“The Political Theology of Salomon Maimon” (04.07.22)

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“*The true end of the laws is usually evident only to a few*”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Introduction

The term ‘Political Theology’ was not coined in the twentieth century.[[2]](#footnote-2) I am not absolutely sure about who was the first to introduce the term. As we shall shortly see, Salomon Maimon (1753-1800) used the term as part of the title to one of the chapters of his 1792/3 *Lebensgeschichte*, and it is the primary aim of my chapter to explain his understanding of the term.

The idea that views about the divine (‘theology’) – true or false – could have an important role in establishing (or undermining) political order and authority, or even in the promotion of the ideal state, goes back to Maimonides, al-Farabi, and ultimately, Plato. We are likely to hear echoes of these writers in the current chapter. Still, in addressing the background of Maimon’s discussion of political theology, I will focus on the one text which exerted the most significant influence on Maimon’s discussion of the issue: Spinoza’s *Theological Political Treatise* (1670).

In order to explain Maimon’s understanding of political theology, we will proceed in the following order. In the first part of the chapter we will have our first encounter with the term and the role of secrets in religious matters. The second part will study Maimon’s definitions of, and distinctions among, various forms of religion. In the third and final part we will explore Maimon’s views about “the greatest of all the mysteries of the Jewish religion”[[3]](#footnote-3) and about the nature of that religion.

Part 1: What is Political Theology?

Maimon’s 1792/3 *Lebensgeschichte* is quite an extraordinary text, being one of the very first instances of the *Bildungsroman* (published only two years after Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser*), and providing an extremely insightful and deep analysis of Jewish culture (in spite of its occasional narcissistic exaggerations). At the time, it was a widely read and discussed book.[[4]](#footnote-4) Since Maimon was uniquely placed at the juncture of so many competing ideologies – traditional rabbinics, Maimonideanism, Kabbalah, early Hassidism, Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*), and Kantianism, to name a few – it is hard to think of any other single book that is equally or more informative (and knowledgeable) about modern European Jewish culture.

The *Lebensgeschichte* appeared in two parts: the first in 1792, the second in 1793.[[5]](#footnote-5) The title of the first chapter of Part Two of the book reads: “*Guide of the Perplexed*: Its plan, Goal, and Method. *Political Theology* [*More Newochim, dessen plan, Zweck und Methode. Theologica Politica*].”[[6]](#footnote-6) This chapter begins a distinct division of the book; the first ten chapters of Part Two of the *Lebensgeschichte* are dedicated entirely to the explanation and interpretation of one philosophical work: Maimonides’s *Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimon’s account of the *Guide* is detailed, crystal-clear,[[7]](#footnote-7) and penetrating. Arguably, these ten chapters provide one of the best – if not *the* best – philosophical analyses of Maimonides’s *magnum opus*. Maimon’s decision to dedicate no less than a *quarter* of his autobiography to the elucidation of the *Guide* attests to the immense respect Maimon professed toward the work. Unfortunately, these fascinating ten chapters have not been translated into English until recently, and were omitted – or displaced as an appendix at the back of the book – in virtually *all* editions and translations of the bookafter 1793*.[[8]](#footnote-8)* The omission and displacement of these ten chapters in almost all editions of the *Lebensgeschichte* might explain the hitherto lack of scholarly attention toward Maimon’s discussion of political theology.

What did Maimon find in the *Guide of the Perplexed*? I do not wish to provide a reductive answer to this question. Still, Maimon’s own words at the opening of his discussion of the *Guide* provide at least a significant part of the answer: “In the *Guide of the Perplexed* we see, in exemplary fashion, Maimonides’ *pure love of truth, and his sincere religious and moral mindset* [*die ungeheuchelte, religiöse und moralische Gesinnung*].”[[9]](#footnote-9) The issue of *Heuchelei* (hypocrisy) in treating questions of religion and philosophy will come up again in the *Lebensgeschichte* in the course of Maimon’s discussion of Mendelssohn and the Wolffians and their common attempt to avoid the Spinozistic consequences of their own views, if pursued consistently. In this context, Maimon will accuse Mendelssohn of engaging in “*politische Kniffe und Heuchelei*” (political trick and hypocrisy).[[10]](#footnote-10) Maimonides thus provides Maimon with a model of a thinker and intellectual who is precisely the opposite of Mendelssohn: a bold thinker with intellectual integrity whose primary commitment is to the philosophical truth rather than the appeasement of the crowds (or the Berlin bourgeoisie).

Other than in the title of the chapter, the term “Political Theology” does not appear again in the first chapter of part two of the *Lebensgeschichte*. Instead, Maimon repeatedly refers in the chapter to the “Secrets of the Prophetic Writings” (a term he adopts from Maimonides). What are these esoteric secrets (notice the plural)? And how are they related to Political Theology, the topic announced in the title of the chapter?

Part 2: Definitions

A highly influential view about the esoteric secret of religion was offered by Leo Strauss in the previous century. According to Strauss, the simple and basic secret is that religion should be preached to the masses as a “white lie” in order to keep them in check, while the philosophical truth – atheism – should be kept to the cabal.[[11]](#footnote-11) Strauss not only maintained this view himself, but ascribed it to Maimonides and Spinoza.[[12]](#footnote-12)

If my reading of Maimon’s claims in the *Lebensgeshichte* is correct, it appears that something like Strauss’s secret is – according to Maimon – what constitutes the *smaller mysteries* of religion which are very useful for the prudent politicians who are incapable of genuine philosophical thought. The *larger mysteries* of religion, claims Maimon, point in a very different, indeed opposed, direction. In order to explore and uncover this other direction, we have to begin with… definitions.

At the opening of the fifteenth chapter of Part One of the *Lebensgeschichte*, Maimon offers the following definition of religion:

*Religion in general* is an expression of the feelings of gratitude, awe, and so forth that stem from the relationship between our happiness and unhappiness [*Wohl und Weh*], on the one side, and one or more unknown forces, on the other. If one looks at how these feelings are expressed only in a general way, ignoring specific expressions, then religion is natural for people. Many of the phenomena that interest people have unknown causes, but people feel compelled to presume causes for these effects—this is the generally accepted Principle of Sufficient Reason—and to articulate the feelings that these causes bring forth.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Notice that per Maimon’s definition, religion is perfectly compatible with reason: its main motivation is the desire to trace the causes of what is significant to our lives, and as such, it is nothing but an employment of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The search after ultimate causes, claims Maimon, can be pursued in two alternative manners: imaginary and rational. The imaginary path employs analogies and assumes that the cause must resemble its effect. Since the phenomena we experience are diverse, the imaginary path leads us to conclude that the causes of phenomena, just like the phenomena themselves, are diverse. For this reason, the imaginary path leads its pursuer to polytheism.[[15]](#footnote-15) The alternative path, which Maimon describes as both rational and “the basis of *true* religion,”[[16]](#footnote-16) avoids the tendency to project the qualities of the effects onto their causes.[[17]](#footnote-17) As a result, this form of religion is perfectly content with assuming one ultimate cause as the source of the diversity of phenomena.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Relying on this sharp dichotomy, Maimon suggests that the “different philosophical systems of theology are nothing other than *refined extensions* of these different modes of representation.”[[19]](#footnote-19) At this point, Maimon presents his three-sided taxonomy of the systems of theology: Atheism, Spinozism, and in between, Leibnizianism:

The *atheist* system of theology, if one can call it that, entirely dispenses with the concept of a *primary cause* (since as a necessary *idea of reason*, its use is, according to the critical system, only of regulative value[[20]](#footnote-20)). All effects are attributed to particular causes, known or unknown. This assumes no connection whatsoever among the different effects, because otherwise the reason for the connection would have to be sought beyond the connection.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Maimon’s presentation of Kant’s critical philosophy as atheistic probably raised quite a few eyebrows among his readers (this might have also been Maimon’s subtle response to Kant’s insinuation that Maimon was a Spinozist [[22]](#footnote-22)), but what should have been truly astonishing for Maimon’s contemporaries was his insistence that Spinoza – who was widely condemned and cursed as an atheist throughout the eighteenth century – offered a system that was the most *opposed* to atheism.

*Spinoza’s system*, by contrast, proceeds from the idea that one and the same substance is the immediate cause of all effects, which should therefore be viewed as predicates of the same subject. *Matter and spirit* are, for Spinoza, one and the same substance, which appears now under this and now under that attribute. This single substance is, he writes, not only the sole possible self-subsisting Being (independent of all external causes), but also the only one that *exists solely for itself*, whose modi (these attributes limited in a particular way) make up all so-called beings except it. Every particular effect in nature is ascribed not to its proximate cause (which is simply a mode), but to the primary cause or substance, which is common to all beings…It is hard to fathom how Spinoza’s system could have been made out to be atheistic, since the two systems are diametrically opposed. The atheist system denies the existence of God; Spinoza’s denies the existence of the *world*. Thus, it should really be called *acosmic*.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In this passage from the *Lebensgeschichte*, Maimon coins for the first time the term ‘acosmism’, which would have a decisive role in the later reception of Spinoza among the German Idealists.[[24]](#footnote-24) The passage also constitutes a crucial turning point in the interpretation of Spinoza who for the first time was considered as a radical *religious* thinker (a few years later, Novalis would speak of Spinoza as a “God intoxicated man”[[25]](#footnote-25)). Between the atheist and Spinozist “systems of theology,” Maimon placed Leibniz.

*Leibniz’s system* occupies the middle ground between these two. Here all *specific phenomena* are drawn into an immediate relation with *specific causes*. But the different effects are conceived of as belonging together within a single system, while the cause of the connections among the variety of things is sought in a Being that is outside the system.[[26]](#footnote-26)

One could just imagine the Leibnizians’ response to this suggestion that their pious champion was *more* atheistic than Spinoza.

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel plagiarized this presentation of the three systems.[[27]](#footnote-27) Through Hegel’s adaptation, Maimon’s reading of Spinoza as an acosmist became widely influential.

Immediately after suggesting his typology of the three systems of theology, Maimon turns to distinguish between *positive* and *natural* religions:

*Positive* religion is distinguished from *natural* religion in just the same way positive civic laws are distinguished from natural ones. The latter are those resting on a murky foundation, the result of an internal process, not defined in view of their actual use [*Gebrauch*]. The former, by contrast, are given a precise foundation, and they are defined from the start in view of their use.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Unlike natural religion, positive religion has clear *aims* and is not a result of random historical processes. At this point, Maimon suggests a further division *within* the category of positive religion:

However, there is an important difference between a *positive* religion and a *political* religion. The former has *correcting and defining knowledge precisely as its sole goal*: that is, it gives instruction with regard to the first cause. This knowledge is communicated to others according to their capabilities; in just the way one has received knowledge oneself. The latter, however, has as its main aim *civic happiness*… Every political religion is also positive, though not every positive religion is also political.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Positive religion which is not political aims at correcting and imparting knowledge about the first cause while positive, political, religion aims at the well-being of society. Having thus completed his taxonomy of religions, Maimon is ready to address the role of secrets, or mysteries, in religions.

Part III: The Smaller and Larger Mysteries of Religion

Only *political religions* can have mysteries, which serve as indirect ways of guiding people to a *political* goal. The people are made to believe that this is the best path for reaching their *private goals*, when in fact the case may be otherwise. There are *small* and *large mysteries* [*kleine und große Mysterien*] in political religion: The former consists of *material* knowledge of all particular operations and their relation to each other; the latter consist of knowledge of the purely *formal* or of the end that defines the small secrets. The former represents the embodiment of religious laws; the latter contains the spirit of the laws.[[30]](#footnote-30)

At first sight, the opening sentence of the excerpt above seems to rule out the possibility of religious mysteries other than in political religion. As we shall shortly see, however, *civic happiness* – which is the end of political religion, and as such constitutes “the large mysteries” – might be identified with the acquisition of knowledge. When this happens, the distinction between positive non-political, and positive-political, religion is blurred. As an example of such a religion, Maimon points to Judaism:

As a positive religion, Judaism differs from paganism in that it is not a purely political religion, that is, one that pursues society’s interests (as opposed to true knowledge or private interests). Instead, Judaism is, in accordance with the spirit of its author, suited to a *theocratic* form of government, which has as its fundamental principle that only a religion grounded in knowledge gained through reason [*nur die wahre auf Vernufterkenntniß beruhende*] can be compatible with both civic and private interests. In its *purest form*, Judaism has no mysteries in the truest sense of the word: not mysteries that, for particular reasons, one does not want to reveal, *but rather that inherently cannot be revealed to all*.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Political religion, claims Maimon, attempts to harness private interest to the service of public interest. In the case of Judaism, there is an even more ambitious drive to unify both private and public intertest with the acquisition of rational knowledge. This rational knowledge – which is the “large mystery” of the Jewish religion – is not a secret in the sense that it is not permitted or that its revelation is not sought after; it is a secret, rather, because its inherent nature *cannot* be revealed to all.

At this point, Maimon’s text breaks and he turns to discuss other issues, as if to abide by his own claim that the larger mysteries *cannot* be revealed. However, at the very end of the first part of the *Lebensgechichte*, Maimon returns to the topic. He still does not reveal everything, but what he does say is significant.

The greatest of all the mysteries of the Jewish religion, however, is the name Jehova, which expresses *pure Being* [*das bloße Dasein*], abstracted from any *particular type of being*, and without which *Being in general* [*Dasein überhaupt*] cannot be conceived of at all. The doctrine of the unity of God and the dependence of all other beings on Him—both the possibility and the actuality of other beings—can be completely understood only within a single system. –- [[32]](#footnote-32)

Throughout the *Lebensgeschichte*, Maimon uses the dash (“—”) at the end of a sentence as an indication that at this locus he is addressing issues about which he cannot speak too openly, and as an invitation to the reader to think of the concealed content. What is then “the single *system*” through which alone the meaning of the Tetragrammaton can be understood?

Maimon does not let the reader wonder much about the last question, but in his answer, he does not mention any system, let alone the name of Spinoza, referring instead to the beliefs of… the Talmudists:

For the Talmudists, the name *Jehova* means *Schem ha-Ezam* (*nomen proprium*), the name of the Being that God as such is entitled to, without any consideration of His effects. The other names of God are *appellative*, expressing characteristics that He has in common with His creatures, although He has them to a greater degree. For example, *Elohim* means a *lord*, a *judge*, and so forth. El means a potentate. Adonai is a lord. And so, it is with all the rest.[[33]](#footnote-33)

One important text which is clearly in the background of the last excerpt is Maimonides’s discussion of the Tetragrammaton in the *Guide of the Perplexed*.[[34]](#footnote-34) But even more striking is the similarity of the excerpt to a passage in Spinoza’s *Theological Political Treatise* where Spinoza, in a casual manner, endorses the traditional rabbinic interpretation of the Tetragrammaton as denoting God’s essence, i.e., pure existence.

Note that there is no name in Scripture except Yahweh which makes known the absolute essence of God, without relation to created things. And therefore, the Hebrews contend that only this name of God is peculiarly his, the others being common nouns. And *really* [*revera*], the other names of God, whether they are substantives or adjectives, are attributes which belong to God insofar as he is considered in relation to created things or is manifested through them. E.g., *El*, or means nothing but “the powerful,” as we know.[[35]](#footnote-35)

After mentioning the Hebrews’ claim that only the Tetragrammaton is a name “peculiar to God,” Spinoza could have moved to another issue, but instead he briefly notes that “*revera*” (i.e., really) the Hebrews’ claim is *correct*. The assertion that only the Tetragrammaton –

which is derived from the Hebrew verb “הווה” i.e., *to be* – denotes God’s essence, fits perfectly Spinoza’s view of God’s essence as being nothing over and above pure existence.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The similarity between Maimon’s and Spinoza’s discussions of the Tetragrammaton strengthens our suspicion that the “the single system” which Maimon identifies with the “largest mysteries of Judaism” is nothing but Spinoza’s system. In such a case, it would seem that for Maimon, the deepest and most ineffable secret of Judaism is nothing but Spinoza’s acosmism, i.e., the assertion that only God truly exists.

At this point, we can observe in sharp relief the opposition Maimon draws between the esotericism of paganism (and, if you wish, Straussianism), and the esotericism that Maimon ascribes to Judaism.

There can also be religious mysteries consisting of the knowledge that this religion, as an enlightened person understands it, has no mysteries at all. *Such knowledge can either go with an effort to gradually disabuse the people of mysteries and suppress the so-called minor mysteries by revealing the major ones, or, in contrast, with an effort to maintain the small mysteries among the people by making preservation of the minor mysteries a purpose of the major ones. In the spirit of its creator, Judaism is of the former type*.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Paganism subordinates the larger mysteries to the smaller mysteries by suggesting that the smaller mysteries (i.e., the various religious rituals) are themselves the ultimate ends of religion. Moreover, for Maimon, paganism and atheism share much in common since both assert the irreducible reality of plurality and deny the existence of one cause behind all phenomena.[[38]](#footnote-38) With respect to religious secrets, paganism and atheism both deny that behind the small mysteries of religious rituals stands the ineffable secret of Spinozistic acosmism. But it is precisely this last secret, claims Maimon, which is the ultimate end of the Jewish religion.

Immediately following the previous excerpt, Maimon continues his analysis of the purpose and mysteries of Judaism, as opposed to those of paganism.

Both Moses and the prophets who followed him unfailingly stressed that external ceremonies are not the purpose of religion; *its purpose, rather, is knowledge of the true God as the single ineffable cause of all things* and the exercise of virtue according to the mandates of reason. Pagan religions, by contrast, show obvious signs of being of the second type. Still, I am not inclined to believe, as some are, that everything is intentionally set up in Paganism to be deceptive. I believe that the founders of these religions were in many cases *deceived deceivers.[[39]](#footnote-39)*

Conclusion

In an earlier work, I have shown that Maimon identified Spinoza’s philosophy with the Kabbalah.[[40]](#footnote-40) Such an identification was already suggested by Georg Wachter almost a century before Maimon.[[41]](#footnote-41) However, unlike Wachter, Maimon had a deep and extensive knowledge of Kabbalistic writings in their original languages of Hebrew and Aramaic. In fact, in his early years, Maimon himself was an up-and-coming Kabbalist, and we still possess his early Kabbalistic manuscripts.[[42]](#footnote-42) The fact that Maimon – whose knowledge of the Kabbalah was quite intimate – strongly associated Spinoza and the Kabbalah is significant, and I suspect that Maimon’s view of Spinoza’s acosmism as the greatest secret of the Jewish religion had a non-negligible role in the subsequent reception pf Spinoza’s philosophy as Jewish (in spite of Spinoza’s expulsion from the Amsterdam Portuguese-Jewish community).

Maimon’s political theology has little in common with Schmitt’s and in many ways it is diametrically opposed to Strauss’s. While Strauss followed Jacobi in assuming that strict rationalism leads to atheism, Maimon – and, arguably, Spinoza as well [[43]](#footnote-43)– was essentially aligned with Maimonides’s vehement attack on anthropomorphic religion. At bottom, though, this attack was in the name of the single ineffable ground of all things.

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1. Spinoza, *Theological Political Treatise*, Ch. 4 §6| III/59/1. I am indebted to Zach Gartenberg for his astute comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I am not a fan of Carl Schmitt. I find his 1922 *Politische Theologie* boring and mostly dull, and the few genuine philosophical insights this tract contains seem to me to pale in comparison with the richness and boldness gleaming on almost every page of Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico Politicus*. Moreover, unlike some in the Critical Theory crowd, I do not feel any need or desire to embrace *echt* Nazis, such as Schmitt and Heidegger, in order to establish my credentials as an “open” thinker. Alas, I am not open, but really closed, to Nazi thinking: “Let not my being be counted in their assembly” (Gen. 49:6).

   I am also not particularly excited about obscurantist writing which establishes its credentials as a “theoretical text” by conscientiously peppering every single page with mandatory stock expressions such as: “as X said” (seven or eight times a page at least), “the Subject” (the same), “the Sovereign” (five or six times is enough), “state of emergency” (three times a page?) and “political theology” (the more the merrier). I leave this kind of charlatanry and authority games to others. And yet, this chapter is still about: political theology. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 104| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 20, 251. Maimon’s *Lebensgechichte* is reproduced as Band I of his *Gesammelte Werke*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On the readership of the *Lebensgeschichte*, see Melamed and Socher’s editorial introduction to Maimon, *Autobiography*, xiii-xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Some chapters of the book appeared earlier in the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. In its latest period, the *Magazin* was edited jointly by Maimon and K.P. Moritz. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 133|*Lebensgeschichte*, Part II, Ch. 1, 15. Italics in origin. Underlining mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The clarity of these ten chapters stands in sharp contrast to Maimon’s typical style of writing philosophy, which is not easy to decipher. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This disturbing disrespect of the literary integrity of the work seems to stem – at least in part –

   from the common attitude toward Maimon as an *Ostjude* whose “inferior” culture does not deserve either recognition or respect. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 133| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part II, Ch. 1, 15. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 197| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part II, Ch. 11, 166. For more on Maimon’s criticism of Mendelssohn as hypocrite, see my “Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism,” 68-73, and “Mendelssohn, Maimon, and Spinoza on Ex-Communication and Toleration,” 56-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. On Strauss’s atheism, see his introduction to *Philosophy and Law*, 18-19 According to Harvey, Strauss moderated his view in his late years. See Harvey, “How to Study Strauss.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. On Maimonides’s atheism per Strauss, see Kremer, “Medieval Arabic Enlightenment,” 138. For Strauss’s view of Spinoza as atheist, see Strauss, *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, 30, and *Persecution*, 189. Cf. my “Spinoza’s ‘Atheism’, the *Ethics* and the TTP”. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 62| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 150-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Maimon was a proponent of an unrestricted version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Other than in Leibniz and Wolff, it is hard to find references to this principle as frequent and explicit as they are in Maimon’s writings. On Maimon’s employment of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, see Melamed and Lin, “The Principle of Sufficient Reason,” §5 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 62-3| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 151-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 63| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Against this claim of Maimon, one could argue that the homogeneity of causation is well motivated by the scholastic maxim, “*nemo dat quod non habet* (nothing can give to another that which it does not have itself)” – a maxim that is closely related to the principle of sufficient reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 62-3| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 151-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 63| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 152. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For Kant’s view of the first cause as a mere regulative idea of reason, see his *Critique of Pure Reason*, A671. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 63| *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 152-3. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Kant’s Letter to Herz of May 26th, 1789 (Ak. 11:50). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 63-4 *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 153-4. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See my “Acosmism or Weak Individuals.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Novalis Schriften*, vol. III, 651. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 64 *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 154-5. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* III, 162–63. Cf. my “Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism,” 94-6. Hegel had a copy of Maimon’s *Lebensgeschichte* in his personal library (I am indebted to Jason Yonover for drawing my attention to this point). In order to keep the record straight, let me note that Maimon too engaged in plagiarism quite commonly. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 64-5. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 155. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 65. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 155. Italics in original. Underlining added. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 65. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 156-7. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 66. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 158-9. Italics in original. Underlining added. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 104. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 20, 251. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 253. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 20, 251. Italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I 61 (Pines 147). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. TTP Ch. 13| III/169/8-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Spinoza’s *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 20: “God’s essence and his existence are one and the same.” For a detailed discussion of the TTP passage and of Spinoza’s identification of God’s essence and existence, see my “Spinoza’s Deification of Existence.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 106. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 20, 254. Italics added. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 63. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 15, 152-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Maimon, *Autobiography*, 106. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 20, 254-5. Italics added. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. “The Kabbalah is, in fact, nothing other than an extension of Spinozism” (Maimon, *Autobiography*, 58. *Lebensgeschichte*, Part I, Ch. 14, 141). For a detailed discussion of this issue, see my “Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. On Wachter’s claims, see Laerke, “Spinozism, Kabbalism, and Idealism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. One of the five parts of Maimon’s early *Hesheq Shelomo* (MS 806426 at the National Library in Jerusalem) is *Ma`ase Livnat ha-Sapir* which is essentially a Kabbalistic work. Other parts of *Hesheq Shelomo* also contain substantial engagement with the Kabbalah. Cf. Idel, “On Solomon Maimon and the Kabbalah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See my “Spinoza’s Atheism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-43)