness. To the contrary: The Messiah is not only king, he is at the same time wiser than Solomon, indeed, a prophet almost equal to Moses (*H. teshovah* IX, 2). Uniting in his person the qualities of the king and the sage, he will establish peace for all time so that men can at last find repose, the leisure to apply themselves to wisdom and the law without being troubled by sickness, war, and famine (*H. teshovah* IX, 1–2, and *H. melakhim* XII, 3–4). Thus, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God" [*Isaiah* 11:9] without the difference between the knowers and the vulgar being abolished: much better, it is only then that the privileges of the philosophers will be fully recognized (Cf. the interpretation of Joel II, 28 in *Guide* II, 32 (p. 74a) [p. 362]). The Messiah is distinguished from all the other prophets because he does not fulfill the signs and it is not asked of him to do so (cf. *H. melakhim* XI, 3 with *H. Yesode ha-Torah* X, 1–2). And is the eternal peace, realized by the Messiah, anything other than the necessary consequence of knowledge, the knowledge of God (*Guide* III, 11)? The Messiah, being a king-philosopher, will establish for all time the "perfect city" whose inhabitants will apply themselves, according to their respective faculties, to the knowledge of God, and he will thereby bring to an end the evils which today trouble the cities.²¹

III

The perfect law, the divine law, is distinguished from the human laws in that it aims not only at the well-being of the body, but also and above all at the

well-being of the soul. This consists in man having sound opinions, above all concerning God and the Angels. The divine law has therefore indicated the most important of these opinions to guide man toward the well-being of the soul, but only in a manner which does not surpass the understanding of the vulgar. This is the reason it was necessary that the prophets have at their disposal the supreme perfection of the imaginative faculty:²² imagination makes possible the metaphorical exoteric representation of the truths whose proper, esoteric meaning must be concealed from the vulgar. For one neither can nor ought speak of the principles except in an enigmatic manner; this is what not only the “men of the law” but also the philosophers say. Maimonides names only one of these esoteric philosophers: Plato (*Guide I*, 17. Cf. a similar remark of Avicenna, cited in my study *Philosophy and Law*, p. 133 n. 71).

To communicate to the vulgar a certain knowledge of the principles, which are incorporeal and intellectual things, they must be represented by corporeal and sensible things. Not by just any corporeal things, but by those which occupy, in the sensible domain, a place analogous to that occupied, in the intellectual domain, by the principle in question. God and His attributes, then, will be represented by the most noble sensible things (Farabi, *Musterstaat*, p. 50, 9–15). It is for this reason that the prophets represent divine perception, for example, by hearing and sight, i.e., by the most noble sensations, and that they do not attribute to God, even metaphorically, the sense of touch which is the basest of our senses (*Guide I*, 47). But the external meaning of the prophets’ speeches is sometimes more than a means to indicate the esoteric truths; there are cases in which the exterior meaning has a value in itself: it may be that the prophet pronounces some speeches which communicate by their esoteric sense a speculative truth, while their exoteric sense indicates “a wisdom useful for many things, and among others for the amelioration of the state of human societies” (*Guide I*, Intro. p. 7a [p. 12]). A remarkable example of this is found in *Guide II*, 31 [cf. *Rasa’il Ihwan al’Safa*, IV, 190]). There is then among corporeal things, worthy of being employed for the representation of the principles, a class which particularly lends itself to this use, namely political matters (cf. Farabi, *k. tahsil*, p. 41). The political hierarchy is an adequately faithful counterpart to the cosmic hierarchy. This is why the comparison of God to a king is so common (*Guide I*, 46(p. 52b)[pp. 102–3]. Cf. I, 9 and III, 51 beg.) It goes without saying that such comparisons must not be taken literally: they contain an esoteric meaning while their exoteric meaning is one of great utility for political life. The divine law attaches so great a value to the representations, useful for political life, of divine matters that it invites men to believe not only in the most important speculative truths, but also in certain things which are “necessary for the good order of the political conditions”; it is in this way that it invites the belief in divine anger and mercy (*Guide III*, 28). The most illustrious example of this are the “thirteen *middot*” [characteristics or attributes] of God, revealed to Moses: they do not signify the attributes of God but the most

perfect manner of acting which the most perfect statesman, i.e., “the governor of the city who is a prophet,” must take as a model; they are the essential conditions of the “governance of the (most perfect) cities” (*Guide* I, 54). However, the unity and scope of the dogmatic politics included in the *Guide* are highlighted in no part more than the theory of providence which forms one of the principal parts of this work.

According to Maimonides, the teaching of the divine law concerning providence is summarized in the thesis that God rewards or punishes men according to their merits or faults so well that all that happens to an individual human being is in perfect accord with the moral value of his actions. This doctrine is diametrically opposed to the doctrine of the “philosophers,” i.e., of Aristotle, who denies divine omniscience and, as a result, particular providence. However, “there have been some philosophers who believed what we believe, namely that God knows everything and that nothing is in any way hidden from him; these are certain great men prior to Aristotle, whom Alexander (of Aphrodisias) also mentions in his treatise (*De Providentia*), but whose opinion he rejects” (*Guide* III, 16 (p. 31a)[p. 463]). There would be a certain interest in knowing who the philosophers are, prior to Aristotle, whose doctrine concerning providence is in accord with the Biblical doctrine according to Maimonides. As Alexander’s treatise *De Providentia* is lost, one is confined to the succinct summary of this writing given by Maimonides. Here are Alexander’s theses: The philosophers were led to deny divine omniscience and providence first and foremost by the observation of the lack of order in human matters, by the observation of the misfortune of the just and the good fortune of the unjust (cf. *Guide* III, 16 (p.31a)[p. 463] where this reasoning is expressly attributed to Alexander, *De Providentia*). They then came to pose the following disjunctions: Either God knows nothing of the conditions of individual humans, or he knows them; if he knows them, one of these three cases must necessarily be admitted: either that God rules them and there establishes the most perfect order, or that he is impotent or, while knowing them and being able to introduce order there he neglects to do so, either through disdain and scorn, or because of envy. Now of these three cases two are impossible with respect to God, namely that God is impotent or that he neglects the things he knows; only the first case then remains, namely that God rules the individual conditions in the most perfect manner. Now, we find such conditions completely unregulated; as a result, the presupposition that God knows individual things is false, and the other part of the first disjunction, namely that God knows nothing of individual things, is true (*Guide* III, 16 (p. 30a–b)[pp. 461–62]). This argument against particular providence was certainly not invented by Alexander. A trace of it is found in the comparable argument of the Academician against the Stoic in Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* III, 39, 92). But, what is more interesting, Chrysippus and the Stoics themselves had posed similar disjunctions to those

cited by Maimonides with the intention (opposed to that of the Academicians and Alexander) of proving that there is a divine providence concerning human matters (cf. Cicero, *De Divinatione* I, 38, 82–39,84 with *De Natura Deorum* II, 30, 77). It seems then that the reasoning, summarized by Maimonides, was first employed to affirm providence. It must even be said that it was invented for this end. In the tenth book of the *Laws*, Plato addresses an “exhortation” to him who, while admitting the existence of the gods, believes that they “scorn and neglect human affairs.” He begins by stating that the good fortune of the unjust is the reason which leads men to this impious belief (*Laws* 899 Dff). He then proves that God is no less concerned with the small (human) matters than with the great (cosmic), beginning from the following premises: (1) God knows all things, (2) he is able to concern himself with the small matters as well as the great, (3) being perfectly virtuous, he wishes to be so concerned (*Laws* 902 E and 901 D–E). It is this distinction between divine knowledge, power, and will, made for proving particular providence, which is at the basis of the disjunctions posed by Alexander with a view to refuting this belief and, before him, by Chrysippus to confirm it; and one finds in Plato some indications of these very disjunctions (*Laws* 901 B–C and 902 A). Moreover, Alexander had begun his reasoning by stating, in the same manner as Plato, that the reason which brings men to deny particular providence is the good fortune of the unjust, which Maimonides repeats in his own account of providence (*Guide* III, 19 beg.) As Alexander had spoken explicitly of philosophers prior to Aristotle who believed in divine omniscience, we do not hesitate to conclude that Maimonides knew, if only through other texts, at least through Alexander’s treatise *De Providentia*, the doctrine of the *Laws* on providence. And if Alexander did not cite Plato’s text, one would have to say that Maimonides, without his knowing it, re-established this text: it was certainly not Alexander who had characterized the negation of particular providence as a “bad and absurd opinion” (*Guide* III, 16. Cf. *Laws* 903 A). But Maimonides not only knew of the doctrine of the *Laws* on providence, he even approved of it: according to him, the doctrine of certain “great men prior to Aristotle” concerning providence is in accord with the doctrine of the divine law. And can one judge otherwise, since Plato speaks of God’s vindictive justice in almost the same terms as Scripture (cf. *Laws* 905 A–B with Amos, IX, 1–3)? It will be objected that the agreement between Plato and the prophets is specious, it being a given that Plato affirms the dogma of particular providence only because of its political utility: a city governed by laws, and not by philosophers, cannot be perfect unless the belief that God rewards or punishes men according to their actions, is there established (cf. *Laws* 663 D–E). We do not dispute this. But it is precisely in this sense that Maimonides accepts the Biblical doctrine: While in his discussion of both creation and prophecy he identifies his own opinion with that of the law, he clearly distinguishes, in his discussion of providence, his

own opinion from that of the law (Cf. above all *Guide* III, 17 (p. 34b)[p. 469] and III, 23 (p. 49b)[p. 494]). Maimonides is thus, here again, in accord with Plato.²³

Having arrived at this point, one cannot avoid posing the questions, decisive for the understanding of Maimonides, concerning the relation between the theology of the *Guide* and the Platonic doctrine of the One, and the relation between the cosmology of the *Guide* (i.e., the discussion of the creation of the world) and the doctrine of the *Timaeus*. The analysis of these relations must be reserved for a subsequent study.

NOTES

1. Cf. Strauss, *Philosophy and Law* [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1987], pp. 103 and 55–56. In R. Sheshet ha-Nasi's letter, published by A. Marx (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, N.S., XXV [1935], 406ff.), one finds the following note concerning Plato's *Laws*, certainly based not on a direct knowledge of it, but on a tradition whose history is not yet elucidated. R. Sheshet says: "I have also seen in the Book of the Laws of the intellect [the *Laws*] which Plato composed that in it he forbids the things which are forbidden in our holy Torah. For example: Thou shalt not murder, and thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor and thou shalt not covet and the rest of the things which the intellect teaches us to refrain from. Also with respect to the positive commandments he [i.e., Plato] commanded to perform justice and righteousness. And many of the things which the virtue of the intellect teaches to do are among the things which are written in our true and holy Torah."

2. [See] the preceding note. Cf. also E. Rosenthal, "Maimonides' Conception of State and Society," in *Moses Maimonides*, ed. I. Epstein (London, 1935), pp. 189–206.

Let us note further that Munk tends to level the political character of the respective passages of *Le Guide [des Egarés]* by translating, for example, *madani* as "social" (cf. especially III, 31, p. 68 b *al-i'mal al-siyasiyya al-madaniyya* which Munk translates as "the practice of the social duties"). Let us add that the translation of *medinah* as "state" instead of "city" is all the more erroneous. In philosophical texts, one often ought to translate even the Hebrew word *medinah* not as "department" or "region," but as "city."

Averroes himself declares that he does not know it [the *Politics*]. According to [Moritz] Steinschneider, *Die Hebraischen Uebersetzungen [des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher]* (Berlin, 1893; reprint ed. Graz: Akademischen Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1956) p. 219, it was never translated into Arabic. It may be, however, that Farabi knew it through the intermediary of those of his friends who knew Greek. Averroes reports: "Apparet autem ex sermone Abyn arim [Abi nazr] Alfarabii, quod inventus est (sc. liber Politicorum Aristotelis) in illis villis." (*Aristotelis Opera*, Venetiis 1550, Vol. III, fol. 79a, col. 1, l. 36–38). ["It is clear, moreover, from Alfarabi's report, that it (Aristotle's *Politics*) was found in those cities."] Also *Averrois Paraphrasis in Plat. Rempubl.* (loc. cit., fol. 175 b, col. 1, l. 38–39).

Averroes believed that he commented on this treatise [on dreams]; but it is easy to see that his paraphrase is not based on Aristotle's treatise. One must judge in the same way regarding the few words with which Farabi claims to summarize the subject of Aristotle's treatise (see Falaquera, *Reshit hokhma*, ed. David (Berlin, 1902), p. 87, l. 27–32). (It remains to show on another occasion that the third part of the *Reshit hokhma* is the translation of Farabi's book on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.) Cf. also the remarks concerning the *De Somno et Visione* of Kindi in A. Nagy, *Die philosophischen Abhandlungen des Kindi* (Munster, 1897), pp. XXII–XXIII. As regards the defective knowledge of the *Parva Naturalia* among the Muslims in general, cf. Max Meyerhof, *Von Alexandrien nach Bagdad* (Berlin: Abhandl. der Preuss Akad. d. Wiss., 1930), p. 27.

I owe the invaluable information on this and such other points as bear on the intellectual atmosphere in which Farabi lived and thought, to my friend Paul Kraus. Cf. while awaiting his subsequent publications his "Beitrag zur islamischen Ketzergeschichte," *Revista degli Studi Orientalia*, XIV (1934), 94–129 and 335–379.

3. This [*Opinions of the People of the Perfect City*] is the title of Farabi's other major work. [The most recent edition appeared under the title *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, a revised text with introduction, translation and commentary by Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).]

Cf. the studies on Razi that Kraus has begun to publish in *Orientalia* of Rome under the title "Raziana." [See *Orientalia*, N.S., IV (1935), 300–334; V (1936), 35–56, 358–378.]

4. For even the doctrines formed in a Christian setting are constituted only in opposition to Maimonides; they thus cannot be interpreted without the preliminary interpretation of the *Guide*, which presupposes the reconstitution of the Farabian doctrine.

5. The Arabic original of the last part of the *Millot* seems to be lost; see Steinschneider, *Hebraische Uebersetzungen*, p. 434. [The Arabic text has now been recovered. See Israel Efron, "Maimonides' Arabic Treatise on Logic" *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XXXIV (1966).]

We read, following the Ms. Mm. 6 24 (fol. 29a) of the Cambridge University Library, *Ha-anashim Haham* ["those people"] instead of *ha-anashim* ["the people"] of the [printed] editions.

6. It is, moreover, in this way that the passage in question is understood by the commentators we have been able to consult (an anonymous commentator in the edition of Cremona, Comtino, and Mendelssohn).—One finds some interesting parallels which confirm our interpretation in the *Emanah Ramah* of Abraham Ibn Daoud (pp. 98 and 101) and in the fragments, published by R. Gottheil, of an encyclopedia of the sciences composed by an unknown Muslim author (*J.Q.R.*, N.S., XXXIII [1932], 178). We do not dispute that the words "in these times" may be taken in the sense "during captivity." Understood in this way, the final phase implies: political science was needed when the Jewish state existed, and it will be needed again after the coming of the Messiah. According to this interpretation, the practical importance of political science would be greater than it is according to the interpretation we have preferred as being better in accord with the whole of Maimonides' doctrine.

7. Cf. *Guide* III, 28 (p. 61b) [p. 513] and III, 51(p. 127a) [p. 624]. As regards the relation between the household and the city, see *Guide* III, 41 (p. 90b) [p. 562].

8. [For Farabi's divisions of philosophy:] *K. al-tanbih 'ala sabil al-sa'ada* (Hyderabad, 1346 A.H.) pp. 20–21. The division of practical philosophy into ethics, economics, and politics is found in one of the *Philosophische Abhandlungen*, published by [Friederich] Dieterici (p. 51, 19–21).

[*Alfarabi's Abhandlung der Musterstaat*, ed. Dieterici (Leiden: Brill, 1895), pp. 46, 18–19. [Reprinted 1964.]] [See note 3 above.]

"Political science examines the types of actions and ways of life which depend on the will, and the habits from which these actions and ways of life derive, and the ends for which these actions are performed. And it distinguishes between the ends for which the actions are performed and the ways of life are followed; and it explains that there is an end which is true happiness and it distinguishes between the actions and the ways of life, and explains that those by which one attains true happiness are the praiseworthy goods and virtues and that the condition of their existence in man is that the perfect actions and perfect ways of life be determined in the cities and nations in a hierarchical manner and that they be practiced in common." *Ihsa al-ulum*; (Cairo, 1931), p. 64.—Compare the parallels in *Musterstaat*, p. 46, 7–21 and in the *k. tahsil al-sa'ada*, (Hyderabad, 1345 A.H.), pp. 15–16. [The *Ihsa* has been partially translated by Fauzi M. Najjar in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds; for the *Musterstaat* see note 3 above; the *k. tahsil al-sa'ada* is available in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, translated by Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).]

k. al-siyasat al-madaniyya, (Hyderabad, 1346 A.H.), pp. 42 and 50. [This text has been edited more recently: *Al-Farabi's The Political Regime* ed. Fauzi M. Najjar (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964); a partial translation also by Najjar appears in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*.]

[For the sciences see] *Ihsa al-ulum*. This small treatise, whose singular importance is noted by

Ibn al-Qifti, is more a critique of the sciences, a note distinguishing between the sciences on the basis of their value, than an encyclopedia properly speaking.

[On the virtues see] *Musterstaat*, p. 69.—In the parallel text (*k. al-siyasat al-madaniyya*, p. 55), the actions which conduce to happiness are mentioned at the end of the enumeration.

[On the inseparability of ethics and politics:] That is, if one bases the interpretation of Farabi on his principal writings. At present, it suffices to note that even the titles, for example, of *k. tahsil al-sa'ada* ("The Attainment of Happiness") on the one hand, and of *k. al-tanbih'ala sabil al-sa'ada* ("Note Concerning the Path toward Happiness") on the other, indicate rather clearly that the first is most important; this judgment is confirmed by the analysis of the two writings themselves: the first is the introduction to a book on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the second is the introduction to a grammatical work; and only the first is mentioned by Ibn al-Qifti as one of the most important writings of Farabi. The distinction between ethics and politics is found only in the second.

Compare the attempt, similar to Maimonides', to reconcile the Farabian point of view with that of Aristotle which is found in the fragment of an encyclopedia of the sciences published by Gottheil (see n. 6); according to the unknown author who, moreover, cites Farabi's treatise on the perfect city as one of the classic books on politics, the order of the practical sciences would be the following: (1) politics (2) ethics (3) economics.

Let us recall that Maimonides himself speaks of "perfect nations."

[On the distinction between the governance of cities and of nations:] According to the *The-saurus philosophicus [linguae hebraicae et veteris et recentioris]* of [Jacob] Klatzkin [Berlin, 1928–33] (s.v. *Hanhagah*) *Hanhagat HaMedinah* would correspond to internal politics, *Hanhagat Halmut* to external or world politics ("Weltpolitik"). The origin of this misunderstanding seems to be the explication of the words in question given by Mendelssohn in his commentary on the *Millot*. Mendelssohn, a student of Chr. Wolff and other theoreticians of modern natural right, translates *Hanhagat HaMedinah* as "Polizei."—Another error also caused by insufficient knowledge of the politics of Farabi is the translation of *Medinah MeKubetzet* by "Republik" instead of "Demokratie" (see op. cit., s.v. *Medinah*).

This [*The Perfect City*] is classified as a "political book" in the mss. of the British Museum and the Bodleian Library.

Musterstaat, p. 58, 18–59, 11; cf. *ibid.*, p. 69, 15: "The first Chief and how revelation is brought about."

This is the title of the last chapter of his encyclopedia of the sciences (*Ihsa al-'ulum*): "On political science and the science of the *fiqh* and the science of the *kalam*."

9. *Musterstaat*, p. 59, 11ff.; *k. tahsil*, pp. 44–45. This passage is found almost word for word in the *Rasa'il Ihwan al-Safa* (Cairo, 1928), vol. IV, pp. 182–183.

10. This is what Falaquera says in his *Sefer ha-mebakesh*, ed. Traklin p. 90. Cf. Maimonides, *Consultations*, ed. Freimann p. 337.

11. Cf. *Guide* III, 7 beg. Compare also the analogous interpretation of the *ma'aseh bereshit* [account of the beginning] in *Guide* II, 30, which marks the conclusion of the discourses on physics.

12. The discussion of prophecy and law is found in *H. Yesode ha-Torah* VII-X; cf. the conclusion of the metaphysics and physics, *loc. cit.*, II, 11 and IV, 10–13.

This is why Maimonides attaches the greatest importance to the final chapter of the prophethology (*Guide* II, 48 beg.)—In order to understand the composition of the *Guide*, one must take note of the order of the dogmas presented in the commentary of the *Mishneh* (*Sanhedrin* X) which is found, though somewhat modified, in *H. Teshuvah* III, 6–8. According to this order, the dogmas concerning the existence, unity and incorporeality of God and the eternity of God alone, occupy the first place; immediately following are the dogmas concerning prophecy in general and the prophecy of Moses and the Torah in particular; and only after this the dogmas concerning providence and eschatology. The source of this order seems to be the *Mu'tazilite* doctrine of the *usul* [roots] which determines the composition of the *Emanot ve-deot* of Saadia Gaon (cf. the interesting remark of S. Pines in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 1935, col. 623). The order in question can be found again in the *Guide* in as much as the first class of dogmas is treated in the majority of I, 1–II, 31, the second in II, 32–48, and the third in III, 8–24. Maimonides departs from this order for different

reasons, among others when adopting, to a certain extent, the following order drawn up by Farabi of the "opinions of the men of the perfect city": (1) the first cause and all its attributes (*Guide* I, 1–70), (2) angels and celestial bodies (II, 3–9), (3) physical bodies, justice and wisdom as seen in their government (II, 10–12), (4) the human soul and the way in which the active intellect inspires it, the first Chief and revelation (II, 32–40). This order is followed more strictly in *H. Yesode ha-Torah*.

13. One must note that Maimonides uses as synonyms "divine emanation" and "intellectual emanation." In so doing, he acknowledges that prophecy is a natural phenomenon. Compare *Guide* II, 48 beg., a passage whose singular importance is noted by Maimonides himself.

Regarding this passage, Munk (*Le Guide des Égarés* II, p. 373) makes the following remark: "It may seem strange that the author places legislators beside diviners and counts them among those whose imagination rules over reason. But one sees later (ch. XL, pp. 310–11) that the author does not mean to speak here of purely political legislation which, as he himself says, is the work of reflection; he has only had in mind those of the ancient legislators who believed themselves inspired, claimed to be prophets, and presented their laws as dictated by a divinity." This remark is not right. In the passage mentioned by Munk, in *Guide* II, 40, Maimonides expressly says that a purely political law, i.e., a law which has no other end than the ordering of social relations and the prevention of injustice and violence, is necessarily the work of a man who has no other perfection than that of the imagination. On the other hand, when speaking of legislation which is the work of reflection, Maimonides does not only have in mind purely political laws, but also and above all laws whose end is the intellectual perfection of men, projected by philosophers. Let us add that Maimonides uses the word "imagination" in a very broad sense: by attributing the purely political laws to the imagination, he follows Farabi's opinion according to which these laws are the work of a "sensual aptitude" (see [below]).

14. Maimonides immediately passes from the exposition of the social function of the prophet (II, 37, last part) to that of prophetic courage (II, 38, beg.).

Cf. also II, 45 (pp. 93a–94a) [pp. 395–97].—The Arabic word Maimonides uses to designate the courage (*iqdam*) of the prophets recalls the passage of the *Perfect City* (p. 60, 9–11), where Farabi, in enumerating the conditions of the "first Chief," also speaks of this faculty. Let us remark in passing that this enumeration only reproduces the enumeration of the conditions of the philosopher-kings in Plato's *Republic*. Moreover, Farabi, in a parallel (*k. tahsil*, p. 44), cites Plato expressly.—Averroes himself speaks of the courage of the prophets when paraphrasing Plato's discourse on the courage of the guardians: "ideoque neque Prophetis, neque magistratibus formido, aut metus conveniens." *Averrois Paraphrasis in Platonis Rempubl.*, Tr. I (*Opera Aristotelis Venetis* 1550, Vol. III, fol. 176 b, col. I. 1. 64–65). [Cf. *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, trans. Ralph Lerner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) p. 23: "hence prophets and chiefs ought not to be characterized as being fearful."]

15. *Guide* III, 51(p. 127a)[p.624]. The *falasifa* attribute greater value to courage than did Plato or Aristotle (cf. above all *Laws* 630E–631C, a passage from which one must begin in order to understand the tendency which determines the composition of the *Nicomachean Ethics*). The increased prestige accorded courage is explained by two characteristics of Islam: the missionary tendency which is inherent in a universal religion; and the polemic against "superstitious" menaces which are inherent in a universal religion that is thereby popular.

As the *falasifa* were Muslims, they recognized the commandment of the holy war, understood by them as a civilizing war or, rather they were guided by the idea of a civilization realizable only through civilizing wars: this idea is absent from the thought of Plato. Averroes, in his paraphrase of the *Republic*, speaks of this in the following manner: "(Dicimus) Platonem, cum de virtutibus tractare instituit, de fortitudine primo initium sumpsisse, enimvero, ratio ipsa, modusque sciendi, quibus eam perfectissimam civis adipiscantur, et servant, ea est, ut quod primum sit operum huius virtutis propositum in civitate observemus. Dicendum ergo est duplicem omnino viam esse, ex qua virtutes in animis civium reperiantur. Alteram, si illorum animis, seu Rhetoricis, seu Poeticis orationibus altius opiniones imprimentur . . . hoc autem disciplinae genus in eos ut plurimum convenit civis, qui a teneris similibus rebus assueverint, atque ex his duabus disciplinae viis prior illa naturae magis consentanea est. Posterior etenim ea est, cuius usus in adversarios potissimum, ac

odiosos nobis est, eosque qui virtutibus illis debitis adhaerere recusant, quam quidem viam quis nuncuparit castigatricem. Neminem autem latere debet huic posteriori viae, inter cives huius Reip. praestantissimae locum non esse. Atqui nonnullae aliae gentes improbae adeo existunt, minimeque virtuti parentes, quarumque mores inhumani sunt, ut nulla alia ratione institui possint, nisi cum illis confligatur, ut virtutibus obsequantur. Similisque ratio est in legibus, quae ab humanis legibus non discrepant. Quemadmodum nostra haec lex divina, cum via ipsa, quae ad Deum gloriosum ducit, sit duplex: altera quidem, quae sermone, atque oratione nititur: altera, quae armis. Sed cum haec particularis ars (sc. bellica) non nisi morali via tuto perficiatur . . ., haec certe ipsa virtus fortitudo est . . . estque quod Aristoteles sensit de praestantissimae Reipub. bellis, ut Alfarabius memorat: *quod tamen a Platone hoc in libro dictum videtur non in eum sensum, ut haec ars ad eum finem adinventata sit, verum ob necessitatem . . . quae sane sententia probabilis est, si hominum genus quoddam daretur, quod proclive ad humanas perfectiones, contemplativas praesertim, esset.*" (loc. cit., fol. 175 a, col. 2, 1, 36–175 b, col. 1, 1.50). [Cf. *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, trans. Ralph Lerner, pp. 10–13: "And we say that the virtue of courage is that with which Plato began to introduce the discussion of the bringing-about of these virtues. As we have said, the way of understanding how it is attained by the citizens and preserved with respect to them in the most perfect manner [requires that] we consider what is primarily intended by the actions of this virtue in the city. We say that there are two ways by which the virtues in general are brought about in the souls of political humans. One of them is to establish the opinions in their souls through rhetorical and poetical arguments. This first way of teaching will mostly be possible only for whichever of the citizens grew up with these things from the time of his youth. Of the two ways of teaching, this one is natural. The second way [of teaching], however, is the way applied to enemies, foes, and him whose way it is not to be aroused to the virtues that are desired of him. This is the way of . . . chastisement by blows. It is evident that this way . . . will not be applied to the members of the virtuous city. . . . As for the other nations, which are not good and whose conduct is not human, why there is no way of teaching them other than this way, namely to coerce them through war to adopt the virtues. This is the way in which matters are arranged in those Laws belonging to this our divine Law that proceed like the human Laws, for the ways in it that lead to God (may He be exalted!) are two: one of them is through speech, and the other through war. Since this art of war is not completed other than by a moral virtue by which it draws near to what is appropriate and in the appropriate time and measure—i.e., the virtue of courage. This is what Aristotle asserts about the wars of the virtuous city, according to what Abu Nasr [al-Farabi] reports. *But from what we find concerning this in this book of Plato's, why according to him this part [of the soul, sc., courage] is not prepared for this end [sc., war] but rather is on account of necessity . . . This opinion would only be correct if there were but one class of humans disposed to the human perfections and especially to the theoretical ones.*"] Compare Farabi, *k. tahsil*, pp. 31–32.

When paraphrasing the passage of the *Republic* where Plato demands that the philosophers be brave (486 B), Averroes says: "Ad haec Fortitudo quoque in hoc octavum obtinebit locum, nam sine fortitudine rationes illas debiles, non demonstrativas, in quibus eum (sc. philosophum) educari contigit, nec contemneret, neque refelleret, quod quidem magis etiam perspicuum est in his, qui in nostris civitatibus educati sunt." (Loc. cit., fol. 182 b, col 1, 1. 40–45) [Cf. *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, p. 73: "The eighth [condition is] that he be courageous. For one who has no courage will be unable to despise the non-demonstrative arguments on which he [sc. the philosopher] has grown up, and especially if he has grown up in these cities".] These phrases imply a certain critique of Plato's point of view, as one sees by comparing them with the passage of Plato paraphrased by Averroes. This critique is carried out in an explicit manner in the paraphrase of the tenth book of the *Republic*: "decimus Platonis liber huic civili, quam tractamus disciplinae, nihil admodum (confert) (Plato) suasorias inductiones, ac rationes locis quibusdam probabilibus depromptas subdidit, quibus animam immortalem esse probaret. Et infert deinde fabulam . . . Enimvero iam nos antea saepius prae diximus, istiusmodi fabulas non esse alicuius momenti. . . . Etenim Platonem videri eam fictam, fabulosamque rationem ingerere, quae tamen nihil ad humanam probitatem necessaria sit. Quippe quod homines non paucos cognoscimus, qui suis ipsi legibus, atque moribus freti expertes plane, et rudes istarum fictionum, nihil virtute, nihil vitae instituto pro-

fessoribus talium historiarum concesserint" (fol. 191 b, col. 2, l. 11–39). [Cf. *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, pp. 148–49: "What the tenth treatise encompasses is not necessary for this science. . . . Then he mentions thereafter a rhetorical or dialectical argument by which he explains that the soul does not die. Then there is a story. . . . We have made it known more than once that these stories are of no account. . . . It is this that has brought us to an untruth such as this. It is not something necessary to a man's becoming virtuous. . . . For we see here many people who, in adhering to their nomoi and their Laws, albeit devoid of these stories, are not less well off than those possessing [these] stories.]"

As regards another difference in principle between the *falasifa* and Plato, see n. 20.

16. One finds the expression "first Chief" (*al-ra'is al-awwal*) used figuratively in the *Guide I*, 72 (p. 103a)[p. 191] and the expression "Chief of the law" (*ra'is al-shari'a*) twice in II, 40 (p. 86b)[p. 383].

Cf., however, with the definition of "Imam" in Farabi (*k. tahsil*, p. 43) the following words of Maimonides concerning Moses: ". . . because they would [imitate] his [Moses'] every movement and speech and would wish thereby to attain happiness in this world and the other (world)". *Shemoneh Perakim*, ed. Wolff (Leiden: Brill, 1903), p. 15 [See "Eight Chapters" in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, ed. Raymond L. Weiss and Charles Butterworth (New York: Dover, 1983), p. 74].

17. *Republic* 375 C and 410 D–412 A; *Statesman* 306 ff; *Laws* 773.—Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Plato und die Dichter* (Frankfurt am Main, 1934), pp. 18–19 [see *Platos dialektische Ethik und andere Studien zur platonischen Philosophie*, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968)].

18. "*Qowwa qarhiyya hissiyya*." We follow here the text of the Palencia edition which is confirmed by the Latin translation of Gerard of Cremona.

19. *Guide I*, 34 (p. 41a)[p. 78]: "Consider how, by means of a text of a book, they laid down as conditions of the perfection of the individual, his being perfect in the varieties of political regimes as well as in the speculative sciences and withal his possessing natural perspicacity and understanding and the gift of finely expressing himself in communicating notions in a flash. If all this is realized in someone, then the mysteries of the Torah may be transmitted to him." Cf. again *Guide I*, 33 (p. 37b)[p. 72]: ". . . that he be full of understanding, intelligent, sagacious by nature, that he divine a notion even if it is only very slightly suggested to him in a flash." Farabi mentions among others the following conditions to be fulfilled by the "first Chief": "He should be by nature excellent at understanding. . . . He should possess natural perspicacity; when he sees the slightest indication of a thing, he should grasp what the indication points to. He should have the gift of finely expressing himself." (*Musterstaat*, p. 59, 16–21). [Cf. *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford, 1985) p. 247].

20. *Guide I*, 36 (p. 44a)[p. 85]. Cf. *Musterstaat*, p. 70, 1–3, and 70, 23. Cf. also Averroes, *In Rempubl. Plat.* (fol. 182 b, col. 1, l. 50–54). The condition that the philosopher-king be eloquent is not mentioned by Plato. The *falasifa* attach a greater importance to rhetoric than did Plato; according to them, the prophet is at once a philosopher and orator (cf. in particular Averroes, *Faslul-maqal* passim and n. 19 above). As a result, one finds some interesting remarks concerning the revealed law in the discourses of the *falasifa* on rhetoric (cf. e.g., Farabi, *Ihsa al'oloum*, p. 26, and Averroes, *Paraphrase de la Rhetorique d'Aristote*, Paris Ms., Hebrew cod. 1008, fol. 92 b ff.) [see Averroes' *Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics" "Rhetoric" and "Poetics"*, ed. and trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977)] and the Topics. Let us recall, moreover, the original relation between rhetoric and political science.

21. We do not take up in the present article the important question concerning the relation between the explication of the Mosaic laws given by Maimonides, and political philosophy. We only note here the fact that Maimonides twice cites passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* in order to explain Biblical commandments (*Guide III*, 43, p. 96a [p. 572] and III, 49 beg.).

22. For prophecy is essentially related to legislation, and the "legislative virtue is man's art of representing those speculative concepts which are difficult to comprehend for the vulgar, by means of the imaginative faculty, and the ability to produce political actions which are useful for attaining happiness, and the amphibolous discourse concerning speculative and practical matters that the vulgar know (only) in an amphibolous manner." This is what Falaquera says in a passage of the

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Reshit hokhma (ed. David p. 30, 1, 25–27) which is probably founded on a writing not yet identified as Farabi's. [See *Farabi's Book of Letters (Kitab al-Huruf)* Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Arabic Text, ed. Mushin Mahdi (Beyrouth: Darel-Mashreq, 1969).]

23. There is, moreover, direct testimony of this; after having set out his doctrine on providence, in opposition to Aristotle's doctrine, Maimonides declares: "The philosophers have equally spoken in this sense (sc. that providence watches over individual humans in accord with the extent of their perfection). Abou-Nasr, in the introduction to his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, expresses himself in these terms: those who possess the faculty of causing their souls to pass from one moral quality to another are those of whom Plato has said God's providence watches over them most." *Guide* III, 18 (pp. 38b–39a)[p. 476]. Maimonides could have found similar texts in Aristotle; there is no doubt that he knew this; why then did he not cite Aristotle, but Plato and Farabi?