

# Maimonides and the Habitus Concept

EREZ NAAMAN  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

A major trend that characterized the naturalization of the Aristotelian habitus concept in the medieval Islamic world was its application to religious discourses. This trend was not limited to the works of Muslim thinkers. The present communication focuses on the ways in which Maimonides used the concept, naturalizing it in the religious Jewish system.

In an earlier article I studied the appropriation and naturalization in the Islamic world of the Aristotelian habitus concept—the idea of a well-established disposition acquired through habituation—and attempted to outline its long trajectory from the ninth to the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> One of the two remarkable naturalization trends I emphasized engaged habitus within a religious Islamic framework or contextualized it Islamically, i.e., in a religious way. The present communication has a different, yet strongly related focus. The naturalization of habitus in the Islamic religious tradition by Muslim thinkers was followed by its naturalization in the Jewish religious tradition. This development was driven by the great interest shown by Jewish thinkers, notably Maimonides (1138–1204), in philosophy in its Greco-Arabic garb, and in applying it to their religious thought. The introduction of the concept into the Jewish system required the translation of *malaka* (habitus) and other Arabic terms into Hebrew. Thus, non-arabophone Jewish communities living outside the Islamic world became familiar with the concept, too.

When al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) Sufi-inspired ethical work *Mīzān al-ʿamal* was translated into Hebrew in the thirteenth century by Abraham Ibn Ḥasday of Barcelona and titled *Mozne sedeq*, the Arabic *malaka* was rendered in the Hebrew translation as *qinyan* (and *middah qinyanit*),<sup>2</sup> “acquisition.” *Malaka* was translated as *qinyan* also in the Hebrew translations of Averroes's middle commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* (ca. 1232) and on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1321).<sup>3</sup> Note that the Hebrew *qinyan* shares the same root (*q-n-y*) and

1. “Nurture over Nature: Habitus from al-Fārābī through Ibn Khaldūn to ‘Abduh,” *JAOS* 137.1 (2017): 1–24. For the ways in which habitus was discussed and understood by Aristotle and notable medieval thinkers of the Islamic world, I refer the reader to this article.

2. *Qinyan* (lit. possession) was at times used in medieval Hebrew translations of Arabic philosophical works to render *mulk* (possession), not *malaka*. Although context could be helpful, this inconsistency might lead to some confusion if the Arabic source is not checked. Thus, while the Jewish thinker Saʿadia Gaon (882–942) used *mulk* to render one of Aristotle's ten categories (“having,” *Categories* 1b25–2a4; in Ishāq b. Ḥunayn's translation we find *an yakūna lahu*), Yehudah Ibn Tibbon translated it with *qinyan* in his translation (dated 582/1186); see respectively *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*, ed. S. Landauer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1880), 103; *Ha-emunot ve-ha-deʿot*, ed. D. Slutzki (Leipzig: C. W. Vollrath, 1863), 53. Yehudah Ibn Tibbon had made the same translation choice (in the same context) in his 1161 rendering of Baḥya Ibn Paquda's *al-Hidāya ilā farāʿīd al-qulūb* (written ca. 1081) from Arabic into Hebrew (Ar. ed. Y. Qafih [Jerusalem: Yad Mohri Qafih, 2001], 59; Heb. tr. *Ḥovot ha-levavot*, ed. A. Tsifroni [Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut, 1959], 123).

3. Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge and Aristotle's Categories*, ed. H. A. Davidson (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1969), 56, 66–67 (*qinyan* and *ʿinyan* for *malaka* and *ḥāl*), 78, 80–84 (*heʿder* and *qinyan* for *ʿadam* and *malaka*); Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics in the Hebrew Version of Samuel Ben Judah*, ed. L. Berman (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999), 78 (*qinyan* for *malaka*), 125 (*ha-teʿarim ve-ha-qinyanim* for *ḥālāt* in the sense of “dispositions

meaning with the Arabic *qunya*, “acquired disposition,” which occasionally appears as a synonym of *malaka*.<sup>4</sup> Despite the common tendency of medieval translators from Arabic to Hebrew to use the identical Semitic root in the target language when possible,<sup>5</sup> in this case the Hebrew *melakhah* must have been rejected because its lexical meaning is “craft,” “profession,” “work.” *Melakhah* was the translation of the Arabic *ṣināʿa*, “craft,”<sup>6</sup> and since the crafts were often described as *habitus*, establishing it as a technical term for *habitus* could have led to confusion with the craft itself.<sup>7</sup> *Qinyan* is a calque, based on the shared meaning of the Arabic root *m-l-k* and the Hebrew *q-n-y*, “to possess.” This apt translation was probably inspired by the use of the Arabic *qunya* as a synonym of *malaka* and by the use of the Hebrew root in the sense of “possession,” as in Genesis 14:19.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, *qinyan* for *malaka* was coined by the translator, philosopher, and commentator Samuel Ibn Tibbon (ca. 1165–1232). He included *qinyan* in the “glossary of foreign words” (*perush ha-millot ha-zarot*) attached to his Hebrew translation of Maimonides’s *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* (*The Guide of the Perplexed*), commenting briefly that in this coinage he followed the Arabic.<sup>9</sup> The first edition of Ibn Tibbon’s Hebrew translation of *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* (1204; rev. ed. with the glossary was finished in 1213) was quickly followed by a rival translation made by the poet and litterateur Yehudah al-Ḥarizi (d. 1225).<sup>10</sup> The latter’s translation was more elegant but less precise, and displayed a lack of consistency in rendering the philosophical terms. According to his own “glossary of foreign words,” al-Ḥarizi’s term for *malaka* is *qeniyah*, “acquisition” (pl. *qeniyot*), which shares the same root with *qinyan*. Still, inconsistent translator that he was, he frequently used *qinyan* for *malaka*, too.<sup>11</sup> Understandably,

---

and *habitus*”), 262 (*tekhunah* for *hayʾa*). Similarly to *hayʾa* in Arabic, its Hebrew translation *tekhunah* can denote *habitus*.

4. Al-Ghazālī, *Sefer mozne ṣedeq*, ed. J. Goldenthal (Leipzig: Gebhardt and Reissland, 1839), 54, 80. For a comparative study of al-Ghazālī’s work with its Hebrew translation, see A. Shaḥlān, “Kitāb mizān al-ʿamal li-Abī Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī [wa-]tarjama al-ʿibriyya Mozne ṣedeq: al-Mizān bayn al-mafāḥim al-islāmiyya wa-l-taqālid al-yahūdīyya,” in *Ghazālī: La raison et le miracle. Table ronde Unesco, 9–10 décembre 1985* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987), 93–117. Ibn Ḥasday’s translation contributed to the diffusion of elements of Sufi mysticism among Christians and Jews in Europe; see L. Ferre, “Ibn Ḥasday, Abraham ben Samuel ha-Levi,” *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. N. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 2010) (accessed online March 11, 2013) <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com>.

5. D. H. Baneth, “Ha-rambam ki-mtargem divre ʿatmo be-hashvaʾah ʿim metargemav,” *Tarbits* 23 (1952): 180, 188; M. Goshen-Gottstein, *Tahbirah u-milonah shel ha-lashon ha-ʿivrit she-bitḥum hashpaʾatah shel ha-ʿarvit* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ben-Zvi, 2006), 25–26 and *passim*.

6. E.g., for *ṣināʿa* in Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, ed. Davidson, 31, 149.

7. E.g., *ve-ha-ʿinyan ba-davar ha-zeh hu kemo ha-ʿinyan be-yeter ha-melakhot . . . lo yasur me-ʿasot zeh tamid ʿad she-yashuv bo middah qinyanit qalah u-muṭbaʿat mah she-hayah bi-tḥilah be-hekhereaḥ u-vigiʿat melakhah* (“The case here is, as in the other *crafts* . . . he will keep doing it continuously, until what has been done initially by force and exhausting *work* becomes natural and easy [to do] by a *habitus*”); al-Ghazālī, *Sefer mozne ṣedeq*, ed. Goldenthal, 79–80 (trans. of al-Ghazālī, *Mizān al-ʿamal*, ed. S. Dunyā [Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1964], 252).

8. “And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor (*qoneh*) of heaven and earth” (King James Bible).

9. Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. by Shemuel Ibn Tibbon with four commentaries by Efodi, Shem Tov, Crescas, and Abravanel (Warsaw: Goldman, 1872), 1: 6; the literal approach to translation is typical of Ibn Tibbon’s works in general; see J. Robinson, “Samuel Ibn Tibbon,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (*Spring 2010 Edition*), ed. E. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/tibbon/> (accessed March 12, 2013); Baneth, “Ha-rambam,” 188–89.

10. Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, tr. Yehudah al-Ḥarizi, ed. L. Schlosberg, 3 vols. (London: Typ. Maurice, 1851–1879); see Robinson, “Samuel Ibn Tibbon”; on al-Ḥarizi’s life and literary career, see Y. Sadan, “Rabbi Yehudah al-Ḥarizi ke-tsomet tarbuti,” *Peʿanim* 68 (1996): 16–67.

11. Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, ed. Schlosberg, 1: vi (*qeniyot* glossed), 50 (*qinyan*, *qinyanim*), 59 (*qinyan*, *qinyanim*), 88 (*qinyan*, *qeniyot*); 3: 13 (*qeniyah*, *qeniyot* (!), *qeniyot*).

Ibn Tibbon's translation became the standard Hebrew version and as such a great source of influence on generations of Jewish philosophers. Hence, *qinyan*, not al-Ḥarizi's *qeniyah*, became the standard Hebrew translation of *malaka*.

Slightly before finishing the first edition of *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, Samuel Ibn Tibbon translated into Hebrew Maimonides's introduction to the Mishnah's Tractate Avot (completed 1202). This introduction, known as *Shemonah paraqim la-Rambam* (Eight Chapters of Maimonides), is part of his first major work, a commentary on the Mishnah, the earliest systematic compendium of Jewish law. His commentary in Judeo-Arabic was started in Fez around 1161 and finished in Egypt in 1168, when Maimonides was thirty. His introduction revolved around ethics, the main topic of the tractate, whose adages are reminiscent of Hellenistic thought. This provided Maimonides with the opportunity to introduce Greek ethical precepts (in their Arabic-Islamic garb) into his Commentary that otherwise mainly concerned legal topics.<sup>12</sup> In chapter four (On Healing the Soul's Illnesses), Maimonides applied the Aristotelian ethical precept that excellence is an intermediate between the two bad extremes of excess and deficiency.<sup>13</sup> He wrote: "Good deeds are an intermediate between two bad extremes, one of which is excess, the other is deficiency. Excellent qualities are habitus in the middle way (Judeo-Arabic, *hay'āt nafsāniyya wa-malakāt mutawassiṭa*, Heb. trans., *tekhunot nafshiyot ve-qinyanim memuṣa'im*) between two bad others (*hay'atayn/tekhunot*), one of which is too much, the other is too little."<sup>14</sup> To acquire the right habitus (*hay'a/tekhunah*), Maimonides, like al-Ghazālī, recommended the practical remedy of inducing a person to stick to its opposite for a while. Both thinkers illustrated it first by the example of inducing the stingy person to become a squanderer until he has generosity established in him.<sup>15</sup> This type of remedy had been prescribed by Aristotle.<sup>16</sup>

The way Maimonides gave the Greco-Arabic concept a Jewish color to agree with the religious nature of the Mishnah is much like al-Ghazālī's. While advocating the adherence to the intermediate, al-Ghazālī adduced supportive evidence from the Quran and hadith. Similarly, Maimonides stressed that the precept to adhere to the intermediate, which he advocated, was exactly what the Torah (*sharī'a*) and rabbinic literature prescribe, adducing textual evidence for that.<sup>17</sup> While the ethical doctrine of the intermediate is originally Aristotelian, Maimonides appropriated it from al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl al-madani*.<sup>18</sup> When it comes to naturalization, however, the present case shows that his approach was the same as al-Ghazālī's.

12. J. Kraemer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 164, 183–84.

13. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. C. Rowe, intr. and comm. S. Broadie (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 116–18 (1106a15–1107a25).

14. *Mūsā Maimūnī's (maimonides') Acht Capitel*, ed. and tr. (of Judeo-Arabic original) M. Wolff, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1903), ט-י, 15–16; Maimonides, *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (Shemonah Perakim): A Psychological and Ethical Treatise*, ed. and tr. (of Samuel ibn Tibbon's Hebrew version) J. Gorfinkle (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1912), 19 (Heb.), 54–55 (Eng.). In chapter five, *malaka/qinyan* is used one more time. The acquisition of the intellectual habitus necessary to distinguish between demonstrative syllogisms and others, wrote Maimonides, is only a tool to know the truth of God's existence: ed. Wolff, ט, 38; ed. Gorfinkle, 32 (Heb.), 71 (Eng.); on the right way as the mean between two extremes, cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Sefer ha-mada'*, ed. and tr. M. Hyamson (Jerusalem: Qiryah Ne'emanah, 1962), 47a–48a (hilkhot de'ot, chapter one).

15. Ed. Wolff, ט-י, 19–20; ed. Gorfinkle, 22–23 (Heb.), 59 (Eng.); al-Ghazālī, *Mizān al-'amal*, ed. Duniyā, 251–52; idem, *Sefer mozne šedeq*, ed. Goldenthal, 78–79; idem, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2005), 943.

16. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 121–22 (1109a20–1109b30); cf. al-Fārābī, *al-'māl al-falsafiyya*, ed. J. Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-Manāhil, 1992), 1: 245 (in *Kitāb al-Tanbih 'alā sabīl al-sa'ada*).

17. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 938–39; ed. Wolff, טז-יז, 23–33; ed. Gorfinkle, 24–29 (Heb.), 63–68 (Eng.).

18. H. Davidson, "Maimonides' *Shemonah paraqim* and Alfarabi's *Fuṣūl al-madani*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 31 (1963): 39; idem, "The Middle Way in Maimonides' Ethics," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 54 (1987): 31–32.

This may be explained by the common needs and goals of two thinkers, greatly inspired by the Aristotelian tradition, who wrote religious works for their respective Jewish and Muslim audiences.<sup>19</sup> The naturalization of Greco-Arabic philosophical material in *Eight Chapters* had far-reaching impact; its translation into Hebrew by Ibn Tibbon introduced it to non-arabophone Jewish communities and made it the standard introduction to philosophical ethics in Hebrew throughout the later Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup>

In *Guide of the Perplexed*, which was his philosophical masterpiece, Maimonides used habitus in several places in more than one context:

(1) The dispute over the divine attributes, which was a topic initially discussed by Muslim theologians that inspired Jewish thought. Maimonides strongly rejected the belief that there existed in God real attributes (*ṣifāt*) like knowledge and power, and he showed (pt. one, chap. 52) that each of the five types of attribution possible from a logical point of view failed to apply to God in view of his unity and incorporeality.<sup>21</sup> Maimonides divided the third type, quality (*kayfiyya*), into four (based on *Categories*, chap. eight), the first of which was habitus (*malaka* and *hayʿa*, used synonymously). He argued that every well-established moral trait, health condition, and profession was a habitus in humans by virtue of their having a soul, yet God had no soul and thus no habitus could apply to him.<sup>22</sup>

In part one, chapter 59, Maimonides asserted that using normal predication when talking about God (e.g., “He is Wise”) was absurd and anthropomorphic. The only feasible way to come closer to apprehending God was to be clear about what he was not, not by affirming anything—even a human perfection—of him. What constituted perfection with reference to humans was not so with reference to God. Maimonides explained that all perfections (*kamālāt*) were certain habitus (*malakāt/qinyanim*), and not every habitus existed in every

19. For a case study that shows significant similarity between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides and the possible influence of the former on the latter, see A. Eran, “Al-Ghazali and Maimonides on the World to Come and Spiritual Pleasures,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 8 (2001): 137–66; on the influence exerted by al-Ghazālī over medieval Jewish thinkers, see M. Zonta, “Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on Judaic Thought,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), ed. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/arabic-islamic-judaic/> (accessed March 28, 2015).

20. Robinson, “Samuel Ibn Tibbon.” Maimonides gave a much shorter account of the ethical sense of habitus (*malaka*) in his early introductory treatise on logic, *Maqāla fī ṣināʿat al-manṭiq* (“Maimonides’ Arabic Treatise on Logic Introduction,” ed. I. Efron, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 [1966]: 155–60, 2); this treatise was translated into Hebrew by Moses Ibn Tibbon (d. ca. 1283), who rendered *malaka* as *qinyan* (*Beʿur millot ha-higgayon* [Warsaw: D. Slutski, 1865], 10).

21. For a concise account of Maimonides’s view of the divine attributes, see Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 381–82; the attributes’ question in medieval Islamic thought is discussed extensively by Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), 18–19, 97–234. The Aristotelian *ḥāl* and *malaka* contributed to the Muʿtazilī Abū Hāshim’s theory of modes (*aḥwāl*), which he applied to the problem of divine attributes. On that, see Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 193–97.

22. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*, ed. S. Munk and I. Joel (Jerusalem: Junovitch, 1929), 78–79: *mithl waṣṣfika l-insān bi-malaka min malakātihi al-naẓariyya aw al-khulqīyya aw al-hayʿāt allatī tūjadu lahu bimā huwa mutanaffis ka-qawlika fulān al-najjār aw al-ʿaṭif aw al-mariḍ wa-lā farq bayna qawlika l-najjār aw qawlika l-ʿālim aw al-ḥakīm al-kull hayʿāt fī l-nafs wa-lā farq bayna qawlika l-ʿaṭif aw qawlika l-raḥīm li-anna kull ṣināʿa wa-kull ʿilm wa-kull khulq mutamakkīn hiya hayʿa fī l-nafs wa-hādhā kulluhu bayyin li-man zāwala ṣināʿat al-manṭiq aysar muzāwala . . . wa-lā huwa taʿālā dhā naḥs fa-takūnu lahu hayʿa fa-talḥaḥuhu l-malakāt. Here, Ibn Tibbon deviated from his systematic approach to translating technical terms, rendering *malaka* as *ṭevaʿ*, “quality” or “habit.” Still, *hayʿa* is translated, as usual, as *tekhunah* (Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. Ibn Tibbon, 1: 73; cf. p. 6, where he glossed *qinyan* as *ṭevaʿ*). It should be noted that Ibn Paquda used the Arabic *ṭabʿ lāzim*, “inseparable quality,” to signify habitus, which was later translated into Hebrew by Ibn Tibbon as *ṭevaʿ qavvaʿa*, “permanent quality” (*al-Hidāya ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*, 292; *Ḥovot ha-levavot*, 410).*

possessor of a habitus.<sup>23</sup> This was understood by medieval commentators on Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of *Guide of the Perplexed*, such as Shem Tov (d. 1493) and Asher Crescas (wrote before 1438), as suggesting inter alia that since all perfections are habitus, they did not exist in a person prior to their development into actuality. That is, the habitus were in potential only, and the thought that something had not existed in God, before he brought it into actuality by prolonged practice, must be rejected. Every habitus not existing in every possessor of a habitus refers as well to the potentiality of the habitus before it becomes actual, a process that cannot be ascribed to God.<sup>24</sup> Maimonides's warning that one should not attribute human perfections to God because all perfections are habitus should also be seen in light of his above-mentioned statement that God has no soul and thus can have no habitus.

(2) The acquisition of knowledge through a dedicated study process. In part one, chapter 34, Maimonides discussed the prerequisites for the study of metaphysics and the reasons preventing many from achieving knowledge of it. One of the obstacles was the necessity to grasp the preliminaries before delving into metaphysics proper, a process on which Maimonides commented: "There are many speculative matters that, albeit not imparting knowledge of the premises of metaphysics, train the mind and obtain for it the habitus (*malakal qinyan*) of inference and knowing the truth in matters of its essence."<sup>25</sup>

(3) Criticism of Muslim theologians' (*mutakallimūn*) views.<sup>26</sup> One of the errors of the *mutakallimūn*, according to Maimonides (pt. one, chap. 73, 7th prem.), was their regarding privations of habitus (*a'dām al-malakāt/he'dere ha-qinyanim*; e.g., blindness is the privation of sight) as accidents that God created continuously in a body. This was absurd, he wrote, since it then follows that the accident of death (as opposed to life) was continuously created by God in the dead; if this were not the case, death would not last.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere (pt. three, chap. 10), Maimonides took the *mutakallimūn* to task for regarding privation and habitus (*'adam wa-malakalhe'der ve-qinyan*) as two contraries created by God. This argument had serious implications since God's creation of evil, like blindness or death, followed from it. Maimonides argued that privation neither needed nor had an agent, since it was created only by accident. Thus, in the case of a person putting out the light at night, it is said that he has created darkness, but this can be said merely loosely. For this person has only removed a certain habitus and did not create its corresponding privation, which is not an existent thing. Maimonides's proclaimed purpose here was to clarify that God's creation was all good, that evil was not created by God, and that perceptible evil manifested through privations of habitus. Matter, which God brought into existence, was by nature related to privation, hence the reason for corruption and evil.<sup>28</sup>

23. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, ed. Munk and Joel, 94; Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. Ibn Tibbon, 1: 88.

24. Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. Ibn Tibbon, 1: 88–90.

25. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, ed. Munk and Joel, 50; Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. Ibn Tibbon, 1: 53; cf. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and Abū 'Alī Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil wa-l-shawāmil*, ed. A. Amin and A. Şaqr (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'lif, 1951), 331.

26. Maimonides spoke of the *mutakallimūn* as if they were one entity that formed a theological system, without specific references to the actual spectrum of opinions voiced by different *kalām* thinkers. Michael Schwarz attempted to match Maimonides's depiction of their views, as represented in twelve premises, with extant *kalām* texts ("Who were Maimonides' Mutakallimūn? Some Remarks on *Guide of the Perplexed* Part 1 Chapter 73," in *Maimonidean Studies*, ed. A. Hyman [New York: Yeshiva Univ. Press, 1991–93], 2: 159–209; 3: 143–72). He found out that only some of the premises were confirmed by the extant evidence.

27. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, ed. Munk and Joel, 142–43; Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. Ibn Tibbon, 1: 120.

28. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, ed. Munk and Joel, 315–17; Maimonides, *Sefer moreh nebukhim*, Heb. tr. Ibn Tibbon, 3: 13–14. Maimonides discussed privation and habitus in his *Maqāla fī ṣinā'at al-manṭiq*; see

Although he did not state it explicitly, Maimonides implied that the *mutakallimūn* failed to grasp the way things are opposed to one another as elucidated by Aristotle in *Categories* (chap. ten: “Those not distinguishing between privation and habitus and two contraries”), where (12b26–13a35) Aristotle argued that privation and habitus were not and could not be opposed as contraries.<sup>29</sup> Earlier, Maimonides had blamed the *mutakallimūn* for forcing their own opinions on reality, so their failure may not have been one of understanding.<sup>30</sup> By elaborating on the Aristotelian opposition of privation and habitus, Maimonides sought to reject theological opinions that, albeit very rarely made by Jewish thinkers,<sup>31</sup> ran counter to his religious and philosophical positions. In this discussion, Maimonides adduced evidence from the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature to prove that his philosophical analysis was in agreement with religion. This is, of course, characteristic of *Guide of the Perplexed* and the aims of its writer. Moreover, Maimonides’s strong belief in free will and in the fact that God did not wish to change every individual’s nature in a miraculous way to agree with his will<sup>32</sup> suited well the philosophical emphasis on the power of humans to change their behavior ingrained in the ethical sense of habitus. It should be noted, however, that *Guide of the Perplexed* differs substantially from the *Eight Chapters* in not considering habitus in the middle way as ethical virtues and not advocating an ethical regimen to acquire the intermediate. Instead, as observed by Herbert Davidson, humans should imitate God by performing acts as he does, not through intermediates (or any quality in the soul) but dispassionately. This higher ethical standard does not entail acquisition of habitus at all.<sup>33</sup>

Regardless of his having come to reject habitus in the middle way as ethical virtues in *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides’s sophistication in employing the concept and naturalizing it in Jewish thought is very impressive. It is certainly more original, creative, and complex than his earlier use of the concept in *Eight Chapters*, which concentrated on its ethical sense and took a very practical approach. In contrast, in *Guide of the Perplexed* the concept is employed in key theological discussions, especially those concerning the divine attributes and the question of evil. In these discussions Maimonides used analytically and masterfully a larger range of the concept’s logical and ethical senses. In engaging habitus within a religious (Jewish) framework in both works, Maimonides followed the path of Ibn Sinā and al-Ghazālī, who contextualized it in a religious (Islamic) way before him.<sup>34</sup> In this respect Maimonides’s contribution should be seen as part of a broader creative naturalization trend in the medieval Islamic world, and not as an isolated case.

---

“Maimonides’ Arabic Treatise,” ed. Efron, לֵא-לֵב, Heb. tr., נִיּוֹן (qinyan) (n. 20 above); cf. *Al-Farabi’s Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle’s De Interpretatione*, tr. F. W. Zimmermann (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 28–30; Sa’adia Gaon, *al-Amānāt wa-l-i’tiqādāt*, ed. Landauer, 53–55 (n. 2 above); and Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text* = *al-Ilāhiyyāt min al-Shifā’*, tr. M. E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 2005), 339–47.

29. In the Arabic translation, *Maṅṭiq Aristū*, ed. ‘A. R. Badawī (Kuwait: Wikālat al-Maṭbū‘āt, 1980), 1: 64–69.

30. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-hā’irīn*, ed. Munk and Joel, 143.

31. While these opinions were originally made by Muslims, the Mu’tazilī theological school did not believe that God created evil, and Ash’arism, Māturīdism, and traditionalism resisted the limitation of the omnipotent God’s control of the world. Each of these three theological orientations differed in its own way from the Mu’tazilī by privileging God’s omnipotence over his omnibenevolence; see S. Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 52 and passim. Among medieval Jewish thinkers, the Jewish philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician Abraham Bar Ḥiyyā of Barcelona (1070–1136) was in the minority, believing that God is the source of both good and evil; see Harry Blumberg, “Theories of Evil in Medieval Jewish Philosophy,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972): 151–52.

32. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-hā’irīn*, ed. Munk and Joel, 386–87.

33. Davidson, “The Middle Way,” 66–68, 72.

34. See Naaman, “Nurture over Nature.”