

LEIBNIZ' ANTHOLOGY OF MAIMONIDES' GUIDE

Foreword by Leibniz' translator

LLOYD STRICKLAND

Translated and annotated by

WALTER HILLIGER



Veritas è terra orientur

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Leibniz' Anthology of Maimonides' Guide

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According to Leibniz' manuscripts
c. 1708 | 5469

First complete English translation,
introduction, and annotations by Walter Hilliger

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Leibniz' Anthology of Maimonides' Guide

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Gratitude

Thanks to Divine Providence for surrounding me with righteous volunteers who are more knowledgeable and resourceful than me to facilitate the publication and the availability of this book.

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Epigraph

Philosophers have always disagreed about whether the created world is the best that could have been created. Many books have been written on this debate. Those who say that it is the best do so on the basis of Reason. Otherwise, if God creates anything other than the best world, it means that God lacks the knowledge, ability, or the will to do so.

God does not lack the wisdom to know the best that is possible, nor the ability to create it, nor the will, because He is good and compassionate.

Thus, it is certain that the world He invented was the best that was possible for Him to create.

As it is said in Bereshit Rabbah 12.1 on Genesis 2:4,

"Such is the story of Heaven and Earth when they were created: And their Creator made them praiseworthy, so who would disparage them? Their Maker molds them, so who could ascribe defect to them? Rather, they are beautiful and excellent."

But those who say the world is not the best possible world come to that assessment because of their own sense of perception and experience, seeing the defects in the world and the many evils in it.

And Maimonides has already clarified in the *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:12 when he replied [against Al-Razi's argument] that the evils of the world are more than its goods, this error is because he was looking at the whole universe by examining a single person as if he were the only person in the world. For he thought that *the whole world exists only for his bad*. For if he saw this in relation to the general existence, he would realize that he lasts for only an insignificant portion of all of existence. The evil that occurs to him is essential to the continuation of the entire universe. If he would realize that, he would not claim that the world is not truly the best that it could be. Check there at length. Also, check the commentary to Job's rebuttal commenting on Genesis 31:1, "and when God saw all that He had made and found it very good." Although in the details of creation there will be shortcomings and mixtures of bad and good when we look at the whole, it is good.

הפילוסופים נחלקו בזה מעולם, אם העולם הנברא הוא היותר טוב שהיה אפשר להברא. או שאינו היותר טוב, וחברו על ויכוח זה ספרים הרבה, כי האומרים שהוא היותר טוב מבררים זה מצד השכל, כי כשלא יברא ה' העולם היותר טוב לא יצויר רק או מחסרון ידיעה או בחסרון יכולת, או בחסרון רצון, וה' לא יחסר לו לא חכמה לדעת את היותר טוב שאפשר ולא יכולת להמציאו ולא רצון כי הוא הטוב והמטיב, א"כ בודאי שהעולם שברא הוא היותר טוב שהיה אפשר לו להמציא, וכן אמר בב"ר (פ' י"ב) אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם בוראם משבחם ומי מגן בוראם מקלסם ומי נותן בהם דופי אלא נאים הן ומשובחים הן, אולם האומרים שהעולם אינו היותר טוב שאפשר, באים ע"ז מצד הבחינה והנסיון, במה שמראים מומי העולם וחסרונותיו והרעות הרבות הנמצאים בו. וכבר באר זה הרמב"ם במו"נ (ח"ב) שהשיב נגד חכם א' שמונה מספר רעות העולם, ושרעותיו רבו מן טובותיו, שזה מפני שהאדם יביט על איש אחד מאישי העולם כאלו הוא לבדו נמצא בעולמו. ויחשב שנברא לרעתו, ואם היה רואה שהוא בטל בערך המציאות הכללי, ושרע הנמצא לקצת הוא לצורך ההויה וההפסד הכללי לא היה טוען זה עיי"ש באורך, ועמ"ש בפ"י איוב בפתיחה ל"ט ט", ועפ"ז יצדק מ"ש שכאשר ראה ה' את כל אשר עשה ראה שהוא טוב מאד. הגם שבפרטי רע הבריאה ימצאו חסרונות ותערובות רע בטוב, כשנראה על הכלל כולו טוב.

Foreword

Leibniz Encounters Maimonides
by Lloyd Strickland.

Leibniz's reading notes on the *Guide of the Perplexed*—translated into English here for the first time—represent his deepest engagement with Maimonides. In order to provide some context for Leibniz's notes, it is worthwhile taking a moment to consider at present the only remarks Leibniz himself published on Maimonides, in §§262–263 of his *Theodicy* (1710).

A deep dive here can help us understand what Leibniz knew of Maimonides' *Guide*, from whom, and probably when.

In §262 of the *Theodicy*, his book-length response to the skeptical arguments of Pierre Bayle, Leibniz considered the question of whether there was more good than evil in the world and quoted with approval a passage from book 3, chapter 12 of Maimonides' *Guide*:

“But even though there should have fallen to the lot of the human kind more evil than good, it is enough where God is concerned that there is incomparably more good than evil in the universe. Rabbi Maimonides (whose merit is not sufficiently recognized in the statement that he is the first of the Rabbis to have ceased talking nonsense) also gave wise

judgement on this question of the predominance of good over evil in the world. Here is what he says in his *Doctor perplexorum* (cap. 12, p. 3):

‘There arise often in the hearts of ill-instructed persons thoughts which persuade them there is more evil than good in the world: and one often finds in the poems and songs of the pagans that it is as it were a miracle when something good comes to pass, whereas evils are usual and constant. This error has taken hold not of the common herd only, those very persons who wish to be considered wise have been beguiled thereby. A celebrated writer named Alrasi, in his *Sepher Elohuth*, or Theosophy, amongst other absurdities has stated that there are more evils than goods, and that upon comparison of the recreations and the pleasures man enjoys in times of tranquillity with the pains, the torments, the troubles, faults, cares, griefs and afflictions whereby he is overwhelmed our life would prove to be a great evil, and an actual penalty inflicted upon us to punish us.’ Maimonides adds that the cause of their extravagant error is their supposition that the whole universe was made for them only, and that they hold of no account what is separate from their person; whence they infer that when something displeasing to them occurs all goes ill in the universe.¹

In §263, Leibniz indicates his approval of Maimonides’ position:

“M. Bayle says that this observation of Maimonides is not to the point, because the question is whether among men evil

exceeds good. But, upon consideration of the Rabbi's words, I find that the question he formulates is general, and that he wished to refute those who decide it on one particular motive derived from the evils of the human race, as if all had been made for man; and it seems as though the author whom he refutes spoke also of good and evil in general. Maimonides is right in saying that if one took into account the littleness of man in relation to the universe one would comprehend clearly that the predominance of evil, even though it prevailed among men, need not on that account occur among the angels, nor among the heavenly bodies, nor among the elements and inanimate compounds, nor among many kinds of animals."²

How did Leibniz happen upon the passage from Maimonides? In the *Theodicy*, Leibniz provided his own French translation of the passage, based on pp. 354–355 of Johann Buxtorf's Latin translation of Maimonides' *Guide*, namely *Doctor Perplexorum* (1629).³

One might suppose that Leibniz drew the passage directly from Buxtorf's translation. But in fact, Leibniz's source was not Buxtorf but rather the second edition of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702), or more specifically, a set of planned additions and corrections for the third edition that Bayle printed at the end of the second edition.⁴ The passage Leibniz cites in §262 of his *Theodicy* is the same one cited by Bayle. Moreover, every detail Leibniz provides of Maimonides' position is to be found in the

remarks Bayle made on the passage, virtually verbatim. This would suggest that at the time of writing the *Theodicy*, Leibniz had no deeper knowledge of the *Guide*.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the unpublished manuscripts of the *Theodicy*. In the original first draft (which is without § numbers), Leibniz quotes the same passage from Maimonides,⁵ following it with this intriguing comment, which he subsequently deleted:

“I suspect that there is something missing in the text of Maimonides, in which he will have maintained that even among men prosperity prevails over adversity, because he was too good a logician to change the question in this way.”⁶

In fact, in book 3, chapter 12 of the *Guide*, Maimonides doesn't make the argument Leibniz suspected he had; Maimonides' point is rather that humans often labour under the misconception that the universe was made for them (and specifically, for their convenience and pleasure), and that in any case most of those disgruntled with the universe seek unnecessary things rather than content themselves with the necessities of life. In his original comment on the passage of Maimonides, Leibniz did no more than guess at what Maimonides' argument would be, and chide Bayle for omitting the key part of it. The fact that Leibniz resorted to guessing (and guessing incorrectly!) at Maimonides' argument indicates that he had not read the *Guide* at the time he wrote the initial draft of the *Theodicy*. Since that draft dates to c. 1707, it is reasonable to suppose that

Leibniz's complete reading of Maimonides' *Guide* occurred later than this.

However, Leibniz had certainly read some of the *Guide* prior to 1707, namely, the dedicatory letter at the start, which was published by Thomas Hyde in 1690 as a bilingual 4-page pamphlet with Maimonides' original Arabic on the left-hand side and a Latin translation on the right.⁷ In the dedicatory letter, Maimonides describes guiding his pupil in the art of logic. Hyde's pamphlet was intended as a sample to make the case for a complete edition of the *Guide*, though such an edition did not appear.⁸ Leibniz read Hyde's pamphlet in 1696. In a letter to Ezechiel Spanheim of 23 December 1696, he wrote:

"M. Thomas Hyde has printed Maimonides' *Moreh Nevochim* in Arabic as it was written by the author with the Latin version by Buxtorf, and notes which seemed excellent to judge by the essay sent to me."⁹

Another brush with the *Guide* occurred ten years later. In a letter of 26 October 1706, another of Leibniz's correspondents, Hermann von der Hardt, provided some details of Maimonides' interpretation (in the *Guide*, Part. 2, Chapter 42) of the visions and dreams of Balaam, a soothsayer who features in several chapters of the Book of Numbers. Von der Hardt explained that Maimonides had interpreted the episode of the talking she-ass in Numbers 22

as occurring in Balaam's vision, exactly as Leibniz had in an essay on the subject written shortly beforehand.¹⁰ Von der Hardt's description of Maimonides as "the first among the Jews to cease talking nonsense"¹¹ was later borrowed by Leibniz in §262 of his *Theodicy*, quoted above.

As for Leibniz's reading notes on the Buxtorf edition of the Guide, the paper contains watermarks attested to 1685 and 1708; the former is clearly too early for the date of composition, as Leibniz had not read the Guide even by 1707, as we have seen. However, the latter date is a good fit. In which case it is likely that Leibniz encountered Maimonides late in life, probably around 1708, eight years before his death. We could even speculate that the catalyst for his reading Maimonides was the passage he encountered in Bayle's Dictionary, a passage that suggested there were sympathies, perhaps even overlaps, between Maimonides' thought and his own, this prompting him to get hold of Buxtorf's translation. And certainly, as his reading notes on the Guide indicate, Leibniz did find plenty of things in Maimonides' thought worthy of his attention and approval.

Notes:

1. G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, ed. Austin Farrar, trans. E. M. Huggard (Chicago: Open Court, 1990), 287–288.
2. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 288.
3. Moses Maimonides, *Doctor perplexorum*, trans. Johann Buxtorf (Basel: König, 1629), 354–355.
4. Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 3 vols. (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1702), III: 3189. In accordance with Bayle’s plans, a posthumous third edition of the *Dictionary* was issued in 1715, with the Maimonides passage in question appearing in note K of the article “Xenophanes”. See Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, (Rotterdam: n.p., 1715, 3ed), III: 889.
5. The unpublished manuscripts of the *Theodicy* show that Leibniz’s original intention was to quote the passage from Maimonides in Latin, as Bayle had in his *Dictionary*; this is how Leibniz had it in his first draft and in the fair copy. But the fair copy shows that Leibniz then changed his mind, as there he crossed out the Latin quotation, replacing it with his own French translation. The manuscripts are held by the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek – Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hannover; for the first draft, see LH 1, 1, 2 Bl. 120; for the fair copy, see LH 1, 1, 1 Bl. 193.
6. LH 1, 1, 2 Bl. 120. Before writing and deleting this passage, Leibniz wrote and deleted another, this time introducing the Maimonides passage with this: “*I would give almost the same praise to Rabbi Maimonides as Mr. Méric Casaubon gave to Euripides if a natural piety were not enough to inspire the sentiment in which he will have maintained that even among men prosperity prevails over adversity.*”

7. Thomas Hyde, *Proponitur, Maimonidis More Nevochim typis mandandum Lingua Arabica, qua ab Authore primo scriptum est* (Oxford: n.p., 1690).
8. The short sample of Maimonides was subsequently republished in a posthumous collection of Hyde's works: Thomas Hyde, *Syntagma dissertationum quas olim auctor doctissimus Thomas Hyde S.T.P. separatim edidit*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1767), II: 435–438. <https://we.tl/t-bzedAtNRVJ>
9. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe. Erste Reihe. Dreizehnter Band*. Edited by Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 444.
10. Namely, "The story of Bilaam", written early September 1706. English translation in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Leibniz on God and Religion*, ed. and trans. Lloyd Strickland (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 187–193.
11. Hermann von der Hardt to Leibniz, 26 October 1706, LBr. 366 Bl. 292v.

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Introduction

« *Dux Neutorum* », Maimonides' Latin translation of *Moreh Nevukhim* | *Guide for the Perplexed*, was the most influential Jewish work in the last millennia (Di Segni, 2019; Rubio 2006; Wohlman 1988, 1995; Kohler, 2017). In countless handwritten copies, it has received the most varied titles. Depending on the authors the word « *Moreh* » or « *Guide* » is translated by *directio*, *director*, *dux*, *demonstrator*, *director*, *doctor* ; and the word « *Perplexed* » by *neutorum*, *perplexorum*, *errantium*, *nutantium*, *dubitantium*, *titubantium*. Its appearance was an event that penetrated universal literature and its wide circulation testified to its importance in western philosophy. Its eternal tradition was embraced by Albertus Magnus, Frederick II, Alexander of Hales, William of Auvergne, Thomas Aquinas, Vincent of Beauvais, Duns Scotus. They were undeniably influenced by Maimonides as was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 — 1716), who wrote his own observations on the *Guide*. Leibniz followed the Latin translation of Jean Buxtorf the Young. This version was made after the Hebrew version « *Moreh Nevukhim* | מורה נבוכים » of Samuel Ibn Tibbon, who translated it after the first copies of the original *Dalālat al-ḥāṭirīn* | دلالة الحائرين arrived in the South of France. The National Library in Paris has fragments of one of the oldest Judéo-Arabic manuscripts. Its Hebrew translation by

Samuel Ibn Tibbon, completed in Arles on November 30, 1204, | 4965, a few days before the death of Maimonides, is of invaluable value thanks to his guarantees of fidelity after a revision in 1213. When the Guide arrived in Paris, the city was recognized as the intellectual capital of the West, with a federation of schools and colleges established on the left bank of the Seine to escape the control of the bishop of Paris. Immediately copied in a large number of manuscripts it spread everywhere and had a considerable influence on Judaism, giving birth to *scholasticism, a daughter of Judaism raised by Jewish thinkers*, according to historian Heinrich Graetz (*Geschichte der Juden*, L. 6, Leipzig 1861, p. xii).

The Guide truly revolutionized Jewish instruction, exegesis, and ideals, despite the opposition of R. Yonah of Girona and R. Salomon de Montpellier who denounced it to the Tribunal of the Dominican Order. The conflict unleashed the burning of books in Montpellier in 1233, Paris in 1242, and the first boycott against the study of philosophy from 1305 to 1355 in a controversy between community leaders of Barcelona and the south of France. It should be noted, however, that the interdiction of R. Solomon Ben Aderet (Teshubot ha-Rashba), based on the Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 and at the end of the Talmudic tractate of Sotah, concerning the mature age of discernment, applied only to Jews younger than 25 years and lasted 50 years (R. David Nieto, *Matteh Dan*, Dialogue 4).

Maimonides enhanced the core curriculum of school teaching by reintegrating the classical Laws of Thought and

Logic (the fourth of which became Leibniz' *Principle of Sufficient Reason*):

אי אפשר אם כן בהכרח למי שירצה השלמות האנושי מבלתי התלמד תחילה במלאכת ההיגיון ואחר כן בלימודיות לפי הסדר ואחר כן בטבעיות ואחר כן באלוקיות

It is necessary for those who wish to attain human perfection, first to start with logic, then apply themselves to mathematics. Therefore, one should turn to natural things and at last to divine things (Part 1, chap. 34).

The violent storms were an inevitable consequence of the important improvement of the *Guide* in the sphere of faith. They lasted for three generations until Ibn Tibbon's translation was printed by Gutenberg's first mechanical press. His influence in the West went as far as the Fifth Lateran Council (1512 — 1517) under Leo X, "*where scholars were encouraged to remove the difficulties which seemed to divide the whole of theology and philosophy (Leibniz, Théodicée, 11).*"

But this influence was countered by "*Luther (1483 — 1546) and the Reformers (under the new dogma of « sola fide » faith alone) who sometimes spoke as if they rejected philosophy and as if they judged it an enemy of faith (Leibniz, Théodicée, 12).*"

In consequence, "*several Protestant theologians, departed as far as they could from scholasticism, which reigned in the opposite [rationalist] party, and they went so far as to despise philosophy (Théodicée, 13).*"

Nonetheless, the *Guide* was preserved, and translated into more languages than any other book written in the 12th century: A Hebrew translation by Judah Al-Harizi from 1091 | 4851 of the National Library of Paris was printed in 1234 in London. Menendez Pelayo, in his *Historia de los heterodoxos Españoles*, pointed out in 1877, the first Castilian version of the *Guide*, edited by Mr. Mario Schiff. This version, *Mostrador y enseñador de los turbados*, was made in the first third of the 15th century by Pedro de Toledo following the version of Al-Harizi. In 1581 or 1583 appeared the *Erudizione de Confusi*, inspired by the translation of Ibn Tibbon. The translator Amadeo ben Moses de Recanati, a renowned copyist, a talented poet, and prose writer, tutor to the son of Isaac ben Judah dedicated his work to Menahem Azaria de Fano. Amadeo, filled with veneration for Maimonides, compared him to Euclid, to Galen, declared him more divine than Plato, and a more learned astronomer than Ptolemy. The monumental edition of the French translation by Salomon Munk (1856 — 1866), *Le Guide des égarés* is in turn used for other works. Thanks to it, Mr. E. Stern translated, in 1864, the second part of the *Guide* which was still missing from the German version. Then comes the *Guida degli Smarriti*, an Italian translation due to David Jacob Maroni, rabbi of Florence (Livorno, 1870 — 1876), the Hungarian translation by Moritz Klein (1878 — 1890), and finally the English translation *The Guide for the Perplexed* by M. Friedlander (London, 1881 — 1885) published in

Sefaria.org.¹

The version read by Leibniz, of John Buxtorf the Younger (Basel, 1629), corresponds to the second Latin translation that has appeared since the Middle Ages, *Doctor Perplexorum*.

Concerning the style, I compared Buxtorf's translation to check whether Leibniz was quoting the translation or merely paraphrased it and I could confirm that Leibniz paraphrased the text, which means two things: First, that Leibniz understood Maimonides, and second, he made a restatement of the Guide, by choosing a thoughtful selection of relevant passages, and by simplifying some points. Hence the title, *Leibniz' Anthology of Maimonides' Guide*.

Leibniz' notes of the Guide in Latin were discovered and partially translated into French by Count Louis-Alexandre Foucher de Careil (Paris, 1861). Unfortunately, his Spinozist views compromised the translation with a modern understanding rejected by Leibniz, for example, "*Secta Mutazali credit accidens voluntate Dei posse subsistere extra substantiam* (Part 3, Chap. 15)" is interpreted as "*the Mutazali sect believed that, by the will of God, an accident could subsist outside of the substance*." Maimonides, and Leibniz, logically objected to the statement that accidents (which happen to the grammatical subject) may occur to a subject beyond *its substance*, its own nature, which must be understood as *subsistence*.² Also, Leibniz understood, according to Maimonides, that Aristotle's opinion deserved

criticism and sometimes refutation, as with the use of the term "*Nature*" in general. Maimonides always used the term "nature" in the singular form when he referred to specific natures and/or particular natures. Therefore, instead of translating the adjective form of "*omnia naturae*" as "the works of *Nature* (*Moreh*, Part 2, Chap. 14)," I translated it as "*natural works*".

In this respect, Maimonides used the term *natures* | הטבעיים in Part 3, Chap. 7: "According to Aristotle, none of the products of *natures* are due to chance... all the products of *natures* are constant or constantly reappear."

In the words of *Hakham* R. David Nieto, the modern idol of a general *Nature* was imported from Aramaic, and later Arabic, into the Hebrew language which instead used the term Providence | השגחה (*hashgaha*).

Probably, because of the generalization of the term *Nature* (in general), Leibniz coined the *Monads* when he referred to particular or individual natures of existing *substances*.

Thus Leibniz reinstated the classical *Principle of Sufficient Reason* as suggested by Maimonides (Part 1, Chap. 74) because "*Spinoza also deprived God of intelligence and choice, leaving him with a blind power, from which everything necessarily emanates (Théodicée, 372).*"

Also, Foucher de Careil's version omitted Leibniz' commentaries on chapters 27 and 32, the 1st chapter of the second part, and chapters 22, 23, 25 to 28, 31, 32, 51, and 54 of the third part. An English translation of this incomplete version was published in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* by Lenn Evan Goodman, *Maimonides and Leibniz* (Hawaii,

1980), which unfortunately included the shortcomings of the incomplete French translation.

This integral bilingual translation of Leibniz' notes on Maimonides was done from the original in Latin, LH 4, 3, 3e (*Ex Maimonide scheda 1 | Egregium video esse librum Rabbi Mosis Maimoni*), *Leibniz-Handschriften zur Philosophie*.³

It completes Leibniz' introduction with sources familiar to him, such as *Certamen Philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis* (Amsterdam, 1684) of Isaac Orobio.⁴

I did not provide Maimonides' citations from the parts of the Guide selected by Leibniz so that the reader may continue his voyage of discovery and intellectual accomplishment directly with the work of Maimonides. The final cause of this translation is to bring the reader into Maimonides' *millenary faith in conformity with reason*, guided by someone who is often considered the last *universal genius*.

Notes:

1. The English translation by M. Friendländer, 1903:
https://www.sefaria.org/Guide_for_the_Perplexed

2. It is inadmissible that Foucher de Careil used the terms of Spinoza (Ethics 1, Prop. 14) to elucidate Leibniz. Classical thought and modern thought are incompatible. Before Leibniz, Isaac Orobio refuted *a unique substance*:

“Quod si non est nisi unica substantia, non est Deus substantia quædam ab omnibus entibus distincta & separata cum omnia, & ipse unica substantia sint, diversis accidentibus, per quæ differunt, affecta: Ergo non est Deus, præter hoc universum (Certamen Philosophicum, p. 55-56). ‘If there is no other than a single substance, God cannot be a distinct substance, separated from all other entities, for He and all other entities or essences would be a single substance, which only differs by a variety of accidents (Isaac Orobio, Philosophical Case, Chapter 3, IV, 31).”

“Turpem æquivocationem committunt isti : quia diversitatem , differentiam, & distinctionem ineptè confundunt: ideo male inferunt: non possent differre substantiæ : ergo nec esse plures substantiæ realiter distinctæ (Certamen Philosophicum, p. 59). They made a clumsy mistake, improperly confusing diversity, difference, and distinction. And that's why they infer so badly that the substances could not be differentiated by thinking that there cannot be really distinct substances (Orobio, Philosophical Case, Chapter 3, IV, 43).”

3. Leibniz' works are still unknown to the wide public. King George I banned him from traveling to England and after his death, his 200,000 pages of unpublished writings were confiscated.

4. Isaac Orobio, *Philosophical Case in defense of Divine and Natural Truth*, ed. and trans. Walter Hilliger (New York, Shehakol, 2021). Leibniz praised Orobio (*Theodicée* 373). An original print in Latin of Orobio's *Certamen* (Philosophical Case, 2020) was rescued by Leibniz in Hanover (TA6193).

Leibniz' preponderance of goods

את־הכל עשה יפה בעתו

He created everything well in time

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Maimonides rightly judged the issue of the prevalence of good over evil in the world. This is what he says in his Guide for the Perplexed (*Moreh Nevukhim*, Part 3, Chap. 12)¹:

There are often in the souls of ill-instructed people, thoughts causing them to believe that there are more evils than goods in the world. And one often finds in the poems and songs of the pagans as if it were a miracle when something good happens, whereas evils are common and constant. Not only common people, but also those who wish to be considered wise, fall into this error. A celebrated writer named Al-Rasi, in his Sepher Elohuth, or Theosophy, among other absurdities, has stated that one finds more evils than good and that in comparison to the leisure and pleasures enjoyed by man in times of tranquility; pains, torments, troubles, faults, cares, griefs and afflictions overwhelm lives into great evil, as an actual sentence inflicted upon us to punish us."

Maimonides adds that the cause of their extravagant error is that they imagine the whole universe as if it was made for them only, without taking into account what is distinct from their person. So, when something against their will occurs, they infer that everything goes wrong in the universe. But, after considering the Rabbi's words, I find that the question

he formulates is general and that he wished to refute those who lean towards a particular reason taken from the misfortune of humans as if it all was made for them. And it seems that the author whom he refutes also spoke in general about good and evil. Maimonides rightly said that if one took into account the tiny proportion of man compared to the universe, one would comprehend evidently that the superiority of evil, found among men, does not take place elsewhere among angels, among celestial bodies, nor among elements and inanimate beings, nor among many species of animals.

I have shown elsewhere,² that if the number of damned men exceeds the number of saved ones (a supposition that is not certain) one could agree that there is more evil than good within the human species known to us.

But I gave into consideration that this would not prevent the existence of an incomparably greater good, much greater than moral and physical evil, among rational creatures in general. And also in the *city of God* (q.v. Psalm 46:5) which contains all creatures, in the most perfect state. Also considering the metaphysical good and evil which is found in all *substances*, endowed or deprived of intelligence, and which taken in such scope would include physical good and moral good, one must say that the universe, as it is, must be the best of all systems.³

Notes:

1. *Discours de la conformité de la Foi avec la Raison*, pp. 262- 263.

2. "Today, whatever limits we give or not to the universe, we must recognize that there are innumerable suns, larger than ours, which have the same right to have reasonable inhabitants, although it does not follow that they are men. We see how little our earth is compared to visible things since it is only an appendage of one of them. It may be that all the suns are inhabited only by happy creatures, and nothing obliges us to believe that there are many damned of them, for few examples or samples suffice for the utility that the good takes away evil. Besides, since there is no reason to believe that there are stars everywhere, can it not be that there is a great space beyond the region of the stars?

Whether it is the empyrean sky or not, this immense space that surrounds this region can always be filled with happiness and glory. It may be conceived as the ocean into which flow the rivers of all blessed creatures when they have come to their perfection in the star system. What will become of the consideration of our globe and its inhabitants? Will it not be something incomparably less than a physical point, since our earth is like a point in the distance of some stars?

Thus the proportion of the part of the universe which we know being lost almost in nothingness at the cost of what is unknown to us, and which we nevertheless have reason to admit, and all the evils which one can object to us is that in this almost nothing, it may be that all the evils are also only almost nothing in comparison with the goods which are in the universe (Monadology, 19)."

3. Leibniz' *principle of preponderance of goods over evils* is derived from the Rabbinical exegesis on Genesis 1:31,

וירא אלהים את-כל-אשר עשה והנה-טוב מאד

And God saw all that had been made and found it very good.

Therefore, Rabbi Moses Raphael de Aguilar, a contemporary of Leibniz and the first Rabbi in the Americas, commented on Genesis 1:31, "it is worth noting, God said of all creations that they seemed good to Him, except for that of man, which was nevertheless to be preferred to all, as he was made according to His divine likeness. The reason is clear because everything God created before man received all His perfection, thus limiting its merit. Since man had to acquire his glory and his beatitude by his actions, he was created imperfect, and consequently, God who is infinitely just, could not say that he was good (during his creation) especially since 'he foresaw his fall, but when God speaks of the universe altogether at the end of the sixth day, He says that He found it very good (the universe in general), including man."

From here we learn the preponderance of goods over evils.

Anthology of Maimonides' Guide

Egregium video esse librum Rabbi Mosis Maimonidis, qui inscribitur Doctor perplexorum, et magis philosophicum quam putaram, dignumque adeo lectione attendita. Fuit in philosophia, mathematicis, medica arte, denique sacrae scripturae intelligentia insignis. Legi versionem Joh. Buxtorfii fil. editam Basileae 1629. Profitetur se parabolarum legis veram intelligentiam aperire; timuisse scribere quia, inquit, talia sunt de quibus nullus ex gente nostra in hac captivitate quicquam scripsit hactenus. Sed suffultum duobus principiis: Tempus est faciendi Domino, irritam fecerunt legem tuam. Psalm. 119, 126. Et dicto sapientum: Omnia opera tua fiant ad gloriam Coeli.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides' excellent book, *A Guide to the Perplexed*, is more philosophical than I had imagined and worthy of careful reading. The author, distinguished by his intelligence in philosophy, was well-versed in mathematics, medical art, and also in the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. I have read Buxtorf's translation (Basel, 1629). Maimonides announces that he will provide a true understanding of the Torah narratives. And he was afraid to write, because, he said, "during the captivity, none of us wrote on these matters." But he was supported by two principles:

עת לעשות ליהוה הפרו תורתך

It is time to do for God,¹ because they invalidated your Torah

Psalm 119:126

and the words of the sages,

כל מעשיך יהיו לשם **שמים**

*May all your works be for the glory of **Heaven***

Pirkei Avot 2:12

1. Isaac Orobio explained: “The Law (Torah) formally consists of human acts, directed according to the rectitude of divine decree because the Law (Torah) is not an abstract entity, subsisting by itself, independent of man, but it comprises two things which are essential to it. The first is its divine decree; the second is the obedience and execution of the decree, which is a human act. If these were lacking, or if one was unable to perform what God provides in the Law, it would be invalidated (Isaac Orobio, on Mental Law in *Epístola Invectiva, Discurso 2, Art. 1.*)”

Part 1, Chapter 26

Deo tribuuntur nomina corporea ut doceatur eum esse Ens, vulgus animalia Entia non apprehendit; tribuitur ei motus, qui[a] intelligunt homines in movendi facultate aliquam perfectionem.

Corporeal names are attributed to God to show Him as a Being (*Ens*).¹ Ordinary people cannot apprehend living entities. Movement is also attributed to God because the faculty of movement means for human understanding a certain perfection.²

Notes:

1. Isaac Orobio declared: "*We give to the Divine Essence, or necessary entity, attributes, and qualities, not because these various qualities and attributes are found in it, but rather because of the imbecility in our understanding that considers them as known in creatures, when we assign them to God, the infinitely perfect*" (Isaac Orobio, Philosophical Case, Ch.2, II, Def. 2, 3)

2. The archaic term Perfection (Lat. *Per-fectio*, occurrence) means in the classical jargon what comes into existence, what comes to be made by God, therefore, existence is a perfection.

השלמויות כולם הם קצת קנינים ולא כל קנין ימצא לכל בעלי קנין
Perfections are all to some extent acquired property, and not all properties are acquired by all proprietors (Moreh, Part 1., Chapter 59).

Divine perfections are the manifestations of existences; they are distinguished from qualities by their materiality. According to Leibniz, "*The perfections of God are those of our souls, but He possesses them without limits; He is an ocean of which we have only drops. (Sur la Liberté de l'Homme et l'Origine du Mal, Préface).*"

Part 1, Chapter 27

Onkelos diligens in removenda a Deo corporeitate.

Onkelos was diligent in removing the [notion of] physicality from God.¹

Notes:

1. Foucher de Careil's translation (Paris, 1861) fails to include this 1st. Part, chap. 27 possibly to avoid controversy with the modern doxa of naturalism, or negligence.

Part 1, Chapter 32

R. Akibha perfectus, qui in rebus divinis ingressus et egressus est in pace, non fatigans animum iis quorum apprehensio non erat in potestate. Nocet se exercere in nimis excelsis.

R. Akiba: “Perfect is he who goes in and out of divine things in peace,¹ without tiring his mind with the apprehension of what is beyond his power. It is harmful to over-exercise oneself. »

Notes:

1. Maimonides alludes to R. Akiba's "entering and *getting out in peace* 'נכנס בשלום ויצא בשלום' of the garden" in his commentary on the story of *Pardes* (B.T. Hagigah 14b.9) that also mentions "*getting out in peace* 'יצא בשלום' (Part 1, Chapter 32)."
To him "*Pardes*" meant metaphysics ; this was before Gershom Cholem coined "*Kabbalah*" to refer to "*mysticism*" in modern jargon.

Part 1, Chapter 34

Incipiendum a Logicis, deinde tendendum ad Mathematica, inde versari oportet in naturalibus, ultimo in divinis.

Nisi per kabbalam (traditionem) scientia aliqua nobis data esset, et si per exempla et similitudines non ducere sed discenda essent omnia per essentialia rerum de finitiones, credendaque per demonstrationes, major pars hominum diem suum obiret antequam sciret num Deus sil necne .

Qui specularur sine principiis , est ut is qui ambulans cadit in fossam qui melius quievisset.

One has to start with logic; then proceed to mathematics; it is, therefore, necessary to apply oneself first to the natures of things and finally to divine things.

If the *Qabbalah* (tradition)¹ and certain knowledge [of God] had not been given to us, and if we did not have the guides of the examples and the similitudes which teach the essential things by their definitions and, finally, what is to be believed by demonstrations, the majority of people would leave the world before knowing whether there is a God or not. He who speculates without principles resembles a man who, while walking, falls into a ditch to rest better.

Notes:

1. Until the modern adoption of “Mystical Kabbalah” by Gershom Scholem, in his journal “Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism”, the term Kabbalah was used to indicate a tradition, *Qabbalah*, and only the word *Sod* (Mystery) from the allegory of the Garden (*PaRDeS*) referred to esoteric occultism (José Faur, *Kabbalah vs Qabbala, Horizontal Society*, 2008). When Leibniz used the term, he was referring to the Maimonidean tradition, not to the modern transliterated term.

Maimonides' Latin translation of *Moreh Nevukhim* | Guide for the Perplexed, was the most influential Jewish work in the last millennia (Di Segni, 2019; Rubio, 2006; Wohlman, 1988, 1995; Kohler, 2017). It marked the beginning of scholasticism, a *daughter of Judaism raised by Jewish thinkers*, according to historian Heinrich Graetz (*Geschichte der Juden, 1861, V. 6, p. xii*). Printed by Gutenberg's first mechanical press, its influence in the West went as far as the Fifth Lateran Council (1512 — 1517) "*where scholars were encouraged to remove the difficulties which seemed to divide the whole of theology and philosophy* (Leibniz, *Théodicée*, 11)."

For centuries, the Guide revolutionized the curriculum of school instruction by reintegrating the natural *laws of thought* in the sphere of faith (the fourth of which became Leibniz' Principle of sufficient reason).

This collection of notes expounds the ideas of the Guide and features all the passages selected and rewritten by Leibniz. This first complete annotated bilingual translation of the original manuscripts in Latin serves as an entry point to faith in conformity with Reason.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides' excellent book, A Guide to the Perplexed, is more philosophical than I had imagined and worthy of careful reading. The author, distinguished by his intelligence in philosophy, was well-versed in mathematics, medical art, and also in the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures.

— G.W. LEIBNIZ, 1685, Leibniz' *Anthology of Maimonides' Guide, Chapter III.*

Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon referred to by the initials of his name as RAMBAM, also known in the past as *Moseh d'Egypto* (Moses of Egypt) because of his long residence there, was born in Córdoba (Spain) in 1131 | 1181 and left this temporal world in 1204 | 1194. He is the most universal Rabbi of an eternal tradition.

He was so excellent and went so far in all sciences that we can rightfully give him the title of [divine] Prince and singular Master of all disciplines.

—IMMANUEL ABOAB, 1629. *Nomología, part 2, chapter 24, p. 274.*

Doctors of faith placed the wisest Rab. Moseh de Egypto on the same level as Plato and Aristotle.

— ISAAC OROBIO, 1666. *Resp. al Libro, Esc. I, Disc. 3, p. 80.*

