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Determinism, Divine Will, and Free Will: Spinoza, Leibniz, and Maimonides

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Abstract

The question of Spinozist determinism and necessitarianism have been extensively studied by commentators, while the relationship between the notions of divine will and free will still requires elaborate studies. This article seeks to contribute to such research, by clarifying the analyses of these questions by authors that Spinoza has confronted: Maimonides, as well as other Jewish philosophers, and Leibniz, who criticised Spinozist determinism. We will study the consequences of these analyses on two examples that Spinoza gave to refute free will, namely, the dream and the situation of Buridan's ass.

Keywords: Spinoza, Leibniz, Maimonides, R. Cohen Herrera, determinism, necessitarianism, free will, dream, Buridan's ass

In the *Letter* 55 to Spinoza, Hugo Boxel, after Maimonides, objects that if God's will is indeed eternal, it does not follow that the world is also eternal (Maimonides, *Guide*, I, 73, The tenth proposition, 144).[1] In fact, God could decree from all eternity that He would create the world at one definite time and not at another, even if time itself is created (H. Boxel, 1925, *Letter* 55 to Spinoza, G. IV, 255).[2] In his reply, Spinoza refuses to consider the idea that nature can result from a divine design or choice. He argues, against Maimonides, that such a hypothesis would then require conceiving God's will as differing from His essence and intellect. This, according to Spinoza, is absurd, because of the anthropomorphism that this thesis inevitably entails. We will try to examine the foundations of Spinozist determinism and necessitarianism[3] by analysing these specific notions in the frame of the Jewish philosophy that Spinoza attempted to refute; notably, that of Maimonides and some other Jewish thinkers. However, we will not examine here some other authors, like Gersonides and R. Hasdaï Crescas, who also profoundly influenced Spinoza on these topics. By mainly focusing on the notions of determinism and free will, I will emphasise Leibniz's resumption

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of certain notions that he found in Maimonides's *Guide*, which certainly enabled him to oppose Spinozism.

Voluntarism and fatalism

In *Ethics* I, 32 and Corollary, Spinoza seeks to prove that the 'will cannot be called free cause, but only necessary [*voluntas non potest vocari causa libera sed tantum necessaria*]', from which it follows that 'God does not operate by the freedom of the will [*Deum non operari ex libertate voluntatis*]' (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 32 and Corollary). The Demonstration of this proposition appeals, in particular, to Definition VII, according to which a thing is said to be free if it

> exists by the mere necessity of its nature and determines itself by itself to act [*ex sola suæ naturæ necessitate existit et a se sola ad agendum determinator*] … and [a thing is] necessary or rather constrained which something else determines to exist and to operate in a precise and determined manner [*Necessaria autem vel potius coacta quæ ab alio determinatur ad existendum et operandum certa ac determinata ratione*]. (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, Definition VII)

In *Ethics* I, 33, Scholium II, Spinoza distinguishes between acting freely, as only God can, and human claiming to act according to a free will. He then denounces those who are accustomed to attribute to God another freedom [*aliam libertatem*] entirely different from the one he posed in Definition VII (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 33, scolie II). However, when man affirms the divine will, he is only projecting onto God his own qualities, just as the triangle, if it could speak, would say that 'God is eminently triangular, and the circle that the nature of God is eminently circular [*Deum eminenter triangularem esse, et circulus, Divinam naturam eminenti ratione circularem esse*] (Spinoza, *Letter* 56 to Boxel, G. IV, 259-260; Gueroult 1968, 281). While criticising the notion of a divine will, Spinoza even more vehemently rejects the idea that God would act according to good, posed as an external model, as this would amount to subjecting Him to a fate [*quam Deum fato subjicere*] (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 33, scholium).

Leibniz evokes fatalism by reference to Maimonides's refutation of this notion. He had read the *Guide for the Perplexed* (in the Latin translation by Buxtorf II of 1629), a work which he considered 'worthy of careful reading [*dignum adeo lectiones attentat*]'. He retains, in particular, his criticism of the Ash'arites, for whom 'everything is done necessarily, and as a result of a certain direction [*quod omnia fiant per se et ex certa gubernatione*] ... it follows from this that nothing is in the power of men, and that all that we call possible becomes necessary [*Sed ita sequitur nihil esse penes hominem, et omnia fiunt necessaria*]' (Leibniz 1861, 2-3, 38-39). Let us recall that in examining the thesis of the Ash'arites, Maimonides states that if

> the nature of the possible is abolished [*sheyhyeh ṯev'a ha-'efshary baṯel*] ... It also follows from this opinion that religious laws, literally the commandments [*'inyan ha-miçwot*], have no use, since the man

> for whom every religious law has been made has no power to achieve anything, and he cannot fulfil what has been commanded to him [*l'o leqayym mah sheniçawe bo*] nor abstain from what has been forbidden to him [*we l'o lehiman'a mimah shehouzar 'alav*]. (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 17, 310; Belo 2007)

Martial Gueroult notes that, despite the obvious analogies between the Ash'arites and Spinoza, their doctrines differ profoundly. Indeed, for Spinoza, everything results necessarily from the essence of God, and consequently the world is governed by rational necessity and not by *fatum*, as among the Ash'arites (Gueroult 1968, 371). However, it must be emphasised that the consequences of the thesis of the Ash'arites, as Maimonides described them, were precisely retained by Spinoza. Concerning the notion of possibility, assimilated to that of contingency, he reduces it to a lack of knowledge (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 33, and scholium).[4] Regarding the divine commandments, he defends the idea that since the Jewish state has been destroyed by purely natural causes, the political legislation of the Hebrews, the sole source of any commandment, has become obsolete, and consequently no one is obliged to practise them (Spinoza, *TTP*, V, 5; XIX, 6).

Compatibilism, omniscience, and possible existence

Let us recall that the notion of compatibilism, associating both determinism and free will, concerns first divine omniscience. This notion goes back to Flavius Josephus, who identified at least three Jewish groups which were active at the time of the revolt against the Romans. On the issue of free will, in particular, these groups had opposing views. For the Essenes, everyone's destiny was inevitable and proceeded from divine decree alone. On the contrary, the Sadducees denied the idea of fatality and affirmed free will, while the Pharisees had adopted an intermediate position called compatibilist, reconciling natural causality with free will (Flavius Josephus 1926, *Antiquities of the Jews* XIII, 9; 2008, *Judean War* II, 8, 2). A possible double source of Flavius Josephus's commentary could be proposed, one Platonist, assigned to Apuleius, and the other rabbinic, concerning free will and the question of evil (Pines 1973, 227-232; Apuleius 2014, *De Platone et Eius Dogmate*, I, XII; Flavius Josephus 2008, *Judean War* II, 14). Flavius Josephus attributed to the Pharisees the compatibilist thesis, as expressed by the *Pirkey 'Avot*, stipulating that everything is planned in advance, but that free choice is left to man [*ha-kol çafouy we ha-reshut netunah*] (*Pirkey 'Avot* III, 15). After R. Sa'adyah G'aon (Sa'adyah G'aon, *Ha-'Emunot weha-d'eot*, 1859, IV, 97a), and according to Maimonides, the fact that everything is planned in advance cannot cancel free will, and divine foreknowledge in no way contradicts man's decision-making power, for foreknowledge, pertaining to eternity, is not the cause of man's actions, which take place in time, and for which he remains entirely responsible (Maimonides's commentary *on Pirkey 'Avot* III, 15).[5] According to Maimonides, God creates all possible things for

a purpose [*maṯarah*] according to His wisdom [*ḥokmato*] (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 25, 333; Ivry 1982; Ivry 1984, 186). He knows the 'things that do not yet exist, and that He is always able to make them exist' (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 20, 318); which is why divine foreknowledge is not a determination, because, concerning, for example, two possibilities, God 'does not opt for one of the possible cases, although He knows in a precise way which of the two will be realised' (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 20, 319). Following Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas affirmed that God knows with certainty everything that happens in time, although these events exist contingently (Spiazzi 1955, 78: *Expositio Libri Peryermeneias*, I, 14).

While positing, in *Ethics* II, 3-4, that from the idea of God follow 'an infinity of modes according to an infinity of ways [*ex qua infinita infinitis modis sequuntur*]', Spinoza seems to take up the Maimonidian conception of divine omniscience (Spinoza, *Ethics* II, 3-4; Melamed 2015, 22, 185, n. 71). However, the Spinozist treatment of omniscience appears to oppose his own theory of parallelism, or at least leads to a weakened conception of parallelism (Melamed 2015, 22-23). Indeed, the thought attribute has a greater extension than that of the other attributes, as Schuller, on behalf of Tschirnhaus, had pointed out to Spinoza in *Letter* 70. There are infinitely more modes in thought than in the other attributes, since these are all the *ideata* of thought, while they possess no mode that would itself be parallel to any mode of the attribute of thought (Schuller, *Letter* 70 to Spinoza. G. IV, 302; Gueroult 1973, 81).

Spinoza borrowed from Maimonides (Maimonides 1982, XIII, 109; Aristotle 2019, *Rhetor*. II, 24; Aristotle 1958, *Ref. Soph.* 4) the distinction between the dog, the celestial constellation, and the barking animal dog [*canis, signum cæleste et canis, animal latrans*], apparently to emphasise that the divine intellect and the human intellect have absolutely no connection (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 17, scholium). However, Alexandre Koyré has shown that this traditional interpretation of the passage of *Ethics* I is erroneous, because this text of Spinoza is not thetic but polemical, and it aims to prove, by the absurd, that in fact the human intellect does not differ in nature from the divine intellect, because our mind [*mens*] 'follows the divine nature [*ex natura divina sequitur*]' (Spinoza, *Ethics* V, 36, scholium; Koyré 1971, 93-102). And Spinoza rejects both divine will and human will, considering the former to be merely a projection of the latter (Spinoza, Appendix of *Ethics* I). On the contrary, according to Maimonides, the divine intellect and the human intellect are distinct. It is only 'by homonymy [*beshytuf*] that we apply both to our will and to that of the separated Being [*ha-nivdal*] the name of will [*raçon*]' (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, 18, 203). In addition, Maimonides points out that not only the notion of causality, but also that of material existence, cannot be applied to God, inasmuch as 'He exists where He is, but not in existence [*nimç'a 'eyfoh sheU' maçuy l'o bemeçy'ut*]' (Maimonides, *Guide* I, 57, 90), and the created existence itself derives from the transcendent divine

will. Therefore, the foundation of the existence of a thing is not necessity [*ḥyuv*], but the absolute will [*raçon*] of the Creator, which unfolds in the realm of possible existence [*'efshary ha-meçy'ut*], without being limited by any determinism or necessity. He is not subject to change, and His different wills do not imply any transformation of His essence (Maimonides, *Guide* II, 27; Hirschensohn 1942, 107). In a causal sequence, the nature of the effect depends on that of its cause, while the desired object always remains heterogeneous to the act of will from which it proceeds.

Divine Causality and Divine Will

According to Maimonides, causality is a relationship of horizontal type, which implies a relationship of resemblance. Now, as there is nothing in common between the Creator and His creatures, the act of creation cannot be causal but only volitional (cf. A. Hyman, "Maimonides on Causality," 168; Seeskin, *Maimonides and the Origin of the World*, 183). It may be asked whether God's will is natural or not. In the *Guide* II, 32, Maimonides states: 'The opinions of people regarding prophecy are like their opinions relative to eternity of the world [*qadmut ha-'olam*] and its creation [*we-ḥydusho*]' (Maimonides, *Guide* II, 32, 239). Because Maimonides, in his *Mishneh Torah*, seems to adhere to the thesis of the naturalness of prophecy (Maimonides, *Hilḥot Yesodey Ha-Torah* VII, 1), commentators such as Shlomo Pines (Pines 1963, cxxiii) or Lawrence Kaplan (Kaplan 1977, 245, n. 35) suggest that, from an esoteric point of view, Maimonides was in fact adhering to the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the world. From this perspective, the Spinozist refutation of Maimonides's voluntarism would relate only to his exoteric thesis and not to his esoteric one. However, as Warren Zev Harvey has pointed out, the naturalistic reading of the *Guide* does not accord well with Maimonides's fidelity to the fundamental tenets of Judaism: 'there is no justified doubt about Maimonides' uncompromising commitment to the Law of Moses, even if it is also true ... that his commitment to philosophy was likewise uncompromising' (Harvey 1981, 291, n. 14).

It should also be noted that, according to Maimonides, the things willed by God are necessarily accomplished, since there is no obstacle to hinder the carrying out of his volition. However, 'He is willing what is possible, but not everything that is possible [*we-l'o kol 'efshary*], but only that which is required by His wisdom to be such [*'el'a kol mah shemeḥayyevet hokmato sheyhyeh kak*] (Maimonides, *Guide* III, 25, 333). As Charles H. Manekin points out, this text does not state that God acts only by His will, which would then suggest that His action operates without a cause, but that He acts by His wisdom, which often remains incomprehensible (Manekin 2005, 214-215). In other words, Maimonides holds that the divine will is always based on His wisdom, for volition [*raçon*] is a consequence of wisdom [*toça'at ha-hokmah*], which implies that His Wisdom [*hokmato*] and Essence [*'açmuto*] are one thing [*devar 'eḥad*] (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, 18, 203). Let

us add that, with regard to the attribute of thought, Spinoza identifies the infinite intellect [*oneyndelyk verstand*] with the Son of God [*Zone Gods*], himself described as the eternal wisdom of God [*Dei aeterna sapiential*] (Spinoza, *KV*, II, XXII, 4, note, G. I. 1021; Spinoza, *Letter* 73 to Oldenburg, G IV, 308-309). As Federica De Felice has pointed out, this identification is consistent with Spinoza's twofold project (De Felice 2015, 493), on the one hand to link the sacred to the purely natural realm, since infinite modes are related to the attributes of substance, itself identified with God or nature [*Deus sive natura*] (Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, Preface; Proposal II, Demonstration),[6] and on the other hand, his valorisation of Christ and his intention to humanise him (Spinoza, *TTP*, II, 13; Matheron 1971, 91).[7]

However, the immediate infinite mode, and especially the infinite intellect as the immediate infinite mode of thought, remains coextensive with the attribute, and can therefore be identified with the attribute, designated by another name (Garrett 2003, 42). Unlike Spinoza, Maimonides did not believe in the reality of attributes, and that is why he did not identify God's will with his wisdom (Manekin 2008, 215-216).

According to Maimonides, the immaterial cannot act on the material by means of causes, because causality implies the commensurability of cause and effect. The absolute dissimilarity between the Creator and his creation presupposes an asymmetrical relationship, which is one of effusion or 'influence [*shef'a*]', which Maimonides compares to the product of a source of water [*ma'ayyan ha-maym*], whose profusion remains inexhaustible. This notion of effusion is what makes it possible to articulate the act of continued creation with prophetic experience, proceeding from a divine influence (Maimonides, *Guide* II, 12, 188). The example of the source, of Kabbalist origin, was used, in the eleventh century, by R. Shlomo Ibn Gabyrol (Avicebron, 1021 or 1022-1050 or 1070) (R. Shlomo Ibn Gabyrol, *Maqor ha-Hayym,* 1950, V, 41; *Zohar*, 1970, II, 42b). While he is generally regarded as a Neo-Platonic philosopher (cf. Pessin, *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire*), Gershom Scholem (Scholem 1940), Jacques Schlanger (Schlanger 1968, 105), and Yehuda Liebes (Liebes 1987) have also shown the influence that the reading of the Sefer Yeçyrah exerted on the author of the *Fons Vitae*. The source connotes the idea of free, oriented and generous effusion, as opposed to the notion of causality which describes an automatic, unintentional and pure rigorous determinism (cf. *Zohar*, 1970, I, 141a; Toledano 2006, T.II, 29, n. 41). The amount of divine profusion or, on the contrary, restriction, capable of being attained by humans, is always proportional to the degree of man's fulfillment or transgression of the commandments. The notion of 'influence', unlike that of causality, implies, as Alexandre Koyré points out, a dialectical relationship, by which the effect is itself the cause of the cause (Koyré 1973, 18).[8] However, even if necessity never concerns the divine will, considered in itself, the dimensions that man perceives of the Creator can be described in terms of necessity. Thus, for example, it follows from His essence that He is

necessarily good, without such inevitability limiting the power of His will. This necessity proceeds solely from our perception of divine greatness, and not from His Being in itself. From an ontological point of view, the expression 'necessity of the divine nature' is contradictory and has no field of application. Indeed, for the monotheistic man, God is in no way a matter of necessity, whereas for the materialist philosopher, necessity cannot be divine, unless, as Spinoza did, one identifies God with nature (Hirschensohn 1942, 106-107). However, as suggested by R. Hasdaï Crescas, it is necessary to distinguish, on the one hand, between natural and logical determinism, which Spinoza will assimilate, and on the other hand, theological determinism, itself distinct from divine predestination (Crescas 1990, 217-218). As Seymour Feldman points out, theological determinism is concerned with omniscience and its relation to human freedom, whereas predestination focuses on the divine will (Feldman 1982, 3-4, n. 1).[9]

Commentators have disagreed on the question of a possible contradiction between the deterministic position of the *Guide*, and the affirmed support for the free will of the *The Eight Chapters on Ethics* and *Mishneh Torah*. For some authors, like Shlomo Pines (Pines 1960) and Alexander Altmann (Altmann 1974), Maimonides would have developed in the *Guide* a deterministic thesis (Stern 1997; Freudenthal 2004). However, for Jerome Gellman, Maimonides remains in every text a supporter of free will. He interprets *Guide*, II, 48, by posing that everything which is created has a proximate cause [*sibah qerovah*] (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, 48, 270), that does not determine the human choice, but only the consequences of this choice (Gellman 1989). In fact, as Shalom Sadik points out, the Maimonidean theory of free will is not contradictory to the chapters of the *Guide*, which can be interpreted from a deterministic perspective. Those chapters, that seem to defend a deterministic view, are compatible with those of the *Eight Chapters* and of the *Mishneh Torah*. In all cases, the origin of the irrational action, which is determined by the sole search for bodily pleasure, comes from a lack of judgment [*mida'at*]. In this sense, the restoration of the faculty of judging, and consequently of free choice, concerns at the same time the apprehension of God by means of the theoretical intellect, and the practice of commandments (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 12, 296; Sadik 2023, 109-110 and n. 98). It should be emphasised that the deterministic thesis neglects human agency and responsibility, which were fundamental to Maimonides, since man's actions remain always in his power (Maimonides, *Hilkot Teshuvah*, V, 5). Finally, it is worth mentioning Warren Zev Harvey's thesis, also suggesting the non-contradiction between Maimonides's early texts (*Mishneh* Torah and *The Eight Chapters*) and the *Guide*, but from an entirely different perspective. Harvey's analysis focuses on the passage in *Guide* I, 2, dealing with *Genesis* II, 23, which contrasts Adam's situation before the primordial sin with that which followed it. In his original state, Adam had only an epistemic relationship to reality. He could only distinguish between the true

[*'emet*] and the false or lying [*sheqer*], and because of this, he actually had access to the intelligible [*muskalot*]. Transgression provided him with the axiological notions of good [*tov*] and evil [*r'a*], which Maimonides calls probable opinions [*mefursamot*], and which therefore remain of the doxic order (Maimonides, *Guide* I, 2, 19-20). Thus, according to Harvey, if Maimonides does speak of free will in his early texts, it is not in a metaphysical sense that would oppose determinism but only in a moral sense (Harvey 1984, 17-18). Adam's sin caused the exchange of his pure intellect, referred to the mere knowledge of the true and the false, for the imaginative faculty of estimation of good and evil. This Edenic condition, before the sin, is, according to Harvey, the source of proposition 68 of *Ethics* IV. This proposition, of only hypothetical order, affirms that if man had been born free, he would not have needed to know good and evil [*Si homines liberi nascerentur, nullum boni et mali formarent conceptum quamdiu liberi essent*] (Maimonides, *Guide* I, 1-2, I, 7, III, 8; Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, 68; Harvey 1988, 169). Charles Ramond emphasises that, for Spinoza, this sin does not mark the beginning of freedom, but that of the servitude and the infancy of humanity (Ramond 1987, 452).

Maimonides showed, on the one hand, that the future of everything ultimately refers to the free will of God, and on the other hand that respect for the Law would be impossible if man could not act freely (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, 48, 271; *Eight chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*, VIII). Unlike animals, separate intelligences and celestial bodies, which are all entirely determined, man always has the intellectual capacity to choose between extremes, either to yield to his natural inclinations or, on the contrary, to overcome them. Without pretending to act against the laws of nature and innovate unnatural behaviour, man can nevertheless decide voluntarily. He encounters only two kinds of limitations, first he can choose only according to the possibilities available to him, second his choices cannot oppose logic (Sadik 2014, 17-18). In order to resolve the contradiction between Maimonides's promotion of free will in his early writings (especially the *Pyrush ha-Mishnayot* and the *Mishneh Torah*), and the deterministic aspects of the *Guide*, Moshe Sokol borrows from Harry Frankfurt (Frankfurt 1971), Gary Watson (Watson 1975), and Charles Taylor (Taylor 1976), the expression 'sane deep self'. He then recalls that an action can be qualified as free when it is not subject to any constraint, either external or internal. When the deep self is dominated by its passions, it will be said to be free only when it succeeds in mastering them, and determined when it remains under its sway. However, as Maimonides shows in the case of a man who refuses to divorce his wife, when it is deemed necessary for the good of his wife, he must then be forced by physical compulsion to declare his consent to this act (Maimonides, *Hilkot Gyrushyn*, II, 20). In this way, he comes to express his true self, which, in his heart, wishes to respect Jewish law. Even though he is forced to divorce his wife, he actually does so of his own free will [*gyrshah mireçono*]. According to this

perspective, Maimonides can thus affirm, at the same time, that human choice is determined through a causal chain that goes back to God, as shown in *Guide* II, 48, but also that a normal person remains responsible for his or her behaviour, as shown in his previous writings, and reaffirmed in *Guide* III, 8, prescribing the control of bodily impulses. Maimonides would thus distinguish between two aspects of the self: an 'evil deep self' and a 'sane deep self', which can be achieved by appropriate therapeutic or legal means (Sokol 1998).[10]

Leibniz and voluntarism

Leibniz seems to have been deeply influenced by his reading of the *Guide*, of which he had annotated the Latin translation of Johann Buxtorf II, as we mentioned previously. He would have found there the notion of simple substance, the differentiation between metaphysical evil, physical evil and moral evil (Ulmann 1971), the notions of the monad, of free will, and of possible worlds (Goodman 1980). However, as Lloyd Strickland has shown, Leibniz did discover the *Guide* quite late, and he seems to have first become acquainted with Maimonides through his reading of the Second Edition of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, dating from 1702 (cf. Strickland 2022; 2023). In his *Théodicée* (1710), Leibniz defends Maimonides's position against Bayle's criticism concerning Maimonides's remarks on evil, observing that he 'does not get to the point' (Bayle 1820, 618-19). Leibniz underlined that Maimonides made a clear distinction between the human world and other realms (Leibniz, *Théodicée*, § 263), and in his notes on Maimonides (that is undated) he notably retained the 19th proposition of the Introduction to the Second Part of the *Guide*: "Everything whose existence is caused is, in relation to its own essence, that of a possible existence [*Quicquid existentiae suae causam habet, possibilis est existentiae ratione substantiae suae*]" (Leibniz 1861, 24-25).[11] In other words, the actual existence of a thing is determined solely by its cause, and, in the absence of a cause, existence remains merely possible [*'efshary*] (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, Introduction. 19th proposition, 161-162). The notion of possible existence is directly opposed to Spinoza's necessitarianism, and that is why Leibniz profoundly changed the Spinozist meaning of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. In his *Specimen inventorum de admirandis naturae Generalis arcanis*, written around 1686, Leibniz remarks that arithmetic and geometry are not concerned with the Principle of Sufficient Reason, and in a note to this text he stresses that 'the true cause [*vera causa*], making some things exist rather than others, must derive from the free decrees of the divine will [*liberis divinae voluntaris decretis*], the first of which is to want to do everything in the best way [*omnia agere quam optime*]' (Leibniz, *GP,* VII, 309-310). In the *Théodicée*, he emphasises that free contingents belong to the region of possibility, and that God never fails to choose the best, but without having forced Himself to do so (Leibniz, *Théodicée*, §§ 42 and 45). Leibniz criticises

Spinoza for defining the good only in relation to man (Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, Preface) and thus recognising no goodness in God, teaching 'that all things exist by the necessity of the divine nature, without God making any choice' (Leibniz, *Théodicée*, § 173). By contrast, Leibniz poses three conditions for defining freedom: spontaneity, contingency, and the ability to envisage alternative solutions (intelligence). They represent the requirements of the moral goodness that characterises every free being, both God and man (Lin 2012, 423).

It is the argument of the best that gives strength to the Leibnizian version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (Parkinson 1974, 3, n. 10), and that Leibniz's proofs of God's existence derive directly from this principle (Lovejoy 1936, 165-166). I have shown in my book, *Spinoza, le spinozisme et les fondements de la sécularisation* (2023), that Spinoza could not accept the kabbalist notion of *çymçum* (contraction of the infinite divine light). Indeed, this notion allows us to understand that God never expresses, in His creation, all His power, and even less His essence, thus giving a place to the possible.

Leibniz also retains from Maimonides his conception of finality: God is 'the end of ends and the efficient of efficients [*finis finium and efficiens efficientium*]' (Leibniz 1861, 10-11). It should be noted that if the expression 'end of ends [*taklyt ha-taklyut*]' is indeed used by Maimonides, who also mentions the term 'agent [*po'el*]', the expression 'the efficient of efficients' does not appear in the paragraph 69 to which Leibniz refers. It is also worth noting that in the same paragraph, Maimonides links divine finality to intention, will, and wisdom, all of which participate in the divine essence [*'açmuto*], which cannot be separated from it (Maimonides, *Guide*, I, 69, 117; Diesendruck 1930, 106-136; Schwartz 1998, 129-146).

Spinoza, having denied the idea of finality, could only reject voluntarism (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 17, scholium). However, Margaret D. Wilson noted that, despite Spinoza's sarcasm against the proponents of voluntarism, which he described as absurd and incompatible with God's omnipotence, he does not seem to have presented a convincing refutation of the theses he was fighting (Wilson 1983, 189-190).

The Perfect Being and the notion of plenitude

In *Ethics* I, 17, Scholium, Spinoza posits that to the 'nature of God belong neither intellect nor will [*ad Dei naturam neque intellectum neque voluntatem pertinere*]', and he denounces those who do not believe that 'God can make exist all that He understands in action, because they think that in this way they would destroy the power of God [*eum posse omnia quæ actu intelligit, efficere ut existent nam se eo modo Dei potentiam destruere putant*)]'. For Spinoza, 'the omnipotence of God has been in action from all eternity and will remain for eternity in the same actuality [*Dei omnipotentia actu ab æterno fuit et in æternum in eadem actualitate manebit*]'. He points out that his opponents

precisely deny God's omnipotence because they are forced to recognise that 'God understands an infinity of creatable things that He can never create. For otherwise, I mean that if He created all that He understands, He would, according to them, eradiate His omnipotence, and He would make Himself imperfect [*Deum infinita creabilia intelligere quæ tamen nunquam creare poterit. Nam alias si scilicet omnia quæ intelligit crearet, suam juxta ipsos exhauriret omnipotentiam et se imperfectum redderet*]' (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 17, scholium). Harry A. Wolfson notes that Spinoza's main opponent here is R. Abraham Cohen Herrera, whose works he had read, and who took up a question posed by R. Moshe Cordovero: why, because of its power, did not the *'Eyn Sof* emanate other series of ten *sefirot* (the ten emanations through which the *'Eyn Sof* is revealed) in the same way as He emanated those we know [*lehaçyl yud sefyrot zulat 'eleh*] (Cordovero 1962, II, 7). R. Abraham Cohen Herrera then points out, in opposition to what Spinoza will write, that God, eternal, omniscient and omnipotent, does not act by the necessity of His nature ['*eyno po'el be hyuv tiv'o*], but only on the advice of His wonderful intellect [*be'eçat siklo ha-mufl'a*], because of the choice of His will [*ube'ad behyrat reçono*], and His desire for mercy towards those whom He has made exist [*we-hafeç rahamuto kol mah she-ymçy'*] ... therefore, if He had wanted them not to come into existence, nothing could have prevented Him from doing so [*'eyn me'akev beyado*], therefore He brought (freely) into existence (His creatures) in these precise moments and places, and not in others [*bezeh ha-zman we-ha-maqom we-l'o bezulato*]' (Cohen Herrera 1864, III, 6, 16a; Wolfson 1934, I, 313-316; Beltrán 2016, 138 and 327). R. Abraham Cohen Herrera emphasises that the infinite [*'Eyn Sof*] does not act according to a natural necessity, but only according to His 'choice or possible will [*bebehyrato u-bereçono ha-'efshary*]' (Cohen Herrera 1864, III, 7, 17a-b).

In *Cogitata Metaphysica*, II, 9, Spinoza recalls this voluntarist thesis, but he emphasises that God's omnipotence depends on His decrees to which nothing can come to oppose 'because it is contrary to God's perfection [*quod pugnet perfectione Dei*]' (Spinoza, *CM*, II, 9, G. I. 266). As Wolfson points out, Spinoza here sacrifices the power of God to His perfection, and he will resume this thesis in *Ethics* I, 17, Scholium, which we quoted earlier. But then he reported this to his opponents and placed the pre-eminence of God's perfection over His power' He would, according to them, pluck His omnipotence, and He would make himself imperfect [*suam juxta ipsos exhauriret omnipotentiam et se imperfectum redderet*]' (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 17, scholium). It should be noted that if, according to *the Preface* to *Ethics* IV, the notions of perfection and imperfection, related to man, are only vocal affirmations [*vocabulium*] (Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, Preface), the *General Definition of Affections,* which immediately precedes this *Preface*, reaffirms what Spinoza's *Letter* 19 to Blyenbergh posed, from a properly ontological point of view: 'By perfection we mean the very essence of a thing [*nos per perfectionem ipsam rei essentiam intelligimus*].' (Spinoza, *Letter* 19 to

Blyenbergh, G. IV, 90, *Ethics* III, General definition of affections; Brandau 2015, 309)

What is the semantic status of perfection? In *Cogitata Metaphysica*, II, 3, God is said to be 'infinite in so far as we have regard for His sovereign perfection [*ipsum infinitum esse dicimus, quatenus ad ejus essentiam sive summam perfectionem attendimus*]' (Spinoza, *CM*, II, 3. G. I, 253-254), then *Ethics* I, 9, specifies that 'The more reality or being each thing has, the more attributes it has [*Quo plus realitatis aut esse unaquæque res habet eo plura attributa ipsi competent*]' (Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 9), and finally, Definition VI of *Ethics* II ends up identifying reality and perfection [*Per realitatem et perfectionem idem intelligo*] (Spinoza, *Ethics* II, definition VI). In this sense, perfection is synonymous with plenitude (Newlands 2017, 277). However, this identification is problematic. Indeed, depending on the monism of substance, the notion of *ens perfectissimum* remains unique and thus belongs to the intensional order, while the notion of plenitude, which denotes the notions of infinity, reality and maximum attributes, is equivalent to that of totality, and then belongs to the extensional order. Now, it has been noted that the identification of the absolutely infinite with the whole of reality constitutes a real theoretical 'coup de force' (Bove & Fœssel 2009, 128), which thus allows Spinoza to identify the infinite and the plenitude as notions that are of an extensional order. On the contrary, for R. Abraham Cohen Herrera, the perfection or plenitude [*shlemut*] of God cannot prevail over His power. Perfection expresses the infinity and eternity of the first cause [*ha-sibah ha-r'ishona*] through the power of His expansion [*'oçem hitpashtouto*] that He deploys, according to His will [*reçono*], in the creation of all beings (Cohen Herrera 1864, III, 5, 15a). R. Abraham Cohen Herrera, using the Kabbalist notion of *çymçoum*, accounts for free will, as well as the passage from the infinite unity to the finite multiplicity creative process, without, however, confusing, as Spinoza does, their respective procedures, intensional and extensional (Rozenberg 2023, 363-378).

The will, the Dream Argument and Buridan's Ass

Although Spinoza, in *Letter* 58 to Schuller, without specifying the particular circumstances, 'grants that in special circumstances we are in no way constrained, and that in this respect we have free will [*hocque respectu habere liberum arbitrium*]'. However, he adds that if one means by compelled one who, although does not act against one's own will [*quamvis non invitus*], yet acts necessarily, he would then deny that we are free in any case [*nego nos aliqua in re liberos esse*] (Spinoza, *Letter 58* to Schuller, G. IV. 267). In *Ethics* III, 2 Scholium, Spinoza seeks to specify, through the example of dreams, the mechanisms that are at the origin of the illusion of free will. To do this, he presupposes that the will works identically in the dream and in the waking state.

What has been called the 'dream argument' aims to show that belief in free will, when we are awake, induces a process similar to that which we experience in the dream. Such assimilation would aim to prove that there cannot be in the soul two types of decrees, some imaginary or dreamlike [*phantasticorum*] and others free [*liberorum*]. Spinoza adds that if one does not want to be crazy [*insanire*], one should identify the decree which is judged to be free to the imagination. Spinoza then concludes that those who believe they speak freely are only 'dreaming with their eyes open [*oculis apertis somniant*]' (Spinoza, *Ethics* III, 2, scholium).[12] He equates the free will with the dreamlike state using a triple argument. Firstly, when we dream that we are speaking, we believe we speak freely, while our words are determined solely by a bodily mechanism. Secondly, dreaming that we are concealing our thoughts, we proceed in the same way as in the waking state, when we remain silent under the effect of a decree of our thought. Thirdly, we sometimes dream that we freely decide to perform certain acts that we do not dare to perform in the waking state, and this type of dream comes only from imagination or memory. For Spinoza, in these three cases, it is not the will that initiates these actions, but they always proceed from the imagined idea, or remembered idea, that provokes an action autonomously, without involving free will. In dreaming, we make no distinction between imagination and memory, and the same is true in the waking state. It is because there is no real difference between dream and waking that we must reject the idea of free choice. Indeed, if we were able to make such a choice, we should be able to make it also while sleeping, and we would then be morally responsible for our actions, both in the dream state and in the waking state. The entirely determined mechanisms of the dream thus prove that our actions in the waking state are never initiated by free will.

The Spinozist argument of dreams is a properly empirical approach, based on simple human feelings, from which Spinoza seeks to compare the forms of decisions that occur in the dream and in the waking state (Rose and Petrick 2019, 5-10). This argument is also opposed to the philosophical-theological tradition, taken up by Maimonides, linking dreams to prophecy, which itself represents the highest degree of perfection that man can attain, and that 'the action of the imaginative faculty during sleep is the same as in the state of prophecy' (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, 36, 246). Now Spinoza, rejecting knowledge of the first kind, effected by imagination, which is the source of all inadequate and 'confused [*confusæ*]' ideas (Spinoza, *Ethics* II, 28), made it the model of prophecy, which he then considered a pure illusion (Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*), I, 9; II, 3; II, 6-7; cf. Rozenberg, forthcoming).

However, as Freud would show, the dream state and the waking state concern entirely distinct topicals and processes. Diurnal and dreamlike mechanisms concern specific differentiated logics, which should not be confused. Dream work uses primary processes, while sleep state implements

secondary processes (Strachey 1999, V, 602). The former are figural and intensional, while the latter are discursive and extensional (cf. Lyotard 1971, 239-270). According to Kant's expression regarding dream and awakening, if we are dealing with the same *subject*, it is not the same *person* (Kant 1983, *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, 334-335).[13] Therefore, one cannot deduce from the dream state where the will is absent, to the negation of this same will, which remains very present in the waking state. It is impossible to prove, through such an argument, that the state of wakefulness, which follows completely different procedures from those governing the state of dreaming, does not involve the notion of will. Moreover, it should be emphasised that the Spinozist argument of the dream no longer explains why we excuse the dreamer for immoral dreams, while we condemn the awakened man for acts or words of the same kind (Zellner 1988).

In contrast with Spinoza, for Maimonides dream is not always an illusion. He took up the conception of true dreams, notably from Al-Farabi (Walzer 1985, 210-227), Avicenna (Avicenna 2005, 356), and Averroes (Averroes 1961, 42-44), as a prelude to prophecy (cf. Brill 2000). He shows that there is no qualitative difference between dream and prophecy, but only a quantitative distinction, in the sense that, as defined in the *Midrah B'ereshyt Rabah* (XVII), dream is the unripe fruit [*nobelet*] of prophecy. The unripe fruit differs from the ripe fruit only in its immaturity due to its premature fall from the tree. In the same way, in dreams, man's imagination has not reached its end [*letaklyto*]; whereas in prophecy the imagination is perfect [*shlemut ha-pe'ulah*]. Depending on man's intellectual preparation, the imagination then allows for the outpouring of the Agent Intellect [*shofe'a ha-sekel 'alav kefy hakanato*] (Maimonides, *Guide*, II, 36, 246-247).

After the criticism of the notion of will, with reference to Descartes, in the Scholium of *Ethics* II, 49, Spinoza objects that 'if man does not operate by the freedom of the will [*ex libertate voluntatis*], what will happen if he is in equilibrium [*si in aequilibrio*], like Buridan's ass?' (Spinoza, *Ethics* II, 49, scholium). Let us recall that in the *Cogitata Metaphysica* Spinoza noted that a person in the situation of this ass, acting like it, cannot be considered as a thinking being, but as the stupidest ass [*pro turpissimo asino*] (Spinoza, *Cogitata Metaphysica*, II, 12, G. I, 277). However, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza grants that an individual placed in the same conditions as this ass will die of hunger and thirst, that is, he would not be able to exercise a free choice to escape death. To the question of whether to consider this individual for an ass or for a man, Spinoza replied that he does not know (Spinoza, *Ethics* II, 49, scholium).

Let us recall that the example of Buridan's ass has its origin in Aristotle's example of a person who is both hungry and thirsty, and when situated between food and drink, will necessarily remain in the place where he is, and then he will perish (Aristotle 2020, *De Caelo*, II, 13, 295b 32). This

argument was echoed by Al-Ghazali, illustrated by the example of two similar dates.[14]

Maimonides, regarding the meaning of the commandments, faced a dilemma similar to that of Buridan's ass. If one asks why the Torah demanded that a lamb be sacrificed and not a ram in such circumstances, then the opposite question should also be asked, namely, why should a ram be sacrificed and not a lamb? This resembles the nature of possibility, implying that one of the possibilities must necessarily occur, without the need to ask why this possibility has occurred, and not another [*bemeçy'ut ha-'efshary ha-sheny bimqom zeh*] (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 26, 336). R. Shem Tov 'Even Shem Tov (Ha-sheny, ?-1493) commented on this passage, giving the example of two glasses of wine that are completely identical, and he adds that the only reason why the thirsty man, who stands in front of these two glasses, will not die of thirst is because of his will [*raçon*] which brings him out of the dilemma. And we do not need to ask why he chose this glass over the second (R. Shem Tov 'Even Shem Tov 1860, II, 26). This is why, as Warren Zev Harvey points out: 'excepting the theoretical situation of indifferentism à la Buridan's Ass, there is in principle for Maimonides always one choice which is right, and it is of course the one that most "conforms to one's purpose" qua man' (Harvey 1986, 134). In this sense, the Maimonidean theory of free will refutes the example of Buridan's ass, posing that there can be no choice without preference, even if we cannot assign a reason to every action that man undertakes (Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 26, 336; Hyman 1979-80, 339-340).

The death of the ass, envisaged by Spinoza in order to establish its determinism, derives in fact from two presuppositions that are both inaccurate. First, according to Spinoza, the reasons perceived by this animal constitute the only motivational forces. Second, those reasons represent, from the point of view of its action, the only causes capable of producing its behaviour. Now, as Ruth Weintraub points out, the first presupposition excludes *acrasia* (Rozenberg 1999, 8-9), which Spinoza himself had considered on several occasions (Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, 17, scholium; *Letter 58* to Schuller. G. IV, 266),[15] and, according to which the ass could very well act in contradiction with its own judgment. The second presupposition rejects the idea that an irrational cause can determine a choice, just like a rational cause (cf. Weintraub 2012, 284-285). These presuppositions remain unfounded, and then, the example of Buridan's ass shows not so much the absence of choice, but the fact that the mind is paralysed by indifference. What, in the case of *acrasia*, constitutes the choice of the worst, by opposing the good guidelines of the understanding, could offer Buridan's ass a salutary outcome here.

It should be noted that Leibniz considered the Buridan's ass example as a 'fiction that cannot take place in the universe' (Leibniz, *Théodicée* § 49).[16] In this sense, it has been noted that the animal remains in fact unable to perceive two equal distances, because such a perception implies an abstract knowledge of the relations between these distances. Spinoza, recognising that

the animal possesses affects but is deprived of reason (Spinoza, *Ethics* III, 57, scholium), also had to admit that only man, who is endowed with abstract knowledge, can easily get out of such a dilemma, or even ignore it entirely. Therefore, the example of Buridan's ass in no way contradicts the idea of free will (Siwek 1947, 346).

The philosophical and religious tradition generally links free will to moral responsibility, however, Spinoza, who denies free will, never mentions responsibility from an individual and moral point of view, but only in a defensive social context (Kluz 2015, 5).[17] Henry Oldenburg asked Spinoza to clarify the status of guilt and punishment, after he posited that we are ruled by fate, because the course of things is inevitable and determined, as if traced by an inflexible hand (Oldenburg, *Letter* 74 to Spinoza. G. IV, 310). Spinoza responded that determinism in no way underestimates law, religion and virtue, nor sanctions and rewards. Man is justifiable before God because he is in His power like clay in the potter's hand (Spinoza, *Letter* 75 to Oldenburg, G. IV, 312).[18] To which Oldenburg replied that if man finds himself in relation to God in such an inevitable situation, then how could one of us be accused of having acted in one way or another, when he was absolutely unable to act otherwise? (Oldenburg, *Letter* 77 to Spinoza, G. IV, 325). In other words, if we follow Spinoza's reasoning entirely, then we would have to conclude that man must be completely excusable since he cannot be responsible for the acts he has been forced to perform. In his reply, Spinoza clarifies that the justification he is talking about is that no one can complain about the nature with which he has been endowed, just as the circle cannot complain about not possessing the properties of the sphere. He then specifies, but without any theoretical justification, that determinism does not justify evil actions, and that is why one who becomes enraged by the bite of a dog is excusable, since he is governed by a purely natural determinism, but one has 'yet the right to strangle him [*tamen jure suffocatur*]' (Spinoza, *Letter* 78 to Oldenburg. G. IV, 327).

Let us recall that, contrary to the legal implications which Oldenburg identified in Spinozism, for Maimonides, commenting on the *Talmud*, man is always responsible for his deeds [*'adam mu'ad le'olam*], even if he sleeps or is forced to perform them (Talmud Bably, *Bab'a qam'a*, 26a; Maimonides, *Hilkot hovel umazyq*, VI, 4). However, from a properly ethical point of view, according to Levinas, moral responsibility is not derived from any legal responsibility, but it refers to the infinite otherness of the Other, by which the Other commands me to protect him, by calling for my solicitude (Levinas 2001, 43).

This article has attempted to confront the Spinozist theory of the divine will and human free will, with several notions developed, especially, by Maimonides, R. Abraham Cohen Herrera, and Leibniz. As we have seen, particularly regarding the question of omniscience, Spinoza borrowed several themes from Medieval Jewish philosophy, but he could not accept their

voluntarist consequences. Thus, while for Maimonides, human free will is the result of the divine will, for Spinoza, God being pure natural necessity, human free will must remain a mere illusion. I then analysed the problems posed by determinism, necessitarianism and fatalism, through the analysis of the examples of dreams and Buridan's ass, given by Spinoza, shedding light, from a new angle, on the ideas of possible existence, contingency, voluntarism, and moral responsibility. For Spinoza, man is socially responsible, even though he is not endowed with free will. However, because of his naturalness he must be treated accordingly, just as a person who is rabid after being bitten by a dog must be neutralised. Reward and punishment remain independent of free will, but they represent the socio-political translation of the natural and necessary consequences of action. This notion of natural responsibility, aimed solely at preserving social stability, is fundamentally opposed to moral responsibility, which is based on the notion of free will and ethical consideration for others.

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Endnotes

[1] I quote *The Guide for the Perplexed* in the Hebrew edition of *Moreh Nevukym* by R. Yosef Q'apah, Jerusalem, M. ha-Rav Kook, 1977. This translation follows R. Shmuel Ibn Tibbon's translation, the translation that Spinoza possessed, and it corrected most of its obscurities. The English translations of Maimonides's writings, as well as of the other Jewish philosophers we quote, are our translations. Regarding the transliteration of Hebrew, we have generally followed the system of Ch. L. Echols (Echols n.d.) and Th. Legrand (Legrand 2013).

[2] Regarding the works of Spinoza, including letters to and from Spinoza, we refer to the Latin edition: *Baruch de Spinoza Opera*, edited by Carl

Gebhardt, Heidelberg, Universitätsbuchhandlung Carl Winter, 1925. The English translations are our translation. It should be emphasised that the theme of creation in Maimonides has been the subject of many debates. Thus, the translator of the *Guide* into Hebrew, R. Shmuel Ibn Tibbon (1150-1230), suggested that several verses of the Creation account seem to affirm the eternity of the world (Ibn Tibbon, *Ma'amar Yqwu ha-maym*, 1837, for example 126-127). On the take back from Avicenna (cf. *Kitab al-Shifa'*, V, 8), by R. Shmuel Ibn Tibbon, of the thesis of the eternity of the world, see G. Freudenthal, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Avicennian Theory of an Eternal World". The work of R. Shmuel Ibn Tibbon was strongly criticised by the Kabbalist R. Ya'aqov ben Sheshet (thirteenth century), cf. Ya'aqov ben Sheshet, *Meshyv Devarym Nekonym*, 1969, 132-135. On the question of a possible denial of creation by Maimonides, see the medieval references in C. H. Manekin, "On the Denial of Maimonides' Creationism: Comment on Prof. Kreisel's Paper," 218, n. 9. Concerning the contemporary era, see, for example, N. M. Samuelson, "Maimonides' Doctrine of Creation"; A. L. Gluck, "Maimonides' Arguments for Creation Ex Nihilo in the Guide of the Perplexed"; and more recently, D. Lemler, *Création du monde et limites du langage: sur l'art d'écrire des philosophes juifs médiévaux*. 54-55, where the treatment of this issue is exposed. It is probable that Spinoza knew the position of R. Shmuel Ibn Tibbon and used it to develop his own philosophy, cf. C. Fraenkel, "From Maimonides to Samuel ibn Tibbon: Interpreting Judaism as a Philosophical Religion," 205.

[3] I will not, in this article, address the question of whether Spinoza was deterministic or necessitarian.

[4] In my book, *Spinoza, le spinozisme et les fondements de la sécularisation. Seconde édition révisée et augmentée.* 318, I reported and analysed *Ethics* IV, definition IV, which distinguishes between the possible and the contingent.

[5] Cf. Klawans, "Josephus on Fate," 48-49; Brown, "Divine Omniscience," 286.

[6] Y. Y. Melamed has shown that 'Christ according to the Spirit' or 'God's eternal wisdom' is nothing but Spinoza's infinite intellect (Melamed 2012, 140-151).

[7] In correspondence, Warren Zev Harvey pointed out that 'Spinoza is not a philosophizing theologian, who says that the Son of God may be understood as Infinite Intellect, but rather he is a philosopher who says that the Infinite Intellect may be understood as the Son of God'. (Warren Zev Harvey, personal communication).

[8] This is precisely the Kabbalist meaning of the commandments [*miçwot*], whose human fulfillment causes divine outpouring [*shef'a*] on the lower worlds. Cf. Haver Wyldman 1889, *Beyt 'Eloqym*, 130b.

[9] Concerning the traditional conflict between Divine free will and human free will, and the solutions that several medieval Jewish thinkers have

proposed, cf. Kasher, "The Conflict between God's Free-will and Man's Free-will."

[10] In another paper, I compare the psychotherapeutic techniques of Maimonides and Spinoza (Rozenberg, forthcoming).

[11] On the importance of the theme of contingency in Leibniz, cf. Meijering, "On Contingency in Leibniz's Philosophy."

[12] In the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione,* Spinoza had equated fiction with dreaming: error is a waking dreaming, and if it is entirely manifest, it is called 'delirium' (*TIE,* § 64, footnote b).

[13] Maimonides emphasises that the physiological forces at work in nutrition [*ha-zan*] and in the imagination [*ha-medameh*], from which dream [*halom*] proceeds, operate outside of consciousness [*da'at*] and free will [*behyrah*] (Maimonides, *Shmoneh Praqym*, II, 1948, 158-159; Maimonides, *Pirqey Moshe,* 1888, 3-4).

[14] Al-Ghazali says however that this person 'will inevitably take one of them through an attribute whose function is to render a thing specific, [differentiating it] from its like' (Al-Ghazali*, Tahafut al-falasifah*, 1997, 23).

[15] This objection was noted by Julie Henry in "La question de l'âne de Buridan selon Spinoza: d'une expérience de pensée au déplacement vers des enjeux éthiques," 2013.

[16] In the *Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain*, Leibniz specifies that the example of Buridan's ass makes 'tipping (*pencher*) without necessity' (Leibniz, *N.E.* I, 15). Cf. Vinciguerra, *Spinoza et le signe: la genèse de l'imagination*, 34.

[17] Concerning the moral responsibility that Judaism maintains in situations of determinism, cf. D. J. Lasker, "The obligation of the 'parapet' and moral responsibility," 153-164.

[18] The metaphor of clay in the potter's hands is taken from *Jeremiah* XVIII, 6.