

# Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism

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DESCRIBING THE 18TH-CENTURY INTELLECTUAL ARENA, Pierre-François Moreau writes:

Whether one reads the underground texts or those of the great Enlightenment authors, one has the impression that Spinozism was everywhere; but at the same time, it can be said, strictly speaking, there were no Spinozists (except as convenient phantoms for apologists); there were only thinkers who make use of Spinoza. Naturally, they could do so with more or less creativity, style, and depth.<sup>1</sup>

These words apply strikingly well to the works and thought of Salomon Maimon<sup>2</sup>. Born in Lithuania in 1753 and raised in a traditional East-European Jewish surrounding, Maimon made a sharp turn in his life when, in his mid-twenties, he left his wife and children and went to Germany for the purpose of studying philosophy and the sciences. In Germany, Maimon succeeded in materializing his intention in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles. Maimon began publishing and participating in contemporary German intellectual life in the early 1790s, after Kant, who described him as “the sharpest of his critics,” recognized his talent. Yet,

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre-François Moreau, “Spinoza’s Reception and Influence,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, Don Garrett, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 413.

<sup>2</sup> In quoting texts from Maimon’s *Lebensgeschichte* I will rely on *Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte* [LB], Zwi Batscha ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1984). In quoting texts from Maimon’s other German works I will use Maimon’s *Gesammelte Werke* [GW], Valerio Verra, ed. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1965–1976). The reference to this edition (by volume and page number) will be followed by a reference to the page number in the original edition. The only work of Maimon which has been so far translated into English is his *Lebensgeschichte* (*The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon* [Au.], J. Clark Murray, trans. [Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001]). Unless otherwise marked, translations of the *Lebensgeschichte* rely on Murray’s edition; all other translations, from German and from Hebrew, are mine. Maimon’s major Hebrew work *Give’at ha-Moreh* (The Hill of the Guide) has so far been translated only into French. Whenever I translate a text from *Give’at ha-Moreh*, a reference to the French translation (*Commentaires de Maïmonide* [CM], Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, trans. and ed. [Paris: Cerf, 1999]) will follow the reference to the modern Hebrew edition (*Give’at ha-Moreh* [GM], S.H. Bergman & N. Rotenstreich, eds. [Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Science, 1965]).

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Maimon's literary success brought little rest to his life. Maimon died prematurely in 1800 following a disease caused by his alcoholism. The Talmudic dictum which Maimon so often quotes—"Scholars of wisdom have no rest either in this world or in the world to come"<sup>3</sup>—turned out to be an apt and rather grim description of his own life. In the decade between Kant's recognition and his death, Maimon published ten books and numerous articles. In spite of the strong impression that his writings made upon figures such as Goethe, Schiller, Kant and Fichte, Maimon was forgotten shortly after his death.

Maimon's attraction to Spinoza was probably fostered by the common intellectual background these two philosophers shared: medieval Jewish philosophy, primarily that of Maimonides.<sup>4</sup> In his autobiography, Maimon identifies Spinoza's understanding of the substance-mode relation with the Kabbalistic (Lurianic) doctrine of *Tzimtzum* (divine self-limitation). Thus, Maimon writes that the ideas of Spinoza were already suggested to him *before* his arrival to Germany (and his actual encounter with the writings of Spinoza), when he was studying the Kabbalah in Poland.<sup>5</sup>

Maimon's actual encounter with Spinoza's writings occurred during his second visit to Berlin between 1780 and 1783. During this period Maimon became a friend and protégé of Moses Mendelssohn. According to Maimon's testimony, the two discussed Spinoza's philosophy at length. Maimon quite openly criticized Mendelssohn for his attempts to hide the Spinozistic core behind Leibniz's and Mendelssohn's own philosophy and for his avoidance of the Spinozistic conclusions which would result from a consistent exposition of Leibniz's philosophy.

Maimon's second Spinozistic period took place in the early 1790s. At that time Maimon was trying to wed Spinoza and Kant by presenting skeptical arguments against Kant and claiming that these arguments could be answered only by a resort to dogmatic metaphysics (by which he meant a consistent [i.e. a Spinozistic] reinterpretation of Leibniz). After the mid 1790s, Maimon seems to adopt a more skeptical position. He still held that the objectivity of experience can be supported only by adopting some elements of dogmatic metaphysics (primarily, the idea of an infinite intellect which creates both the form and the *content* of experience). However, Maimon argued that such a move does not grant us certainty, since the skeptic can always resort to a more radical position and doubt the possibility of experience. In spite of this skeptical turn, Maimon never completely abandoned Spinoza's philosophy, and the latter played a central role in Maimon's logical doctrine of the Law of Determinability (*Satz der Bestimmbarkeit*). Maimon's combination of Spinozistic pantheism and (arguably, non-Spinozistic) idealism seems to play a crucial role in the later developments of German Idealism.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Moed Katan* 29a; *Tractate Berachot* 64a. Among other places, Maimon quotes this dictum in his unpublished Hebrew manuscript, *Hesheq Shelomo* (10), in *Give'at ha-Moreh* (GM 401 CM 190), and at the closing of the *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* (VT) (Berlin: Christian Voss und Sohn, 1790), 444 (GW II 440).

<sup>4</sup> Maimon's original name was Salomon *ben* (son of) Joshua. He adopted the surname 'Maimon' as an expression of deep respect toward Maimonides.

<sup>5</sup> LB 1571 Au. 219.

<sup>6</sup> At the end of this paper I will suggest that Maimon's reading of Spinoza had a crucial influence on Hegel's understanding of Spinoza. I will not discuss here, however, other possible influences of Maimon either on Hegel or on Fichte. For three recent intriguing discussions of Fichte's debt to

In this paper, I will point out the main Spinozistic elements of Maimon's philosophy (primarily the view of God as the material cause of the world, or as the subject in which all things inhere). I will also examine the intellectual background of Maimon's Spinozism and trace influences of Maimon's contemporaries on his understanding of Spinoza. In the first part of this paper, I will show how Maimon's expectations that he would find a community of free thinkers were belied by his encounters with the members of the Jewish and German Enlightenment, and how, as a result, Maimon learned that even among the *Aufklärer*, one must be careful when speaking of politically sensitive topics such as Spinozism. In the second part, I will explain Kant's characterization of Maimon's philosophy as Spinozism. I will argue that this characterization assumes a certain understanding of Spinoza as a modern Eleatic. While this (mis)understanding of Spinoza as a radical monist was shared by both Maimon and Kant (as well as most of their contemporaries), it is explicitly ruled out by Spinoza. In fact, I will argue that Maimon's own philosophy is far more monistic than Spinoza's. In the third part of the paper, I will point out Maimon's pantheistic view of God as *the material cause* of the world and show that Maimon identifies this view with both the Kabbalah and Spinoza's metaphysics. Finally, I will suggest that the central doctrine of Maimon's speculative logic—the Law of Determinability—has an interesting affinity with the fundamental principles of Spinoza's metaphysics.

## I. A TALE OF TWO DISAPPOINTMENTS

### I. I

When the 25-year old Maimon came to Berlin for the first time, in 1778, he had in his pocket a manuscript of a commentary on Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* (LB 1271 Au. 194).<sup>7</sup> Since Jewish beggars were not allowed to reside in the capital, Maimon had to get the approval of the Jewish community in order to settle in the city. Maimon was straightforward in explaining the purpose of his visit and told the officers of the Jewish community that he came in order to extend his knowledge of philosophy and the sciences, and that he was planning to publish a new edition of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* with his own commentary. He did not suspect that such goals would not be respected by the rather enlightened Jews of Berlin. To his astonishment, the response of the Jewish officials was quite

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Maimon, see Peter Thielke, "Getting Maimon's Goad: Discursivity, Skepticism, and Fichte's Idealism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39(1): 2001, 101–34; Fredrick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 248–59; and Daniel Breazeale, "Der Satz der Bestimmbarkeit: Fichte's Appropriation and Transformation of Maimon's Principle of Synthetic Thinking," *Deutscher Idealismus—Ein Internationales Jahrbuch/ German Idealism—An International Yearbook* 1 (2002). Two classical studies which stress Maimon's influence on Fichte are Martial Guérault, *L'évolution et la structure de la doctrine de la science chez Fichte*, 2 vols. (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles lettres, 1930), and Alexis Philonenko, *La liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte* (Paris: Vrin, 1966).

<sup>7</sup> This early unpublished manuscript of Maimon was carried by Maimon throughout his wanderings. Following Maimon's death the manuscript disappeared. I do believe, however, that some pages of this manuscript may have been attached to *Hesheq Shelomo* (another unpublished manuscript of Maimon which was written about a year later, when Maimon was staying in Posen). The manuscript of *Hesheq Shelomo* (Solomon's Desire) is currently held by the National and University Library in Jerusalem (MS 806426).

harsh: Maimon was asked to pack his belongings and leave the shelter of the Jewish community at once; he would not be permitted to enter the city. In his autobiography Maimon describes the effect of this event upon him as deep disappointment and despair:

The refusal of permission to stay in Berlin came upon me like a thunderbolt. The object of all my hopes and wishes was all at once beyond my reach, just when it was so near. I found myself in the situation of Tantalus, and did not know where to turn for help. I was especially pained by the treatment I received from the overseer of this poorhouse, who, by command of his superiors, urged my speedy departure, and never left off till he saw me outside the gate. There I threw myself on the ground and began to weep. (LB 1281 Au. 195)

Interestingly, in retrospect, Maimon expresses his understanding of the decision to expel him:

[This rabbi told the elders of the community] that I was going to issue a new edition of the *Guide of the Perplexed* with a commentary, and that my intention was not so much to study medicine, as to devote myself to the sciences in general, and to extend my knowledge [*meine Erkenntnis zu erweitern*]. This the orthodox Jews look upon as something dangerous to religion and good morals. They believe this to be especially true of the Polish Rabbis, who, having by some lucky accident been delivered from the bondage of superstition, suddenly catch a gleam of the light of reason and set themselves free from their chains. And this belief is to some extent well founded. Persons in such a position may be compared to a man who after being famished for a long time suddenly comes upon a well-spread table, and attacks the food with violent greed, and overfills himself. (LB 1281 Au. 194–95, my emphasis)

Thus, Maimon's journey to Berlin to study the sciences and "widen his knowledge" failed. But it was not a complete failure: he learned at least one thing from this episode. With a keen sense of irony, Maimon titled the chapter of his autobiography which ends with his expulsion: "Journeys to Königsberg, Stettin and Berlin for the purpose of extending my knowledge of men [*zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis*]." Extending his knowledge of human prejudices was probably not what he came for. Yet the recognition that these Enlightened Jews—of which he surely had heard countless embellished stories in Poland—were hardly more open than the people among whom he lived for more than twenty years, was undoubtedly an important lesson. This was his first disappointment.

## 1.2

Maimon's next visit to Berlin, between 1780 and 1783, took place under much more pleasant circumstances. During this visit he made the important acquaintance of Mendelssohn and succeeded in making his way into some circles of the Enlightenment. It is probably in this period when Maimon came across Spinoza's writings for the first time.<sup>8</sup> In his autobiography, Maimon describes this discovery:

<sup>8</sup> Spinoza's *Ethics* was translated into Hebrew and Yiddish only in the second half of the 19th century. While the little German Maimon had acquired already in Poland could have helped him read a German translation, this was not likely. Note Maimon's claim that before coming to Germany, Spinoza's system "has already been suggested" to him "by the Kabbalistic writings," which apparently rules out any direct encounter with Spinoza's writings at that time.

As a man altogether without experience I carried my frankness at times a little too far and brought upon myself many vexations in consequence. I was reading Spinoza. His profound thought and his love of truth pleased me uncommonly; and as his system has already been suggested to me in Poland by the Kabbalistic writings, I began to reflect upon it anew and became so convinced of its truth, that all the efforts of Mendelssohn to change my opinion were unavailing. I answered all the objections brought against it by the Wolffians, raised objections against their system myself, and showed that if the *Definitiones nominales* of the Wolffian ontology are converted into *Definitiones reales*, conclusions of the very opposite of theirs are the result.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, I could not explain the persistency of Mendelssohn and the Wolffians generally in adhering to their system, except as a *political dodge and a piece of hypocrisy* [*politische Kniffe und Heuchelei*], by which they studiously endeavored to descend to the mode of thinking common in the popular mind; and this conviction I expressed openly and without reserve. (LB 156–57 | Au. 219–20)

As expected, Maimon's openness in these matters brought him troubles rather than appreciation. Several liberal young Jews with whom Maimon used to pass time in Berlin complained to Mendelssohn that Maimon was spreading "dangerous opinions and systems" (referring clearly to Maimon's Spinozism). Mendelssohn summoned Maimon and asked him about this and other rumors he heard about Maimon's all-too-free behavior (LB 171–72 | Au. 238–40). Maimon responded by insisting that,

[T]he opinion and systems referred to are either true or false. If the former, then I do not see how the knowledge of the truth can do any harm. If the latter, then let them be refuted. (LB 172 | Au. 240)

Maimon added, however, that he understood that his presence in Berlin had become a burden. He bade Mendelssohn farewell, and left the city.

Following a short stop in Hamburg, Maimon went to Amsterdam, where he stayed for nine months. What the purpose of his journey to Holland was, and whether it was related to his adoption of Spinozism at this time, we do not know.<sup>10</sup> Maimon may have been hoping to find in Holland a more open and liberal Jewish society, where he could pursue his studies unbothered by political considerations. This was of course wishful thinking, as it did not take long before the local Jews pronounced Maimon a "damnable heretic,"<sup>11</sup> and stoned him in the open street.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In the *Nouveaux Essais* (Book III, Chapter III, §15), Leibniz presents a distinction between *nominal* and *real* definitions: "Something which is thought possible is expressed by a definition; but if this definition does not at the same time express this possibility then it is merely nominal, since in this case we can wonder whether the definition expresses anything real—that is, possible—until experience comes to our aid by acquainting us *a posteriori* with the reality (when the thing actually occurs in the world). This will do, when reason cannot acquaint us *a priori* with the reality of the thing defined by exhibiting its cause or the possibility of its being generated" (*New Essays on Human Understanding*, Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 293–94). Cf. Leibniz's *Discours de Métaphysique* (Sec. 24). For Maimon's discussion of real and nominal definitions, see his *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* (GW II 101, 200 | VT 101, 200).

<sup>10</sup> Maimon's own explanation of the reasons for embarking on this journey is very vague. See LB 175 | Au. 244.

<sup>11</sup> LB 176–77 | Au. 246.

<sup>12</sup> Sabattia Joseph Wolff, *Maimoniana oder Rhapsodien zur Charakteristik Salomon Maimons* (Berlin, 1813), 178. Wolff was a Jewish physician and a friend of Maimon.

## I.3

Toward the end of 1785—after leaving Holland and spending two years in a gymnasium in Altona—Maimon came back to Berlin. It was just at the height of the famous *Pantheismusstreit*, an event which stirred up the whole intellectual life of Germany, and marked the end of the *Aufklärung*.

A combination of ideological disputes and personal rivalries within German intellectual circles led the major participants in the *Pantheismusstreit* to take surprising positions. Jacobi, the fideist, argued that Spinoza's atheistic philosophy was the only possible conclusion of consistent rationalism and that this conclusion can only be escaped by a *salto mortale* which will bring one back to the secure ground of sensible experience.<sup>13</sup> Mendelssohn, whose first published work—the *Philosophical Conversations* (*Philosophische Gespräche*, 1755)—was a careful attempt to legitimize Spinoza,<sup>14</sup> now presented an attack on Spinoza along the lines of Christian Wolff.

Maimon observed these events closely and his response is clearly recorded in the *Lebensgeschichte*.<sup>15</sup> More than being in disagreement, Maimon seems to be deeply disappointed by both sides of the controversy. We have already seen Maimon's characterization of Mendelssohn's attitude toward Spinoza as hypocritical. About Jacobi, Maimon writes:

The profound Jacobi had a predilection for Spinozism, with which surely no independent thinker can find fault, and wanted to make out Mendelssohn, as well as his friend Lessing, to be Spinozists in spite of themselves. With this view he published a correspondence on the subject, which was never intended to appear in print, and be subject to public inspection. What was the use of this? If Spinozism is true, it is so without Mendelssohn's assent. Eternal truths have nothing to do with the majority of votes, and least of all where, as I hold, the truth is of such a nature, that surpasses all expression. (LB 1661 Au. 232)

Though Maimon shared Jacobi's appreciation of Spinoza as a philosopher, as well as Jacobi's view that Mendelssohn and the Wolffians were trying to avoid the Spinozistic conclusions of their own system, Maimon felt that Jacobi's attack on Mendelssohn (like Mendelssohn's own defense) was politically motivated.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Maimon's

<sup>13</sup> "It is as if Jacobi felt obliged to defend Spinoza passionately on rational grounds for the sake of rejecting philosophy on the strength of true belief" (George di Giovanni, "The First twenty years of critique: The Spinoza connection" in Paul Guyer, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 423). For a comprehensive discussion of the *Pantheismusstreit*, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 44–126.

<sup>14</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften—Jubiläumsausgabe* (MJA) (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1929), 18–19; Moses Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, Daniel O. Dahlstrom, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100–111.

<sup>15</sup> Maimon was well acquainted with the writings of both Mendelssohn and Jacobi. He translated Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden* into Hebrew (LB 1981 Au. 274), though the manuscript of this translation is lost. Maimon quotes excerpts from his translation of chapters 11–14 of the *Morgenstunden* in his Hebrew book, *Give'at ha-Moreh* (Ch. 74). In chapter 69 of *Give'at ha-Moreh*, Maimon translates into Hebrew some excerpts from Jacobi's German translation of Giordano Bruno's *De la causa, principio e uno* (Cause, Principle, and Unity). Jacobi added this translation as an appendix to the second edition of *Über die Lehre des Spinoza, in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau, 1789).

<sup>16</sup> The claim that a consistent exposition of the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff leads to Spinozism originated with neither Maimon nor Jacobi. For a discussion of the attacks against Wolff along this very line in the 1720s see Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 544–52.

hope to find in Germany a community of thinkers that would engage in a free and impartial search for the truth was belied. This was the second disappointment.

#### I.4

Maimon did learn, however, an important lesson from these two stories. He learned that certain things should not be admitted in public. If previously Maimon had mocked Mendelssohn's practice of being extremely cautious whenever politically sensitive issues such as Spinozism were discussed,<sup>17</sup> Maimon now adopted this very practice. He still would not say a single negative thing about Spinoza, and, unlike his contemporaries, he never resorted to the practice of clearing himself from the charge of Spinozism by recriminating Spinoza. Whenever such charges were brought against Maimon, he always asked his adversaries to engage with the content—rather than the genealogy—of his claims.<sup>18</sup> Yet, from now on, Maimon adopted a much more cautious attitude. He tried to avoid the association with Spinoza and tried instead to characterize his philosophy as a form of Leibnizianism. He stressed that this is *his* understanding of Leibniz, or, that it is Leibniz's philosophy, "if understood correctly."<sup>19</sup> When pressed by objectors who argued that in fact his system is closer to Spinozism rather than to Leibnizianism, he responded: well, if you wish, you may call it Spinozism.<sup>20</sup>

So far, I have tried to outline the historical context of Maimon's engagement with Spinoza and to show the reasons for Maimon's caution in his treatment of Spinoza. In the next section, I will discuss Kant's characterization of Maimon as a Spinozist which will allow us to point out the major *divergence* between Spinoza's and Maimon's philosophies.

## 2. ACOSMISM OR "SPINOZA OF ELEA"

### 2.1

On April 7, 1789, Marcus Herz, a former student of Kant and a friend of Maimon, wrote to Kant about Maimon and a certain composition Maimon had written in response to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Herz sent this text together with his own letter and a short letter by Maimon, and asked Kant for his evaluation.<sup>21</sup> A month and a half later, after reading the first two chapters of the composition, Kant responded in a letter full of praise for Maimon, describing him as "having an acumen for such deep investigation that very few men have" and claiming that "none of my critics understood me and the main questions as well as Herr Maimon does."<sup>22</sup> Apart from these tributes, the letter also contains Kant's replies to Maimon's objections.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Mendelssohn's praise of Leibniz for hiding the alleged Spinozistic origin of the doctrine of the pre-established harmony. Mendelssohn praises Leibniz for being "not merely the greatest, but also the most careful [*behutsamste*] philosopher" (MJA I 121 *Philosophical Writings*, 104).

<sup>18</sup> See Maimon's reply to Kant's description of his views as Spinozism: "The outline [*Grundriss*] of this system, as I have presented it here, should be examined, not its name" (GW II 3671 VT 367).

<sup>19</sup> GW II 4331 VT 437. I will later argue that this "correct understanding" of Leibniz is very close—but not identical—to Spinozism.

<sup>20</sup> GW IV 581 *Streifereien im Gebiete der Philosophie* (Berlin: Wilhelm Vieweg, 1793), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence*, Arnulf Zweig, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 291–4 (Ak. II: 14–17).

<sup>22</sup> Kant, *Correspondence*, 311–12 (Ak. II:48–49).

In his composition, Maimon argued that Kant failed to provide an answer to the question *quid juris*, i.e., by what right do the categories apply to the intuitions. If, as Kant holds, these two kinds of cognitions have completely alien sources—understanding and sensibility—their accord appears to be merely a fact which cannot claim necessity.<sup>23</sup> Maimon argues that this problem can be easily solved in the system of Leibniz-Wolff, which holds sensibility and understanding to be not *different sources* of knowledge but rather *different degrees* of perfection of the *same source* of knowledge (i.e., sensations should be considered as merely obscure concepts).<sup>24</sup>

Yet, the claim that the intellect is the source of intuitions is not sufficient to solve the *quid juris* problem, insofar as it does not make clear what kind of intellect—finite, or infinite—can be the source of our intuitions. Had Maimon held that only God's infinite intellect can produce intuitions, the question of the application of concepts to intuitions in the human, finite, mind would still be in its place. In order to bridge this gap between the abilities of the divine and human understanding, Maimon adds another crucial claim: "Our understanding is the same as God's infinite understanding, though only in a limited way."<sup>25</sup> Thus, if our understanding is a limited model of God's understanding, and if, for this infinite understanding, the difference between concepts and intuitions is just one of degree, there seems to be a way to bridge over the gulf between understanding and sensibility. Though Maimon does not attribute the view of the human understanding as a limitation of the infinite understanding to any specific philosopher, the context of the discussion suggests to the reader that it is the view of Leibniz and Wolff.

In response to these claims of Maimon, Kant writes:

If I have correctly grasped the sense of this work, the intention is to prove that if the understanding is to have a law-giving relationship to sensible intuition, then the understanding must itself be the originator not only of sensible forms but even of the material of intuition, that is, of objects. Otherwise, the question, *quid juris?* could not be answered adequately. . . . [According to Maimon:] An *a priori* synthesis can have objective validity only because the divine understanding, of which ours is only a part (or as he expresses it, "though in a limited way"), is one with our understanding; that is, it is itself the originator of forms and of the possibility of things (in themselves) in the world.

However, I doubt very much that this was Leibniz's or Wolff's opinion, or that this could really be deduced from their explanations of the distinction between sensibility and understanding; and those who are familiar with the teachings of these men will find it difficult to agree that they assume Spinozism; for, in fact, Herr Maimon's way of representing is Spinozism and could be used most excellently to refute Leibnizians *ex concessis*. (*Correspondence*, 312 [Ak. 11:49–50])

## 2.2

Why does Kant claim that Maimon's view of the human understanding as a limitation [*Einschränkung*] of the infinite understanding is Spinozism and how is this

<sup>23</sup> GW II 621 VT 62.

<sup>24</sup> GW II 63–641 VT 63–64.

<sup>25</sup> Unser Verstand ist eben derselbe, nur auf eine eingeschränkte Art (GW II 651 VT 65).



view supposed to refute the Leibnizians? Kant understood Maimon's use of the notion of "limitation" as claiming that the human intellect is part of the infinite intellect. This very view is indeed embraced by Spinoza<sup>26</sup> (though, occasionally, Wolff also uses "limitation" terminology to explain creation<sup>27</sup>). As we shall later see, Maimon adopted the "limitation" terminology from the *Kabbalah*, and it is not clear whether by "being a limitation of x" Maimon meant "being part of x," or rather, "being a determination, or a property, of x." However, since—as we shall soon see—for Maimon "the *Kabbalah* is nothing but expanded Spinozism," Kant seems to be correct in identifying the traces of Spinoza. But how does this view refute Leibniz?

Kant is not explicit in this matter, but I believe he had in mind that Maimon's limitation thesis denies the *independence* of the monads. Instead of being independent substances created by God, Maimon takes them to be *parts* of God's understanding. Indeed, once one denies the independence of the monads, Leibniz's system becomes quite close to Spinoza's.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.3

There is, however, one clear *anti-Spinozistic* element in Kant's, rather adequate, description of Maimon's views. One would think that this element should have stopped Kant from describing Maimon as a Spinozist (Kant could simply point out some similarity [i.e. the notion of limitation] between the views of Maimon and Spinoza). Kant was clearly aware that Maimon was an *idealist*, and that he suggested a thorough reduction of all things to thought. (See the passage quoted above: "the understanding must itself be the originator not only of sensible forms but even of the material of intuition, that is, of objects.") But, idealism is a doctrine that could not be espoused by Spinoza, since Spinoza holds that the attributes are *conceptually* (and causally) *independent from each other*:

Each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself [*Unumquodque unius substantiae attributum per se concipi debet*]. (*Ethics*, Part 1, Proposition 10)  
 [E]ach attribute is conceived through itself without any other [*Unumquodque enim attributum per se absque alio concipitur*]. (*Ethics*, Part 2, Demonstration of proposition 6)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For Spinoza's view of the human mind as part of the infinite intellect, see Letter 32: "As regards the human mind, I maintain that it, too, is a part of Nature; for I hold that in Nature there also exists an infinite power of thinking which, in so far as it is infinite, contains within itself the whole of Nature *ideally* [*in se continet totam Naturam objective*], and whose thoughts proceed in the same manner as does Nature, which is in fact the object of its thought. Further, I maintain that the human mind is that same power of thinking, not in so far as that power is infinite and apprehends the whole of Nature, but in so far as it is finite, apprehending the human body only. The human mind, I maintain, is in this way part of an infinite intellect" (Spinoza, *The Letters*, Samuel Shirley, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 194–95).

<sup>27</sup> See Wolff's *Theologia Naturalis*, Part 2, no. 92. Cf. Alexander Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn on Leibniz and Spinoza" in his *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (London: Routledge, 1969), 249.

<sup>28</sup> Leibniz himself was clearly aware of this point. In a letter to Bourguet from December 1714, Leibniz writes: "Il [Spinoza] auroit raison, s'il n'y avoit point de monades" (*Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, C.I. Gerhardt, ed. [Berlin: Weidman, 1875–90; Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1960], vol. 3, 575).

<sup>29</sup> *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (CWP), vol. 1, Edwin Curley, trans. and ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 416, 450.

Thus, any reduction of Thought to Extension (materialism), or of Extension to Thought (idealism) is explicitly ruled out by Spinoza. This doctrine of Spinoza—which in current literature is termed “the conceptual barrier,” or “the conceptual separation of the attributes”—has a pivotal role in the *Ethics*.<sup>30</sup> Without this doctrine, many of the demonstrations of the *Ethics* would simply be invalid.

Apparently it was not just Kant who thought that Maimon’s idealism should not disqualify him as a Spinozist, but also Maimon himself. Maimon’s first reaction to Kant’s accusation of Spinozism was a denial accompanied by a demand that his claims should be judged according to their content rather than their title (GW II 365–71 VT 365–7). However, two years later, in an editorial note in the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, Maimon adopts Kant’s characterization and writes about himself:

He confesses to have dared even in his first work [i.e. *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie*] to do this *Salto mortale*<sup>31</sup> and to try to bring together Kant’s philosophy with Spinozism. He is now, however, convinced of the impossibility of carrying out this enterprise (an enterprise natural for any self-thinking person), and rather believes in the manageability of bringing together Kant’s philosophy and Hume’s skepticism.<sup>32</sup>

Why did both Maimon and Kant think that Maimon’s idealism was compatible with Spinozism?

#### 2.4

The answer to the last question seems to lie in the common understanding of Spinoza’s philosophy as a modern reappearance of the views of Parmenides and the Eleatic school, which was dominant in Maimon’s day.<sup>33</sup> According to this view, Spinozism is a form of radical monism which denies the reality of the multitude of finite things. Both the attributes and the modes of Spinoza’s substance are taken to be merely ideal, or even illusory.

Such an understanding of Spinoza was held not only by thinkers like Lessing—for whom “Spinozism” was nothing but pantheism epitomized by the *hen kai pan*

<sup>30</sup> For a thorough discussion of the conceptual barrier between the attributes see Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9–17.

<sup>31</sup> Here Maimon is alluding to Jacobi’s report on the conversation he had with Lessing in which Jacobi claimed that Spinozism is the inevitable conclusion of any rationalistic philosophy, and that it can be avoided only by a *salto mortale*.

<sup>32</sup> GW III 455 (*Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, 1792 vol. 9/2, 143). Maimon published several articles in the *Magazin* and became the coeditor of the journal (together with Karl Philipp Moriz) in its last years.

<sup>33</sup> The association of Spinoza with Eleatism seems to begin with Bayle’s influential writings on Spinoza. See for example Bayle’s entry on Xenophanes in Pierre Bayle, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Pierre Bayle* (Chippenham: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1997), vol. 5, 574. An interesting work in this context is Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, *Natur und Gott nach Spinoza* (Leipzig: Joh. Gottfr. Müller, 1789), reprinted in the *Aetas Kantiana* series [Nu. 98], Brussels 1973. The book discusses at length Spinoza’s philosophy and its contemporary interpretation in a form of a dialogue between Parmenides and Xenophanes. The identification of Spinoza with Eleatism became the standard view of Spinoza in German Idealism. Another proponent of this erroneous interpretation of Spinoza was the prominent 19th century historian of philosophy, Johann Eduard Erdmann. See his *History of Philosophy*, Williston S. Hough, trans. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890 [Reprint: Thoemmes, 1997]), vol. 2, 90 (§273, 2). Cf. Erdmann *Vermischte Aufsätze* (Leipzig: 1846), 141, and Schopenhauer’s repeated claim that “Spinoza was a mere reviver of the Eleatics” (*Parerga and Paralipomena*, vol. 1, E.F.J. Payne, trans. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974], 71, 76–77).

(One and All) slogan—but even by a philosopher like Hegel who had quite an intimate knowledge of Spinoza and was deeply interested in the details of the *Ethics*.

Parmenides has to reckon with illusion and opinion, the opposites of being and truth; Spinoza likewise, with attributes, modes, extension, movement, understanding, will, and so on.<sup>34</sup>

Taken as a whole this constitutes the Idea of Spinoza, and it is just what τὸ ὅν was to the Eleatics. . . . Spinoza is far from having proved this unity as convincingly as was done by the ancients; but what constitutes the grandeur of Spinoza's manner of thought is that he is able to renounce all that is determinate and particular, and restrict himself to the One, giving heed to this alone.<sup>35</sup>

Spinoza's doctrine of the conceptual separation of the attributes is clearly inconsistent with the view of Spinoza as a modern Eleatic, and thus we find hardly any reference to it in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century literature on Spinoza.<sup>36</sup> In the few occasions in which it is mentioned, it is considered untenable.<sup>37</sup> In the absence of this doctrine, the way is open for both materialist (as was common in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and idealist interpretations of Spinoza.

Maimon, and apparently Kant as well,<sup>38</sup> took the latter path and considered Spinozism to be at least compatible with idealism. In numerous places Maimon

<sup>34</sup> Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, A.V. Miller, trans. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1989), 98.

<sup>35</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, trans. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), vol. 3, 257–58. For Hegel's claim that modes are illusory in Spinoza's philosophy, see vol. 3, 258, 261, 264, 281, 287–89, 330; *Science of Logic*, 98. Interestingly, Hegel seems to understand Spinoza as viewing even the attributes as merely vanishing and illusory things (in addition to the passage just quoted, see also *Science of Logic*, 538 and *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 269).

<sup>36</sup> The infinity of attributes introduces into Spinoza's philosophy a strong pluralistic element. The conceptual barrier between the attributes secures this infinite manifold of attributes against any collapse through a reduction to a finite number of attributes, or even to just one attribute. Both Hegel and Schelling seem to disregard Spinoza's claim about the existence of infinite attributes, and take Thought and Extension—the only attributes known to the human mind—to be the only attributes that exist (See Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, Andrew Bowie, trans. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 67, and Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 261). On Hegel's side, this move could have been an attempt to take the sting out of one of the most anti-humanistic doctrines of Spinoza which makes man a marginal constituent of nature, with a very limited ability to grasp nature. For Hegel's criticism of the marginalization of man in Spinoza's world, see his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 280 and 286–8.

<sup>37</sup> “[E]ach attribute is supposed to express the totality of substance and to be understood from itself alone; but in so far as it is the absolute as determinate, it contains otherness and cannot be understood from itself alone” (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 538). Cf. Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Vol. 3, 269): “Neither are extension and thought anything to him [Spinoza] in themselves, or in truth, but only externally; for their difference is a mere matter of the understanding, which is ranked by Spinoza only among affections, and as such has no truth” (my emphasis).

<sup>38</sup> In his *Lectures on Metaphysics* Kant argues that “dogmatic egoism”—i.e. solipsism—“is a hidden Spinozism” insofar as it acknowledges the existence of only one being while all other things are merely modifications of the one being (*Lectures on Metaphysics*, Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon, trans. and eds. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 29 [Ak. 28:207]). Cf. Kant's Refl. # 3803 (Ak. 17: 29721) “*Omnis spinozista est egoista*” and Mendelssohn's claim in the *Morgenstunden* that the Spinozist makes God into an “infinite egoist” (MJA, vol. 3/2, 116). In his *Opus postumum* Kant refers to Spinozism as “transcendental idealism” (Ak. 21:22). In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (vol. 1, 256), Hegel as well calls Spinoza “an idealist,” though he may be using “idealism” in a more technical sense, internal to his system. For a discussion of Kant's view of Spinoza, see Henry Allison, “Kant's Critique of Spinoza,” in Richard Kennington, ed. *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 199–227.

explicitly identifies Spinozism with the views of the Eleatic school.<sup>39</sup> Whenever he discusses Spinoza, Spinoza's views are taken to be a paradigm of radical monism, suggesting the complete unity of the world in various ways. Maimon's view of his own idealism as a form of Spinozism is one aspect of this understanding of Spinoza (insofar as it eliminates the plurality of the *attributes*); Maimon's characterization of Spinoza as an "acosmist" (which eliminates the reality of the *modes*) is just the other aspect.

## 2.5

Addressing the frequent charge of atheism brought against Spinoza's philosophy, Maimon writes:

In this [Spinoza's] system unity is real, but diversity is merely ideal. In the atheistic system it is just the other way around. *The diversity is real* and grounded in the very nature of things, while the unity, which one observes in the order and regularity of nature, is consequently only coincidental; through this unity we determine our arbitrary system for the sake of our knowledge.

*It is inconceivable how one could make the Spinozistic system into atheism since these two systems are the exact opposites of each other* [my emphasis]. Atheism denies the existence of *God*, Spinozism denies the existence of the *world*. Rather, Spinozism should be called "acosmism."<sup>40</sup>

In this defense of Spinoza, Maimon names Spinozism "acosmism" because it denies the reality of the diversified world. Rather than denying the existence of God, Spinoza is said to deny the existence of *anything but God*. The characterization of Spinoza as an acosmist, which played a crucial role in the subsequent reception of Spinoza,<sup>41</sup> lucidly expresses Maimon's view of Spinoza as a radical monist.

Interestingly, Maimon contrasts Spinozism not just with atheism,<sup>42</sup> but also with Leibniz's philosophy. Maimon presents Leibniz's (theistic!) system as a compromise, or a middle position, between Spinozism and atheism, insofar as it grants independence to the various monads, yet assumes a harmony between these monads and a being who is responsible for that harmony (LB 217). It is doubtful that any Leibnizian would be content with such a description of his views as *more atheistic than Spinozism*.

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<sup>39</sup> See for example Maimon's *Streifereien*: "Spinoza behauptet nach dem Parmenides „nur das Reelle, vom Verstande begriffene existirt, was mit dem Reellen in einem endlichen Wesen verknüpft ist, ist bloß die Einschränkung des Reellen, eine Negation, der keine Existenz beigelegt werden kann" (GW IV 62–63). In *Bacons von Verulam neues Organon* (Berlin: Gottfried Carl Nauck, 1793), Maimon presents a certain dialectical game in which he portrays both Parmenides and Xenophanes, first as Spinozists, then as Leibnizians as well (184–93 | GW IV 405–14). Note that in this text (as in most other places) Maimon views Leibnizianism as a form of mild, or compromised, Spinozism. Both Spinoza and Leibniz are supposed to view particular things as merely "limitations" of God. Cf. Samuel Atlas, "Solomon Maimon and Spinoza," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 30 (1959): 233–85. Atlas's account of the Maimon-Spinoza connection seems to me to be the best and most comprehensive study of the topic. However, Atlas fails to address Maimon's crucial claim that God is the material cause of the world.

<sup>40</sup> "Es ist unbegreiflich, wie man das spinozistische System zum atheistischen machen konnte, da sie doch einander gerade entgegengesetzt sind. In diesem wird das Dasein Gottes, in jenem aber das Dasein der Welt gezeugnet. Es müsste also eher das akosmische System heißen" (LB 217). The translation is mine.

<sup>41</sup> See section 5.2 below.

<sup>42</sup> By which he probably referred to Hume's skepticism.

## 2.6

In this section we have seen Kant's reasons for identifying Maimon as a Spinozist and the intellectual climate that allowed the identification of Maimon's idealism with Spinozism in spite of the clear divergence between the two. Ironically, however, Maimon's own idealism is far more monistic than the philosophy of Spinoza (which Maimon took as a paradigm of monism). Arguably, Maimon's disregard for the conceptual separation of the attributes, and his view of Spinoza as an acosmist, are just two aspects of the same image of Spinoza as a modern Eleatic.

In the next section, I will discuss the strongest Spinozistic element in Maimon's thought: his view of God as the material cause of the world.

### 3. PANTHEISM AND THE VIEW OF GOD AS THE MATERIAL CAUSE OF THE WORLD.

## 3.1

If Spinoza were an acosmist, and if, as Maimon attests, the Spinozistic system had already been suggested to him by the Kabbalists in Poland, we may wonder whether any of these Kabbalists embraced acosmism as well. Indeed, in a certain Kabbalistic composition dated 1778 we find the following:

It is impossible to conceive any other existence but His, may he be blessed, no matter whether it is a substantial or an accidental existence. And this is the secret of the aforementioned unity [that God is the cause of the world in all four respects: formally, materially, efficiently and finally], namely, *that only God, may he be blessed, exists, and that nothing but him has any existence at all.* [My emphasis]

This acosmistic passage appears in a composition entitled *Hesheq Shelomo* (Solomon's Desire), whose author was none other than Maimon.<sup>43</sup> Notice that here Maimon presents his own acosmism as the secret behind the view of God as the cause of the world in all respects. Arguably, it is the view of God as the *material* cause of the world which brings about this radical conclusion. That God is the cause of the world in the remaining three respects of causation is a common theistic view, which by no means leads to acosmism.

## 3.2

In order to understand Maimon's view of God as the material cause of the world it will be instructive to look at its background in the 69th chapter of the first part of *Maimonides's Guide of the Perplexed*. Following a reference to the four Aristotelian causes Maimonides writes:

Now, one of the opinions of the philosophers, *an opinion with which I do not disagree*, is that God, may He be precious and magnified, is the efficient cause, that He is the form, and that He is the end [of the world].<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Hesheq Shelomo*, 139.

<sup>44</sup> Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Shelomo Pines, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), vol. 1, 167, my emphasis.

While Maimonides endorses the view of God as the cause of the world in the three other respects, he avoids—and apparently disagrees with<sup>45</sup>—the claim that God is also the material cause of the world.

Maimon, however, dares to take the additional step and, in a second passage in *Hesheq Shelomo*, he links the claim that God is the material cause of the world with a certain idealistic view.

[Y]ou should know that the intellect is the best and first reality, and is the cause of the least and last reality external to the intellect—just as the intellectual form in the artisan is the best and first reality, and the cause of the least and the last reality external to the intellect. And thus, since He is an intellect *in actu*, the intellect, the intellecting subject and the intellected object will be one, and [He] will include the *four causes* of reality which are: the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. But since the last three causes, which are the formal, the efficient and the final were already clarified in the master's words, we will only present them briefly.<sup>46</sup>

After making the assertion that God is the cause of the world in all four respects, Maimon briefly summarizes Maimonides' exposition of God as the formal, efficient and final cause of the world. Then, when we expect to read Maimon's detailed explanation of his innovation that God is also the material cause of the world, the text breaks off in the middle of the page. The next couple of pages of the manuscript are missing. Whether this is a case of external censorship, self-censorship or a mere coincidence, we simply cannot know.

In 1790, twelve years after writing (the unpublished) *Hesheq Shelomo*, Maimon published a commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, titled *Give'at ha-Moreh* (The Hill of the Guide). Here again Maimon comments on the same passage from Maimonides's *Guide*.

One should wonder about the philosophers<sup>47</sup> why they have not said that God, may he be exalted, is also the matter [of the world], that is, *the last subject of everything which is not a predicate of anything else*.<sup>48</sup> For if we assume that God is the efficient, formal and final cause but not the material cause as well, we would have to assume the existence of primordial matter, that is, one which has no cause. However this would contradict the notion of God, may he be exalted, that is, the universal cause of everything that is. But the truth is that God is indeed the last cause in every respect.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> By stressing that he “does not disagree” with the claim that God is the efficient, formal and final cause, Maimonides is probably alluding to his disagreement with the complementary view, namely, that God is the material cause of the world as well.

<sup>46</sup> *Hesheq Shelomo*, 285, my emphasis.

<sup>47</sup> Was Maimon not aware that it was Maimonides, and not “the philosophers,” who denied that God is the material cause of the world, or was it simply more convenient to criticize “the philosophers” rather than the great master? Apparently, it seems that the latter is true for in his discussion of this chapter in his *Lebensgeschichte* (Maimon dedicated ten chapters of his autobiography to a summary of the main doctrines of the *Guide*) Maimon explicitly attributes to “the philosophers” the view that God is the cause of the world *in all four respects*. To this he adds: “I do not have to explain to the intelligent reader the consequences of this claim at length” (LB 272).

<sup>48</sup> In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle defines the substratum as “that of which other things are predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else” (1028b36 in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Jonathan Barnes, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)). Clearly, Maimon had this definition in mind in his exposition of the material cause. Note, however, that Maimon refers to “the last subject of everything,” and thus modifies Aristotle's definition of a substratum to embrace monism.

<sup>49</sup> GM 1091 CM 261, my emphases. Earlier in *Giveat ha-Moreh*, Maimon writes: “It is known that every effect needs four causes which are: the matter, the form, the [effecting] agent, and the end. And

## 3.3

The pantheistic implications of the claim that God is also the material cause of the world are quite clear. Yet, two crucial points must be noted. First, the view of God as the material cause of the world is *not* an endorsement of materialism. By saying that God is the matter of the world, Maimon uses “matter” in its logical, Aristotelian sense, as the substratum in which the form, or the predicates, inhere.<sup>50</sup> In the passage just quoted from *Give’at ha-Moreh*, Maimon explicitly spells out what he understands by the view of God as the matter of the world: “that is, the last subject of everything which is not a predicate of anything else.” It is exactly this *logical* use of the term “matter” that Kant employs in *the Critique of Pure Reason*:

[Matter] signifies the determinable in general, [form] signifies its determination. . . . The logicians formerly called the universal the matter, but the specific difference the form. In every judgement one can call the given concepts logical matter (for judgment), their relation (by means of copula) the form of judgment. In every being its components [*essentialia*] are the matter; the way in which they are connected in a thing, the essential form.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, in his discussion of the topic in the earlier composition, *Hesheq Shelomo*, Maimon claims God is indeed the ultimate cause of the world in all respects, but that the four Aristotelian causes should be applied to different aspects of God:

[B]ut you should know that the material and efficient causes should be attributed to Him, may he be blessed, with respect to the *Ensoph*, while the formal and final [causes should be attributed] with respect to the *Sephirot*.<sup>52</sup>

By *Ensoph* (the Infinite) the Kabbalists related to the most remote and hidden aspect of God, and it would be somewhat odd to view this abstract aspect of God as anything physical. A physical understanding of Maimon’s view of God as the material cause would also be straightforwardly inconsistent with Maimon’s general idealistic program.<sup>53</sup>

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when the agent is *finite*, for example, a man, *these four causes will be distinguished from each other*” (GM 461 CM 196, my emphases). The last sentence apparently alludes that for God—the *infinite* agent—the four causes are not distinguished one from each other. At the end of this passage Maimon argues that God is the efficient, formal, and final cause, but he avoids claiming explicitly that God is also the material cause of the world.

<sup>50</sup> Aristotle does not restrict the application of material causation to physical things. In the *Metaphysics* he discusses the intelligible matter of mathematical objects (1036a10). In another passage in the same book he suggests that the genus is the matter of its species (1058a23–24), apparently because the species are determinations of the genus. For a discussion of these passages, see W.K.G. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), vol. VI, 231–32. Similarly, Mendelssohn considers the matter-form relation as the relation of the genus to its species (MJA, vol. 14, 80). Cf. the end of the next quote from Kant.

<sup>51</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A266/B322.

<sup>52</sup> *Hesheq Shelomo*, 139. Maimon understands the Kabbalistic Sephirot as divine attributes. See LB 84 quoted below.

<sup>53</sup> The view of God as a physical being would be an abomination for any follower of Maimonides (as Maimon claimed to be). Maimonides ceaselessly repeats that no corporal characteristics pertain to God. In his introduction to *Give’at ha-Moreh*, Maimon presents the main qualities of Maimonides’s *Guide*, among which he mentions that it shows “the denial of any physicality [*Gashmut*] in God” (GM 41 CM 148).

The second point to be stressed is that the view of God as the world's "last subject," or that all things are predicates of God (while God is not a predicate of anything else), shares a striking similarity with one of Spinoza's most daring views: the claim that all particular things are *modes* of God.<sup>54</sup> By suggesting that God is the material cause of the world, Maimon is endorsing not just pantheism, but also *the same* (rather uncommon) *version of pantheism as Spinoza's*. Let me explain the last claim. Pantheism is the view of the world as identical with God. A simple version of pantheism is the view of all things in nature as *parts* of God. Spinoza cannot endorse such a view because of his commitment to the doctrine of the indivisibility of the substance (i.e. God).<sup>55</sup> Instead of having particular things as *parts* of God, Spinoza renders them *modes* of God.<sup>56</sup> By claiming that all things are predicated of God, Maimon seems to endorse Spinoza's *mode-substance pantheism* (i.e. particular things *inhere* in God as his *modes*), rather than the simple *part-whole pantheism* (particular things are *parts* of God). That Maimon was aware of the mode-substance nature of Spinoza's pantheism (and thus, of the strong similarity between his and Spinoza's views) is something we can learn from Maimon's portrayal of Spinoza's philosophy in his autobiography:

The Spinozistic system supposes one and the same substance as immediate cause [*Ursache*] of all various effects [*Wirkungen*], which must be considered as predicates of one and the same subject. (LB 216)

Interestingly, it is precisely the view of God as the material cause of the world that Maimon relies on in his *Lebensgeschichte* in order to argue that the philosophy of Spinoza is identical with the Kabbalah:<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza, see John Carriero, "On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33:2 (1995): 245–73. Carriero comes very close to the claim that Spinoza's understanding of the substance-mode relation is grounded in the notion of material causation.

<sup>55</sup> "A substance which is absolutely infinite is indivisible" (*Ethics*, part 1, proposition 13). Cf. proposition 12 and the scholium to proposition 15 of the same part.

<sup>56</sup> For Spinoza, the part-whole relation holds only between *finite* and *infinite modes*, but not between modes and the attributes (or the substance). Therefore, the human mind (a finite mode of Thought) is part of the infinite intellect (an infinite *mode*), but it is a mode—and not a part—of the attribute of thought. The ground of this view lies in Spinoza's distinction between different kinds and degrees of infinities. While the infinity of *Natura naturans* (the realm of the substance and the attributes) does not allow divisibility, the infinity of *Natura naturata* (the realm of the modes) does allow it. See Spinoza's 12th Letter.

<sup>57</sup> Maimon was not the first to argue for the affinity of Spinoza and the Kabbalah. In the last passage Maimon is probably responding to Jacobi's claim that the Kabbalah is "undeveloped Spinozism" (See *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn*, Heinrich Scholz, ed. [Berlin: Reuthner & Reichard, 1916], 176). Maimon, however, puts it the other way around ("expanded Spinozism"). The question of Spinoza's relation to the Kabbalah was first brought up by Johann Georg Wachter in his *Der Spinozismus im Judenthumb* (1699). In this work, Wachter identifies Spinoza with the Kabbalah in order to cast both as atheistic. A few years later, Wachter published a second book which addresses the same topic, *Ehucidarius Cabalisticus* (1706). While sticking to the identification of Spinoza and the Kabbalah, in his later book, Wachter defends and supports both Spinoza and the Kabbalah. For the fascinating story of Wachter's conversion to Spinozism/Kabbalism, see Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 645–52. For a recent discussion of the relation of Spinoza's pantheism to Kabbalistic pantheism, see Moshe Idel, "Deus sive Natura: Les Métamorphoses d'une formule de Maimonide à Spinoza" in Moshe Idel, *Maimonide et la mystique juive* (Paris: Cerf, 1991), 105–34.



In fact, the Kabbalah is nothing but expanded Spinozism, in which not only is the origin of the world explained by the limitation [*Einschränkung*] of the divine being, but also the origin of every kind of being, and its relation to the rest, is derived from a separate attribute of God. God as the ultimate subject and the ultimate cause of all beings [*Gott als das letzte Subjekt und die letzte Ursache aller Wesen*], is called *Ensoph* (the Infinite, of which, considered in itself, nothing can be predicated<sup>58</sup>). But in relation to the infinite number of beings, positive attributes are ascribed to him; these are reduced by the Kabbalists to ten, which are called the ten *Sephirot*. (LB 84| Au. 105)

Thus, it turns out that Maimon shared the view of God as the material cause of the world (i.e., his substance-mode pantheism) with both Spinoza and “the Kabbalists.”

### 3·4

Given the close affinity between Spinoza and the view of God as the material cause of the world, one would expect Maimon to mention Spinoza in his discussion of material causation in the 69th chapter of *Give'at ha-Moreh*, but he does not. Following his suggestion that God is the material cause of the world, Maimon allocates the next couple of pages of *Give'at ha-Moreh* (110–114) to a detailed summary of the third and fourth dialogues of Giordano Bruno's (1548–1600), *Cause, Principle and Unity* (1584).<sup>59</sup> Though Bruno's claims are frequently vague, he apparently shares with Spinoza and Maimon the mode-substance pantheism which asserts that there is a self-subsisting substratum that underlies all beings. Some of the claims that Maimon quotes from Bruno can be easily misattributed to Spinoza.<sup>60</sup>

In as much as sensual things, as such, share one physical subject, so must ideas share one intellectual being. And the two mentioned must also share a subject which comprises the two of them. For all beings are necessarily caused by the existence of the other, apart from the substance whose existence is necessary, that is, that its existence is comprised within itself.<sup>61</sup>

Why then this long quotation from Bruno and complete silence about Spinoza? If Spinoza was good enough to be mentioned in the *Lebensgeschichte* as a proponent of the view that God is the material cause of the world, why was he not mentioned in Maimon's discussion of the same topic in *Give'at ha-Moreh*?

<sup>58</sup> Since all the predicates are predicated on the *Ensoph* (or the material cause of the world), but in itself, it is formless, i.e. it lacks any predicates.

<sup>59</sup> Maimon did not have Bruno's Italian text before his eyes but rather relied on Jacobi's translation and summary of *Cause, Principle and Unity*, which Jacobi attached as an appendix to the second edition (1789) of *Über die Lehre des Spinoza, in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (in *Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*, 245–282).

<sup>60</sup> The possibility of Bruno's influence on Spinoza was widely discussed in 19th century literature. Fredrick Pollock, a leading Spinoza scholar of the period, writes: “Spinoza's relation to Giordano Bruno has been exaggerated in some quarters and ignored in others. It is enough to say, however, that there is no external probability against Spinoza having been acquainted with the main contents at least of Bruno's work, and the internal evidence in favour of it is all but irresistible. It may remain, perhaps, an open question whether Spinoza had read the actual text of Giordano Bruno, though there is no reason why his knowledge should not have been at first hand. *There can also be little doubt the terminology of Spinoza's metaphysics (as to attributes and modes) was suggested by Giordano Bruno.* But of Spinoza's precision in the use of terms there is no trace in Bruno, who is everything but systematic” (Fredrick Pollock, “Notes on the Philosophy of Spinoza,” *Mind* 3 [1878]: 198, my emphases). Cf. R. Avenarius, *Über die beiden ersten Phasen des spinozistischen Pantheismus* (Leipzig, 1868).

<sup>61</sup> GM 114| CM 267. Cf. Scholz, *Hauptschriften*, 216, and Giordano Bruno, *Cause, Principle, and Unity*, Robert de Luca, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 75.

## 3.5

The reasons for the omission of Spinoza in *Give'at ha-Moreh* become clear when we look at the political context of the book's publication. Maimon was commissioned to write *Give'at ha-Moreh* as part of Berlin *Haskala's* (the Jewish Enlightenment movement's) endeavor to propagate its ideas. The choice of commissioning a commentary of Maimonides' (philosophical) *magnum opus* was not coincidental. Maimonides, the man, could never be implicated as a heretic, while his text, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, could hardly be interpreted along strict orthodox lines. Therefore, a commentary on the *Guide* seemed to have been a very natural choice for propagating the ideas of the Jewish Enlightenment and its view of Judaism. Given this context, it is likely that any discussion of Spinoza, needless to say a support of his views, could have easily resulted in quite a scandal.

## 3.6

Maimon is consistent in omitting Spinoza's name almost throughout *Give'at ha-Moreh*. Most conspicuous is the omission of Spinoza in the "Outline of the History of Philosophy" (GM 6–181 CM 153–68), which Maimon prefixes to *Give'at ha-Moreh*,<sup>62</sup> and in Maimon's discussion of the identity of the intellect, the intellecting subject, and the intellected object (Ch. 68). In the *Lebensgeschichte* Maimon unmistakably alludes that this identity doctrine leads to Spinozism.<sup>63</sup> Maimon mentions Spinoza's philosophy only at the very end of the book (Ch. 74), and even there he resorts to quite unusual tactics to express his opinion. Instead of presenting his own view of Spinoza, Maimon translates extensive parts of chapters 13 and 14 of Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden*, in which Mendelssohn discusses and criticizes Spinoza. Indeed, chapter 14 is framed as a dialogue with a Spinozist.<sup>64</sup> If one looks carefully at these long quotations, one observes an odd pattern: Maimon allocates much more space for the defense of Spinozism and much less space for its criticism. Without explicitly asserting even a single word in favor of Spinoza, Maimon succeeds in turning Mendelssohn's critical text into a moderate defense

<sup>62</sup> In this short introductory chapter to *Give'at ha-Moreh*, Maimon presents the main philosophical systems from the Pre-Socratics, through Plato, Aristotle, medieval Arabic science, Copernicus, Kepler, Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, Kant, and finally, himself. The omission of Spinoza is very evident in this context.

<sup>63</sup> "Worauf dieses führt, kann der denkende Leser leicht einsehn" (LB 271).

<sup>64</sup> Was this dialogue a reconstruction of the discussions Mendelssohn had with Maimon about Spinoza? In his autobiography Maimon writes that he was so convinced of the truth of Spinoza's philosophy "that all the efforts of Mendelssohn to change my opinion were unavailing" (LB 1571 Au. 219). Not many among Mendelssohn's contemporaries would openly identify themselves as Spinozists. Furthermore, in the *Morgenstunden*, Mendelssohn puts in the mouth of the Spinozist the claim that the threefold identity of the intellect, intellecting subject and intellected object leads to Spinozism (MJA, vol. 3/2, 116). Maimon associated the threefold identity doctrine with the view of God as the material cause of the world already in *Hesheq Shelomo*, written before Maimon met Mendelssohn (*Hesheq Shelomo*, 285. Cf. section 3.2 above). I am not aware of any text of Lessing which makes the association of the threefold identity doctrine with Spinozism, and thus it is at least possible that "the Spinozist" of the *Morgenstunden* was not Lessing, but (also) Maimon. If the actual conversations between Mendelssohn and Maimon were the source of these chapters of the *Morgenstunden*, this could also explain why Maimon quotes these chapters at length, both in *Give'at ha-Moreh* and in *Über die Progressen der Philosophie*.

of Spinoza.<sup>65</sup> For the same purpose Maimon employs another rhetorical device. In the *Morgenstunden*, Mendelssohn cites Wachter's (1699) association of Spinoza with the Kabbalah in order to cast both as *Schwärmerei*.<sup>66</sup> Maimon quotes Mendelssohn's claim about the affinity between Spinoza and the Kabbalah, but he omits Mendelssohn's characterization of both as *Schwärmerei*, and adds that "this opinion is very deep" [GM 1611 CM 321]. Given their different audiences, Mendelssohn's original claims and Maimon's translation of these claims achieve quite opposite ends. Mendelssohn, writing in German for the circles of the *Aufklärung*, identifies Spinozism with "kabbalistische Schwärmerei" in order to denounce Spinozism (and, as a result, clear himself of any association with Spinoza). Maimon, writing in Hebrew for a traditional Jewish audience, makes the same identification in order to vindicate Spinoza.

### 3.7

Returning to the question of Maimon's omission of Spinoza in his discussion of material causation in *Give'at ha-Moreh*, it is difficult to doubt that this omission was politically motivated. Had Maimon mentioned Spinoza in this discussion, he either would have had to resort to a fake denouncement of Spinoza, or would have jeopardized the reception of his book among more traditional Jews. Giordano Bruno, whose name was hardly known among the Jewish audience, was far less problematic. Yet, even when Maimon quotes Bruno, he seems to be alert to possible political implications, and therefore tries to assign to Bruno's view of God as the material cause of the world a certain timbre of respectability.<sup>67</sup>

Obviously, it was not in Bruno's writings that Maimon came across these pantheistic views for the first time. As we have already seen, Maimon entertained the idea of God as the material cause of the world already in his early, semi-Kabbalistic manuscript, written in 1778 in Poland. It is quite probable that Maimon first came across these views during his stay in the house of one of the founders of Hassidism, the "*Maggid* of Mezricz," who apparently advocated similar pantheistic doctrines.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.8

In 1792, the Prussian Royal Academy announced a prize contest on the question: "What progress has metaphysics made since Leibniz and Wolff?" Maimon's essay for this contest draws upon several historical predecessors of Leibniz, as well as

<sup>65</sup> This practice probably invoked some protest from Mendelssohn's friends (since it could make the impression that Mendelssohn was actually defending Spinoza). In *Über die Progressen der Philosophie*, written two years after *Give'at ha-Moreh* (and published later as part of Maimon's *Streifereien*), Maimon deals again with Mendelssohn's critique of Spinoza. Here, however, he warns his readers: "Doch will ich hier niemandem etwas aufdringen. Alles, was ich also zum Behuf des Verschrienen Systems sagen werde, soll bloß auf meine Rechnung geschrieben werden" (GW IV 591 *Streifereien*, 37).

<sup>66</sup> MJA, vol. 3/2, 104. On Wachter, see note 57 above.

<sup>67</sup> Where Bruno claims that his view was shared by the Pythagoreans, Anaxagoras and Democritus (*Cause, Principle and Unity*, 83), Jacobi translates: "So lehrten die Weisesten Männer unter den Griechen" (Scholz, *Hauptschriften*, 218). Maimon, however, translates: "This is the true belief of the *wholesome* [*shlemim*] among the sages of Greece" (GM 1141 CM 267–8). The Hebrew adjective, *shalem* (wholesome), connotes a certain respectability that is inconsistent with heterodoxy.

<sup>68</sup> For Maimon's account of his stay at the court of the *Maggid*, see LB 105–118! Au. 154–71.

upon Kant's critique of dogmatic metaphysics. The more interesting part of the essay, however, is Maimon's comparison between the systems of Leibniz and Spinoza. With regard to this part of the essay, Fichte will later write:

That, when fully thought out, the system of *Leibniz is nothing other than Spinozism*, is shown in a valuable essay by Solomon Maimon: *Über die Progressen der Philosophie*.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, in this essay Maimon sets out, again, to defend Spinoza from the criticisms leveled by Mendelssohn in the *Morgenstunden*. This time, however, he claims much more explicitly that Leibnizianism is Spinozism clothed in a politically respectful dress-up:

I will show here that the difference which Mendelssohn finds between the two systems [of Spinoza and Leibniz] and the difficulties he advances against Spinoza's system, belong to the *exoteric exposition in philosophy* (of which, in our days—thank God!—there is no need to make use).<sup>70</sup>

I will return soon to Maimon's claim about the "exoteric exposition in philosophy."

Following a defense of Spinoza's denial of the possibility of finite substances and of Spinoza's alleged denial of the reality of movement, Maimon summarizes the dispute:

All these criticisms against Spinoza are based on one single misunderstanding. Spinoza claims with Parmenides "only the real [*das Reelle*]" which is comprehended by the understanding, exists. What is linked with the real in a finite being is nothing but a limitation [*Einschränkung*] of the real, a negation to which no existence [*Existenz*] can be ascribed. The Leibnizian claims the exact opposite: only the limitation, as the individual in the object [*als das Individuelle im Objekt*], exists.

The limitation, says [the Spinozist], cannot be thought without the real, whereas the real can be thought without the limitation. Furthermore, the real is the same in all beings, consequently there is only one substance. [The Leibnizian] claims that though limitation cannot be thought without the real, yet in itself, it [can] be thought as such.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, a limited, for-itself existing being [*ingeschränktes für sich bestehendes Wesen*] is possible, and it is precisely through this limitation [that it can be] an individual thing, that is, [it can be] actual [*wirklich*]. (GW IV 63! *Streifereien*, 41)

Although the last two sentences of this passage are relatively opaque, I believe they should be understood in the following way. While the Spinozist makes finite things to be merely limitations of the substance ("the real"), and thus makes the finite things fully dependent upon the substance, the Leibnizian preserves some independence for a finite substance ("for-itself existing being" [*für sich bestehendes Wesen*]). The Leibnizian agrees that an adequate description of any finite substance will have to refer to the infinite substance (whose limitation is the finite substance). However, for the Leibnizian, finite substances are considered concep-

<sup>69</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, Peter Heath and John Lachs, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 102, my emphasis.

<sup>70</sup> "Ich werde hier zeigen, daß die Verschiedenheit, die er zwischen beiden Systemen findet, und die Schwierigkeiten, die er Spinozas System entgegen setzt, *zum exoterischen vortrage in der Philosophie* (wovon man Gottlob! in unseren Zeiten keinen Gebrauch zu machen nöthig hat) gehört" (GW IV 59! *Streifereien*, 37, my emphasis).

<sup>71</sup> "Dieser behauptet, Einschränkung kann zwar nicht ohne das Reelle, an sich aber an [=als?] dasselbe gedacht werden, folglich ist ein eingeschränktes für sich bestehendes Wesen möglich." The syntax of this sentence is a bit odd.

tually self-sufficient, if we look at them separately, without taking into account the harmony between all finite substances.<sup>72</sup>

It is not difficult to detect in Maimon's description of the Spinozist position his own claim that God is the material cause of the world. In both cases, God—or the substance—is the infinite substratum, while all other things are his limitations, or determinations (i.e. properties, forms, attributes, modes). Obviously, Maimon's view of God as the material cause of the world is *not* consistent with Leibnizianism insofar as it makes finite things *inhere* in God. Thus, it seems rather clear with which side in this dispute—Leibniz's or Spinoza's—Maimon agrees.<sup>73</sup>

In fact, Maimon seems to take Leibnizianism as a soft version of Spinoza, motivated by the political fear from being cast as heresy and atheism.<sup>74</sup> By criticizing Mendelssohn for the use of “exoteric presentation in philosophy” in the latter's attempt to disassociate Leibniz from Spinoza, Maimon alluded to a certain *esoteric* understanding of Leibniz, an understanding that Mendelssohn (like most other Leibnizians) would never admit. Indeed in another passage in the *Über die Progressen der Philosophie*, Maimon alludes quite clearly to his understanding of the nature and origin of Leibniz's views:

Leibniz speaks therefore (regardless of his *exoteric* method) *not of things in themselves as simple substances, but only of fictions.*<sup>75</sup>

In the preceding pages Maimon had argued that a consistent understanding of Leibniz's metaphysics leads one to view the monads as merely fictions.<sup>76</sup> What kind of picture do we get if the monads turn out to be fictions while Leibniz's God is left as the only real Substance? To use a quote from Maimon's discussion of the very same topic: “Where to this leads, the intelligent reader can easily see.”<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Sylvain Zac, *Salomon Maimon—Critique de Kant* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), 15–16.

<sup>73</sup> Yet, with regard to the dispute between the Leibnizian and the Spinozist about the creation or eternity of the world, Maimon adds that Kant's first antinomy showed that both sides were wrong (GM 1661 CM 327–28, GW IV 631 *Streifereien*, 41).

<sup>74</sup> In *Über die Progressen der Philosophie* Maimon presents a dispute between Leibniz and Locke regarding the nature of bodies and minds. In this context, Maimon suggests that Leibniz tried to conceal his view of bodies as merely expressions of the activity of the minds (and of minds as limited expressions of God's thought) in order to avoid the suspicion of Spinozism: “Leibniz wollte sich desgleichen über seine Meinung nicht gerade zu erklären, um dadurch dem Verdacht des Spinozismus auszuweichen” (GW IV 471 *Streifereien*, 25).

<sup>75</sup> “Leibniz spricht also (seiner exoterischen Lehrart ungeachtet) nicht von Dingen an Sich als einfachen Substanzen, sondern bloß von Fiktionen” (GW IV 521 *Streifereien*, 30).

<sup>76</sup> Alternatively, Maimon suggests that the monads are merely limitations of God's thought. Maimon finds it hard to believe that a thinker like Leibniz was satisfied with the watch-maker metaphor as the ground for the pre-established harmony: “Die Art diese Harmonie begreiflich zu machen, daß man Gott als einen Uhrmacher, und die Monaden als die von ihm verfertigten ähnlichen und zugleich aufgezogenen Uhren vorstellt, ist populair, exoterisch, und zu kras als daß man in Ernst eine solche Vorstellungsart diesem großen Manne beilegen sollte” (GW IV 41–421 *Streifereien*, 19–20). Maimon argues against the watchmaker metaphor that such a view explains the harmony through the merely arbitrary will of God.

<sup>77</sup> Compare Atlas, “Solomon Maimon and Spinoza,” 275: “Maimon fully realizes that a consistent philosophy of Leibniz, based on the principle of sufficient reason, must lead to the same conclusions as the system of Spinoza. The recognition of the dependence of finite things on the absolute infinite reality must lead to the denial of the substantiality of finite individual things. The realization of the logical consistency of such a position did not make him oblivious of the actual position of Leibniz as a metaphysical pluralist who maintained the metaphysical reality of finite individual things.” Unlike Atlas—who does not pay any attention to Maimon's talk about the exoteric exposition of Leibniz's

## 4. THE LAW OF DETERMINABILITY

## 4.1

The claims Maimon attributes to the Spinozist—that the “limitation” is dependent upon “the real” while “the real” is not dependent upon the “limitation,” and that God is the material cause of the world—bear a significant resemblance to Maimon’s Law of Determinability [*Satz der Bestimmbarkeit*], the central axis of his positive philosophy.

Maimon’s Law of Determinability is supposed to govern the *content* of *synthetic* judgment just as the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle govern the *form* of *both analytic and synthetic* judgments. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant contemplated the possibility of such a principle that would govern the content of synthetic judgments (A571–73/B599–601). Kant calls this law “The Principle of Thoroughgoing Determination” [*Das Principium der durchgängigen Bestimmung*]. The principle states that “of every pair of possible [and opposite] predicates, one of them must apply” to every single subject. Consequently, every single thing would be determined with regard to any pair of opposite predicates. According to Kant, the principle necessitates the idea of the sum total of all possibility, and as further result, the concept of an *ens realissimum*. Kant argues, however, that this derivation is not valid insofar as it relies on an application of a principle that is limited to the domain of possible experience to the realm of all things [A583/B610].

Despite the similar name and the common aim of providing a principle for synthetic thinking, Maimon’s law and Kant’s principle are significantly different, both with regard to their content, as well as in their realms of applicability. For Maimon, only mathematical judgements pass the test of his Law of Determinability.

## 4.2

According to Maimon, thoughts can be classified into three main kinds:

Formal [*formel*] thoughts, which are *a priori* and are governed merely by the law of non-contradiction. Formal thoughts are general and do not designate any specific object.

Actual [*wirklich*] thoughts, in which an empirical synthesis (such as, “yellow gold” or “black line”) are merely given to us, while our intellect is not able to decipher any necessary connection between the subject and the predicate. Both the subject and the predicate can be thought independently from one another. For Maimon, such a synthesis whose reason we cannot conceive, is merely arbitrary. To that extent, Maimon argues, an actual synthesis such as “red line” is not different from a nonsensical synthesis such as “sweet line:” in both the relation of the predicate to the subject is merely arbitrary.<sup>78</sup>

Real [*real* or *reell*] thoughts are syntheses of two concepts which are generated *a priori* by the intellect, according to Maimon’s Law of Determinability. In a real synthesis (such as “straight line” or “irrational number”), there is a necessary con-

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philosophy—I suspect that Maimon viewed Leibniz (and not just his followers) as trying to hide the Spinozistic implications of his system.

<sup>78</sup> GW II 931 VT 93.

nection between the subject and the predicate: the subject can be thought independently from the predicate, while the predicate cannot be thought without the subject. This asymmetrical relation between the subject and the predicate points out a reason for the synthesis (i.e., in order to think of the predicate, one must conceive it in relation to its subject). Real synthesis designates (or rather, creates<sup>79</sup>) an object.

#### 4.3

The three principles of the Law of Determinability are the following:<sup>80</sup>

I. In any *real* synthesis of two concepts, if concept A can be thought without concept B, while B cannot be thought without A, then B is the predicate (the determination), and A is the subject (the determinable) (e.g., in the synthesis “right angle” “right” necessarily involves the concept “angle,” while “angle” can be thought without “right;” therefore, “angle” is the subject, and “right” the predicate) (GW II 841 VT 84).

II. A predicate cannot belong to two different subjects (e.g., “right” cannot be a determination of both “angle” and “line”) (GW II 86–71 VT 86–7).<sup>81</sup>

III. The predication/determination relation is transitive, i.e., if A is a predicate of B, and B a predicate of C, then A is also (indirectly) a predicate of C (GW II 3871 VT 387).<sup>82</sup>

Real syntheses (which follow the Law of Determinability) were cherished by Maimon, because he thought that through these syntheses one can discover the basic categories of thought as well as generate new concepts. It seems that the desired, ultimate, result of the Law of Determinability was supposed to be a comprehensive hierarchy of the categories of thought. Each concept (or category) of this hierarchy was supposed to be predicate of a concept in the level below it, and a subject of the concepts in the level above it. Maimon considered several candidates for the role of the ultimate subject (determinable) of this hierarchy. One of these

<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Maimon argues that “in mathematics we are like God” insofar as we can create new objects by mere thought. For a discussion of this claim, see David Lachterman’s excellent article, “Mathematical Construction, Symbolic Cognition and the Infinite Intellect: Reflections on Maimon and Maimonides,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30 (1992): 497–522.

<sup>80</sup> Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the ramification of the law for the rest of Maimon’s philosophy. For a further discussion of the law, see Samuel Hugo Bergman, *The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon*, Noah J. Jacobs, trans. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 93–115; Samuel Atlas, *From Critical to Speculative Idealism—The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 146–67; and Jan Bransen, *The Antinomy of Thought—Maimonian Skepticism and the Relation between Thoughts and Objects* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 107–33. I am indebted to Oded Schechter for his elucidation of the distinction between Maimon’s Law of Determinability and Leibniz’s predicate in subject principle. I follow his interpretation of most aspects of the law (see his paper, “The Logic of Speculative Philosophy and Skepticism in Maimon’s Philosophy: *Satz der Bestimmbarkeit* and the Role of Synthesis,” in *Salomon Maimon: Rational Dogmatist, Empirical Skeptic*, Gideon Freudenthal, ed. [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003], 18–53), yet I disagree with him on the question of whether Maimon assumes any point of departure for the conceptual hierarchy generated by this law. While Schechter maintains that Maimon’s logic does not have such a beginning, I believe Maimon was considering several candidates for that role. Among these are God (see above Maimon’s claim that “God is the ultimate subject of all things”), “the I,” and “consciousness in general” (See Bergman, *The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon*, 164–65).

<sup>81</sup> Though see VT 244–45 (GW II 244–45) for an important reservation concerning this claim.

<sup>82</sup> The last principle is the more trivial of the three, and for that reason I will not discuss it here.

was the concept of God. As we have already seen, Maimon suggests that God is the material cause of the world, or “the ultimate subject of all things.” In his later works, Maimon considers both “the I” and “consciousness in general” for that very role.<sup>83</sup>

Yet, Maimon was quite pessimistic about the possibility of carrying out this project. His reliance on exclusively mathematical examples in his discussion of the law is not coincidental. He suggests that it is only in mathematics that we can find real syntheses that follow the law of determinability.

#### 4.4.

Commenting on the first element of the law (the subject-predicate asymmetry), Richard Kroner, the prominent historian of German Idealism, writes:

It is not hard to recognize Spinoza’s famous definitions in the concepts of the independence of the determinable and the dependence of the determination. But insofar as Spinoza’s substance would in time become the I of German Idealism, one can hardly underestimate the importance of Maimon’s adoption of this fundamental thought of Spinoza’s *Ethics*.<sup>84</sup>

The definitions to which Kroner refers are those of substance and mode. Spinoza writes:

By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through *itself* [*in se est, et per se concipitur*], that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing from which it must be formed. (*Ethics*, Part 1, Definition 3)

By mode I understand the affections of substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived [*in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur*]. (Definition 5)<sup>85</sup>

Kroner’s suggestion that the asymmetric dependence of the predicate upon the subject is an echo of Spinoza’s view of the substance-mode relation is strongly supported by Maimon’s characterization of Spinoza’s philosophy.<sup>86</sup> As we saw, Maimon explains the Spinozist position as holding that “the limitation cannot be thought without the real, whereas the real can be thought without the limitation.” There is not much difference between this claim and (I).

While one may object to Kroner by claiming that the asymmetry of the subject-predicate (or substance-mode) dependence is widely accepted and is not specific to Spinoza, I think Kroner is right insofar as both Spinoza and Maimon seem to take this asymmetric dependence quite *radically*, so that *nothing* about the determinable could be explained by its determination.<sup>87</sup> This point will be demonstrated shortly.

<sup>83</sup> See Bergman, *The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon*, 164–65.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1921), vol. 1, 360.

<sup>85</sup> Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 408–9.

<sup>86</sup> In some places Maimon explicitly presents the determinability relation as a relation between a substance and its accident: “The thought of a triangle, i.e., ‘a space enclosed by three lines,’ is a *real* one, for ‘space’ is being thought here as *something standing in its own* (substance) and the determination ‘three lines’ as *inhering* in it (accident)” (Salomon Maimon, *Letters of Philaetes to Aenesidemus* in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of German Idealism*, George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris, trans. and eds. [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000], 165).

<sup>87</sup> Descartes seems to hold a moderate version of the substance-mode asymmetry. He clearly affirms this principle: “[I]t is part of the nature of a mode that, although we can readily understand a substance apart from a mode, we cannot vice versa clearly understand a mode unless at the same time we have a conception of the substance of which it is a mode” (*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, J.



Maimon's second claim—that two subjects cannot share a predicate—is much more surprising, to say the least. Yet, this claim as well has a very close parallel in Spinoza's metaphysics:

In nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute. (*Ethics*, Part 1, Prop. 5)

This doctrine of Spinoza plays a key role in the construction of his metaphysics: without it, Spinoza could not have proven the central doctrine of substance monism.

But even if there is a significant similarity between Spinoza's claim that substances cannot share attributes, and Maimon's claim that subjects cannot share predicates, one may still object that the resemblance is merely external, because the internal logic behind each principle is quite different. In order to evaluate this claim, it might be helpful to look at the justification these two philosophers provide for their respective claims.

#### 4.5

Spinoza's reasons for holding that substances cannot share attributes are:

i) The principle of Identity of Indiscernibles (*Ethics*, Part 1, Demonstration of Prop. 5).

ii) The priority of the substance to its modes (*Ethics*, Part 1, Definitions 3 and 5, and Proposition 1), i.e., the asymmetric dependence of modes on the substance.

Relying on (i) and (ii) Spinoza proves his thesis in the following manner: if A and B were two different substances sharing the same attributes, then—according to (i)—A and B must be distinguished by their properties. Since they share the same attributes, they cannot be distinguished by their attributes.<sup>88</sup> However, they cannot be distinguished by their modes as well, since this would mean that the substances are dependent upon the modes in order to be distinguished, which would contradict (ii) (*Ethics*, Part 1, Demonstration of Prop. 5).

Maimon provides three proofs for his claim that subjects cannot share a predicate. Two of the proofs rely on the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, but they fall short of achieving their goal.<sup>89</sup> The third argument seems to be more successful. Here Maimon assumes the existence of two independent concepts (i.e., neither one is a predicate of the other), A and B, and a third concept P which is a predicate of both A and B. Since P, as a predicate, depends upon its subjects, then the thinking of P would involve both A and B. Therefore, it seems that under *some* circumstances (namely, the thinking of P), there would be a necessary connec-

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Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, & D. Murdoch, trans. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], vol. 1, 298f AT VIII B, 350). However, if Descartes wishes to avoid holding the view that the difference between substances is a primitive difference, he must hold that finite substances are individuated *through their modes*. (Descartes could not rely on attributes in order to individuate substances, since he holds that different substances share the same attribute.)

<sup>88</sup> Spinoza fails to consider the possibility of substances sharing only *some* of their attributes. For an attempt to fill this gap see Michael Della Rocca, "Spinoza's Substance Monism," in Olli Koistinen and John Biro, eds., *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17–22.

<sup>89</sup> See GW II 88–90, 379–80f VT 88–90, 379–80; cf. Bergman, *The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon*, 100–101.

tion between A and B, so that the one could not be thought without the other. However, this would contradict our original assumption that A and B are mutually independent (GW VI 22–23| *Die Kategorien des Aristoteles*, 10–11).

The underlying assumption of the last proof is that if P is a property of both A and B, it cannot tell us *anything* new about the relation between A and B, insofar as A and B are said to be prior to (i.e., conceivable independently of) P. To that extent, Maimon seems to share Spinoza's strong understanding of the substance-mode (or, subject-predicate) asymmetrical dependence. Though the arguments provided by Maimon and Spinoza are somewhat different, it seems that there is a very similar pattern of thought behind them, i.e., they all rely upon the same metaphysical principles: the priority of the substance to its modes and the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles.

#### 4.6

So far, I have been trying to show the similarities between Maimon's Law of Determinability and the principles of Spinoza's metaphysics.<sup>90</sup> Now I want to say a word about how this law deviates from Spinoza, or rather, deviates from Maimon's acosmistic *understanding* of Spinoza.<sup>91</sup> The view that Maimon ascribes to Spinoza that "the real is the same in all beings, consequently there is only one substance" takes all things to be *direct* properties, or determinations, of the one substance. Maimon, by contrast, suggests a certain hierarchy of concepts. While he would probably accept that all determinations are ultimately grounded in one subject, he will suggest that it is not that they are all *direct* determinations of the ultimate

<sup>90</sup> One significant difference between Spinoza's metaphysics and Maimon's Law of Determinability is that the former deals with a *metaphysical* priority of the substance over its modes, while the latter deals with a *logical* priority of the subject over its predicates. Maimon's deep interest in the nature of synthetic *a priori* judgments is alien to Spinoza's thinking. Yet, the way Maimon tries to reformulate and answer this Kantian problem seems to draw much upon the substance-mode asymmetry in Spinoza.

<sup>91</sup> Note that in the following lines I will be speaking of Spinoza as *he was perceived by Maimon*. As I have already alluded to, I find the view of Spinoza as a Neo-Eleatic (or as an acosmist), which was shared by Maimon and most of his contemporaries, a misconception of Spinoza's philosophy. Variant versions of this interpretation were advocated by some leading 20th century Spinoza scholars, such as Wolfson and Joachim, and there is at least one important line in Spinoza's thought that may support it: Spinoza's functional and rather weak notion of individuality (See *Ethics*, part 2, definition 7 and the definition following proposition 13 of the same part). Since, for Spinoza, finite things are individuals, one may conclude that both individuality and finite things are not real for Spinoza. Nevertheless, this point is outweighed by the following considerations, which are inconsistent with the view of finite things as illusory. Firstly, Spinoza's notion of the third (and highest) kind of knowledge in which one "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (*Ethics*, part 2, proposition 40, second scholium) is not limited to the knowledge of infinite things. It is hard to see how we can have adequate ideas of finite things if they were merely illusions. Secondly, Spinoza's pivotal doctrine of parallelism (*Ethics*, part 2, proposition 7) demands a certain isomorphism between ideas and the modes of all attributes; but, if the finite modes were not really distinguished from each other, it is not clear what units would bear the isomorphic relation with their ideas. Thirdly, in several places Spinoza argues that we gain better knowledge of God the more we know natural phenomena (see for example, *Theological-Political Treatise*, Chapter 4 [Gebhardt III/60/9–10]). But if natural phenomena were merely illusory, it is not clear how they could contribute to our knowledge of God. Fourthly, the view of finite modes as mere illusions seems to make finite modes modes of thought, rather than modes of the substance (this last argument was put forth by Francis S. Haserot in his article, "Spinoza's Definition of Attribute," *The Philosophical Review* 62:4 [1953]: 512)

subject, but rather that they are only related to it indirectly and *transitively*. The motivation behind this move of Maimon might have been an attempt to avoid Spinoza's alleged "acosmism," which he thought set a clear dichotomy between the real and unique substance, on the one hand, and the illusory manifold of modes, on the other hand. By suggesting his elaborated hierarchy of concepts, Maimon seems to find a way to derive the Many from the One, and thus to save the Many. Furthermore, this hierarchy seems to set the first step in the development of speculative logic in German Idealism. Although the later systems of speculative logic will be significantly different from the hierarchy of Maimon's Law of Determinability,<sup>92</sup> they will share with Maimon the attempt to avoid Spinoza's acosmism, not by denying the deep unity of being, but rather by deriving the Many from the One.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

### 5.1

In this paper I have discussed the main aspects of Maimon's relation to Spinoza. I have avoided several relevant issues, which I believe to be of secondary importance.<sup>93</sup> I have laid out the political context of Maimon's engagement with Spinoza, and pointed out the events which led Maimon to adopt a more cautious approach in his discussion of Spinoza. In his autobiography, Maimon relates another occasion in which he was charged with Spinozism. It was in 1786–87 in Breslau, three or four years after he was censured by Mendelssohn for the "dangerous opinions and systems" he was spreading. Upon arriving in Breslau, he was received quite coldly by the local Jews. Maimon did, however, succeed to strike a friendship with the poet Ephraim Kuh, through whose investigations it turned out that the reason for this reception was several letters sent from the circles of the Jewish Enlightenment in Berlin:

The general tenor [of the letters] was, that I was seeking to spread pernicious systems [*Schädliche Systeme*]<sup>94</sup> . . . I confessed to Kuh that, during my first sojourn in Berlin as a young man without experience or knowledge of the world, I had felt an irresistible impulse to communicate to others whatever truth I knew; but I assured him that, having for some years become wise by experience, I went to work with great caution, and that therefore this charge was now wholly without foundation. (LB 1951 Au. 270–71)

Apparently, it was this "great caution" that made Maimon present himself—in the late 1780s and early 1790s—as a Leibnizian rather than a Spinozist. Maimon did adopt some important doctrines from Leibniz,<sup>95</sup> yet, Maimon's view of God as the

<sup>92</sup> In Hegel's logic a category always leads to another, singular, category. Thus, instead of Maimon's converging hierarchy, Hegel suggests a linear explication of the absolute, one category after the other.

<sup>93</sup> Of such a kind are Maimon's doctrine of the World-Soul [*Weltseele*] and his suggestion to replace Kant's three ideas with the idea of an infinite intellect (which was apparently supposed to *unify* Kant's three ideas). I hope to discuss these topics in another place.

<sup>94</sup> Murray's translation, "pernicious *opinions*," is imprecise.

<sup>95</sup> The most important of which is the doctrine of the differentials. See Bergman, *The Philosophy of Solomon Maimon*, 59–68. Note, however, that Maimon presents this doctrine only in his *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* (1790) and in *Über die Progressen der Philosophie* (1792). Apparently, he abandoned this doctrine later.

material cause of the world, as well as his view of Leibnizianism as a politically motivated soft version of Spinozism, make clear the central and overriding role of Spinoza's influence on Maimon's philosophy.

## 5.2

I have argued that the most important Spinozistic element in Maimon's philosophy is his pantheistic view of God as the material cause of the world. Maimon's adoption of Spinoza seems to be of crucial importance for the later developments of German Idealism, not only because he was the first to try to wed Spinoza and Kant<sup>96</sup> (a path which was followed by Schlegel, Schelling and Hegel), but even more so because of the new understanding of Spinoza which emerged from his writings. We have seen earlier Maimon's claim that Spinoza's philosophy should be called "acosmism" insofar as it affirms the sole existence of God, and is thus the exact opposite of atheism (See 2.6 above). It is this very claim which, a quarter of a century later, Hegel will employ in his own defense of Spinoza. Hegel never mentions Maimon in this context and it is hard to prove that Hegel borrowed the view of Spinoza as an "acosmist" directly from Maimon rather than through an intermediary text.<sup>97</sup> However, there seems to be a striking similarity between Maimon's discussion of Spinoza in the *Lebensgeschichte* and Hegel's discussion of Spinoza in the *Lectures in the History of Philosophy*.

The relationship between God and the finite, to which we belong, may be represented in three different ways: firstly, only the finite exists, and in this way we alone exist, but God does not exist—this is atheism; the finite is here taken absolutely, and is accordingly the substantial. Or, in the second place God alone exists; the finite has no reality, it is only phenomena, appearance. To say, in the third place, that God exists and we also exist is a false synthetic union, an amicable compromise. It is the popular view of the matter that the one has as much substantiality as the other; God is honoured and supreme, but finite things also have Being to exactly the same extent. Reason cannot remain satisfied with this "also," with indifference like this [*Die Vernunft kann bei solchem auch, solcher Gleichgültigkeit nicht stehenbleiben*] . . .

[According to Spinoza] There is therefore no such thing as finite reality, it has no truth whatever; according to Spinoza what is, is God, and God alone. Therefore the allegation of those who accuse Spinoza of atheism are the direct opposite of the truth; with him there is too much God [*Das Gegenteil von alledem ist wahr, was die behaupten, die ihm Atheismus Schuld geben; bei ihm ist zu viel Gott*].<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Or, as Sylvain Zac put it: "Il [Maimon] aurait aimé associer Kant à Spinoza et prouver, grâce à Spinoza, l'intelligibilité du monde" (*Salomon Maimon—Critique de Kant*, 21).

<sup>97</sup> In his editorial preface to *Benedicti de Spinoza Adnotationes ad Tractatum Theologico Politicum* (The Hague: 1802), Christophorus Theophilus (Gottlieb) de Murr quotes Maimon's characterization of Spinozism as acosmism, as well as Maimon's view of Leibnizianism as a middle position between Spinozism and atheism. It is likely that Hegel came across Murr's preface while he was assisting H.E.G. Paulus in the preparation of the new edition of Spinoza's *Opera* (Jena: 1802–3). A few years earlier, in 1799, Fichte responded to the charge of atheism by claiming that his own philosophy should be called acosmism rather than atheism. See *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacobs, Hans Gliwitzky, and Erich Fuchs, eds. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964), vol. I/6, 54.

<sup>98</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), 162–63. Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 97, 226 (§§ 50 and 151). Following Hegel, Heine marks: "No one spoke more sublimely about the Deity than Spinoza. Instead of saying

The *atheistic* system of theology, if one may call it so, dismisses the use of the notion of first cause altogether. All effects are related to particular known or unknown causes. Furthermore, in this system one cannot even assume a *connection* between the various effects, since otherwise one would have to search for the *reason* of this connection beyond it.

The Spinozistic system, on the contrary, supposes one and the same substance as immediate cause [*Ursache*] of all various effects [*Wirkungen*], which must be considered as predicates of one and the same subject...

In this [Spinoza's] system unity is real, but diversity is merely ideal. In the atheistic system it is just the other way around. *The diversity is real* and grounded in the very nature of things, while the unity, which one observes in the order and regularity of nature, is consequently only coincidental; through this unity we determine our arbitrary system for the sake of our knowledge.

It is inconceivable how one could make the Spinozistic system into atheism since these two systems are the exact opposites of each other. Atheism denies the existence of *God*, Spinozism denies the existence of the *world*. Rather, Spinozism should be called "acosmism."

Leibniz's system holds the middle between the two aforementioned positions. In it all particular effects [*Wirkungen*] are related immediately to particular causes [*Ursachen*]. However, these various effects are thought as connected in one system, and the cause of this connection is sought in a being beyond it. (Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, 216–7)<sup>99</sup>

Both Maimon and Hegel present three principal views about the existence of God and the world of finite things. Both texts take atheism and Spinozism to stand at the opposite poles of this logical space: atheism denies the existence of God, Spinozism denies the existence of the world of finite things. Both Maimon and Hegel regard the middle position—which affirms the existence of both God and finite things—as a popular and gross view.<sup>100</sup> Maimon explicitly identifies this middle view with Leibniz's position. Given Hegel's stress that the middle view grants equal substantiality to God and the finite things (as well as Hegel's characterization of this view as "popular"<sup>101</sup>), it is quite likely that Hegel too refers primarily to Leibniz here.

### 5.3

It is hard to overestimate the importance of the shift from the 18th century perception of Spinoza as an atheist to the new understanding of Spinozism in German Idealism as a deeply religious view, or as Novalis put it, a philosophy of a

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that he denied God, one must say that he denied man" ("Religion and Philosophy in Germany," in Heinrich Heine, *The Romantic School and Other Essays*, Jost Hermand & Robert C. Holub, eds. [New York: Continuum, 1985], 175).

<sup>99</sup> The translation is mine. I have quoted parts of this passage in sections 2.5 and 3.3 above.

<sup>100</sup> In the current passage, Maimon does not charge Leibniz with exoteric and popular writing motivated by political concerns. However, I have already shown (See section 3.8, nn. 70, 74 and 76) that this was indeed Maimon's judgment of Leibniz's position.

<sup>101</sup> In his discussion of Leibniz in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel points out that a certain theologian "brought it as a charge against Leibniz—a charge which he [Leibniz] never denied—that his philosophy was written in a popular form" (Vol. 3, 329). Hegel also suggests that "the philosophy of Leibniz seems to be not so much a philosophic system as an hypothesis regarding the existence of the world, namely how it is to be determined in accordance with the metaphysical determinations and the data and assumptions of the *ordinary conceptions*, which are accepted as valid" (Vol. 3, 330, my emphasis). Cf. *ibid.*, 330, 343 and 348 for additional references to Leibniz's philosophy as popular. Note, that Hegel himself affirms the existence of both the finite and the infinite, just like the "popular" view. However, unlike the latter, Hegel rejects the mutual indifference between the finite and the infinite, and demands that the finite be derived from the infinite.

“God intoxicated man.”<sup>102</sup> Arguably, this new understanding of Spinoza begins with Maimon’s discussion of Spinozism in his *Lebensgeschichte* (1792/3).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Novalis Schriften*, Richard Samuel, Hans Joachim Mähl, and Gertrud Schulz, eds. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960–1988), vol. III, 651 (note 562). Cf. Beiser, *German Idealism*, 418–21.

<sup>103</sup> I am greatly indebted to Robert Adams, Karl Ameriks, Fred Beiser, Michael Della Rocca, Florian Ehrensperger, Miriam Feinstein, Gideon Freudenthal, Michah Gottlieb, Karsten Harries, Warren Zev Harvey, Martina Kolb, Sam Newlands, Oded Schechter, Peter Thielke, Eric Watkins, Allen Wood and the two referees for their very helpful corrections and comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Needless to say, any remaining errors should be attributed to me alone. I would also like to thank the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for a dissertation scholarship which supported me while I was working on this article.