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Michael Friedländer's Pioneering English Translation of the *Guide*

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In the author's note following her recent celebrated novel *A Guide for the Perplexed*, Dara Horn writes: "The most accurate English translation available [of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*] is that of Shlomo Pines, and Pines's edition is the indispensable entry point for English-language readers embarking on a philosophical study of this work. Quotations from the *Guide* that appear in this novel are drawn . . . from an older translation by M[ichael] Friedländer due to that translation's greater accessibility."[1] According to this award-winning novelist's judgment, Pines's 1963 translation of the *Guide* is more "accurate," while Friedländer's 1885 translation is more "accessible." In other words, Pines's translation is more suitable for study in a philosophy seminar, but Friedländer's is more suitable for quotation in a popular novel. Reading Horn's note, I recalled a conversation I had more than three decades ago with the distinguished Israeli Bible scholar Nehama Leibowitz, who asked whether the greater accuracy of Pines's translation really and truly justified replacing Friedländer's old translation, which she thought read more smoothly.

1. Horn 2013, 338–39.

Literary individuals, like Horn and Leibowitz, appreciate Friedländer's felicitous translation of Maimonides' *Guide*. However, it would be an exaggeration to see the relationship of Friedländer's English translation to Pines's as similar to that of al-Ḥarizi's Hebrew translation to Ibn Tibbon's. Friedländer was much less a poet than al-Ḥarizi; and Pines was much less a literalist than Ibn Tibbon. Friedländer and Pines had one thing in common: an extraordinary knowledge of classical, Oriental, and European languages. Neither spoke English as a native language.[2]

Michael Friedländer, the author of the first English translation of the *Guide*, was born in Jutrosin, Prussia, in 1833. In 1850, he moved to Berlin, then the capital of Prussia, and studied Talmud under Rabbis Jacob Joseph Oettinger (1780–1860) and Elhanan Rosenstein (1796–1869), and classics, Oriental languages, and mathematics at the University of Berlin.[3] He received his doctorate from the University of Halle in 1862. His dissertation, "The Ancient Persian Kings" ("De veteribus Persarum regibus"), was a study of the history of the ancient Persian kings, based on classical Greek sources, like Herodotus, which have the advantage of chronological proximity, and medieval Arabic sources, like Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, and Abū al-Fidāʾ, which have the advantage of geographical proximity.[4] In 1865 he was invited to London to assume the position of principal of Jews' College, which he held until his retirement in 1907. He died in London in 1910. Among his many works are a commentary on the Song of Songs, written in German (1867); a critical edition and English translation of Abraham Ibn Ezra's *Commentary on Isaiah* (1873); *Essays on Ibn Ezra* (1877); *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy* (1888); and *The Jewish Religion*

2. In references to the *Guide*, I will cite the English translations by Friedländer (1881–85; abridged edition, 1904) and Pines (1963); the Arabic text by Munk and Joel (1930/31); the medieval Hebrew translations by Ibn Tibbon (1981), al-Ḥarizi (1851–79), and Falaquera (2001); the modern Hebrew translations by Qafih (1972) and Schwarz (2002); and the French translation by Munk (1856–66).

3. It is remarkable that Salomon Munk, the author of the French translation of the *Guide* (1856–66), had also studied with Rabbi Oettinger. Often Oettinger is caricatured as being a narrow-minded traditionalist and an enemy of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. He is famously quoted as saying: "If you want to know what kind of snuff Rashi used, ask Zunz; if you want to understand what Rashi wrote, ask me." Nonetheless, two of his leading students studied Oriental languages at European universities and translated the *Guide*. On Munk's translation, see Paul Fenton's contribution to this volume.

4. See Friedländer 1862, 1, on the methodological point about chronological and geographical proximities.

(1891). His annotated translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* was completed in 1885.[5]

The English translation of the *Guide* was initiated by the short-lived Hebrew Literature Society, London. Friedländer was not the original translator. The introduction to the *Guide*, part I, was translated by Hermann Gollancz (1852–1930), and *Guide*, part I, chapters 1–25, was translated by Joseph Abrahams (1855–1938). Friedländer assumed responsibility for the translation beginning with *Guide* I 26. Part I of the *Guide* was published in 1881. Parts II and III appeared in 1885.[6] The translation has been reprinted many times and is still in print.

Friedländer not only wrote copious and helpful notes to his translation, but also provided historical and analytical discussions. In his introduction to part I, he presents a biography of Maimonides, along with a long excursus on his alleged early conversion to Islam, and a detailed and astute survey of the contents of the *Guide*. In his introduction to part III, he discusses the Arabic text of the *Guide*; its Hebrew, Latin, and other translations; its commentaries; and the controversies concerning it. These introductions reflect impressive erudition and keen analytic ability.

A caveat is required here. In 1904, Friedländer published what he frankly called a "cheap edition" of his translation, designed "to bring the work of Maimonides within the reach of all students of Theology and Jewish Literature."[7] In this popular edition, Friedländer omitted his learned notes, helpful parenthetical references to Hebrew words and phrases, and also other materials, such as the excursus on Maimonides' alleged conversion to Islam. He also changed the name of the book from the more correct "The Guide *of* the Perplexed" to the more accessible "The Guide *for* the Perplexed." It is this "cheap edition" of Friedländer's translation that is currently in print, and the more valuable early annotated editions can be found today only in libraries and bookstores dealing in rare books. This said, it should also be noted that the 1904 edition contains some consequential corrections in the translation; for example, the phrase *jāhil min jumhūr al-rabbānīn* (*Guide* I, intro.) is translated as "an ill-informed *Theologian*," not "an ill-informed *rabbi*";[8] the phrase *ahl al-lugha* (*Guide* I 8) is translated as "authors," not

5. Theodor H. Gaster, "Biographical Sketch," in Friedländer 1946, i–viii.

6. Friedländer 1:iv, 2:v–vi.

7. Friedländer 1904, v.

8. Friedländer 1:13; 1904, 5; Munk-Joel 5, line 27. Ibn Tibbon: *sakhal me-hamon ha-rabbanim*; al-Ḥarizi: *ish kesil me-hamone ha-rabbanim*; Munk 1:15: "un ignorant du vulgaire

"orators";[9] and the phrase *al-maʿqūlāt al-uwal* (*Guide* I 34) is translated as "common sense," not "innate ideas."[10]

Preparing his abridged version of the *Guide* in 1904, almost four decades after having assumed the principalship of Jews' College, Friedländer may have come to realize that his British readers, unlike German readers, were not interested in lengthy scholarly annotations. Indeed, it is likely that Friedländer had learned this lesson much earlier. Part I of his *Guide*, completed in 1881, contains many notes on the precise meanings of Arabic words and phrases, while parts II–III, completed in 1885, contain many fewer such notes. Indeed, the difference between part I and parts II–III is obvious at a glance, even to one who knows no Arabic, Hebrew, or English: every single page of part I is adorned with ample annotations featuring Arabic and Hebrew quotations printed in Hebrew letters and occasionally in Arabic letters; not one page of parts II or III bears quotations in Hebrew or Arabic letters. After the publication of part I, Friedländer may have been impressed that few British readers appreciated his profuse notes on Arabic terminology, and those few could probably read French and consult the notes to Salomon Munk's 1856–66 Arabic text and French translation. It is also possible that the Hebrew Literature Society, which was in the process of going out of business, no longer had the resources for Hebrew or Arabic fonts.

Friedländer had supreme respect for Munk's text and translation. He refers to Munk reverently as "the regenerator of the *Guide*."[11] Regarding Munk's text and apparatus, Friedländer comments: "In [Munk's] notes . . . the various readings of the different MSS. are discussed with such completeness that the student . . . is spared the trouble of consulting the MSS., and he will find little to add by consulting those MSS. which were not yet known

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des rabbins"; Pines 10: "an ignoramus among the multitude of Rabbanites." The Arabic *rabbānī* may mean either "divine" or "rabbinical." Friedländer's (or Gollancz's) original translation was superior to the corrected one. Cf. Qur'an 3:79.

9. Friedländer 1:51; 1904, 20; Munk-Joel 22, line 17. Ibn Tibbon: *baʿale ha-lashon*; al-Ḥarizi: *baʿale ha-lashon*; Munk 1:52: "on en fait dans notre langue"; Pines 33: "the people of our language." Maimonides seems to mean native Hebrew speakers or authentic Hebrew speakers. If so, neither of Friedländer's (or Abrahams's) translations is accurate.

10. Friedländer 1:125; 1904, 48; Munk-Joel 53, line 7. Ibn Tibbon: *ha-muśkalim ha-rishonim*; al-Ḥarizi: *ha-muśkalot ha-rishonot*; Munk 1:128 and n3: "les notions premières," "intelligibilia prima"; Pines 78: "the first intelligibles." Both of Friedländer's translations are wrong.

11. Friedländer 3:xvii.

or not accessible to Munk."[12] This may in part be an excuse for Friedländer's not always examining the manuscripts himself, but it is, I think, in larger part an honest report of his experiences in the Bodleian, the British Museum, and other libraries.

Comparing the Hebrew translations of Ibn Tibbon and al-Ḥarizi, Friedländer writes: "Ibn Tibbon's version is more accurate; he sacrificed elegance of style to the plan of conscientiously reproducing the author's work, so as not to omit even any particle, however unimportant it may appear."[13] In order to illustrate what he called Ibn Tibbon's "anxiety to retain peculiarities of the original," he refers us to a passage in Ibn Tibbon's translation of *Guide* I 58, where he parses the normally feminine Hebrew word *meṣi'ut* as masculine in order to replicate the ambiguity of a pronominal reference in the Arabic text.[14] As for al-Ḥarizi, Friedländer has this to say: "[He] was less conscientious about words and particles, and wrote in a superior style." Friedländer does not tell us which translation he prefers, but concludes: "*Vox populi* decided in favor of . . . Ibn Tibbon."[15]

When translating the *Guide*, Friedländer had the translations of Ibn Tibbon, al-Ḥarizi, and Munk open before him, cites them in his notes, and is influenced by them. However, as we shall see, he also sometimes ignores previous translations and goes his own way.[16]

In addition to the Hebrew translations of Ibn Tibbon and al-Ḥarizi, Friedländer sometimes cites the selected Hebrew translations made by Shem Tov Falaquera (ca. 1225–95) in his commentary on the *Guide*. For example, in *Guide* I 72, Maimonides writes that the divine force in the universe acts not egotistically but altruistically, like a benefactor who acts

12. Friedländer 3:ix.

13. Friedländer 3:xi.

14. Friedländer 3:xi. This passage will be discussed below. Pines and Strauss are in agreement with Ibn Tibbon about the importance of literalness. See Pines, preface, vii: "Wherever the original is ambiguous . . . , the translation has . . . attempted to preserve that very ambiguity."

15. Friedländer 3:xi–xii.

16. In the passages I examined for this study, I did not find corroboration for Simon Hopkins's charge that "much of [Friedländer's version] has been translated from Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew rather than from Maimonides' Arabic." See Hopkins 2005, 106. Although Friedländer's translation is influenced by his predecessors, in particular Ibn Tibbon and Munk, his many notes on the Arabic text reflect a concern for fidelity to the original. However, as mentioned above, this concern is much more manifest in part I of the *Guide* than it is in parts II or III. Hopkins does not cite evidence for his charge, but it is plausible he had in mind passages from parts II or III.

karama ṭibāʿin wa-faḍīlata sajiyyatin lā li-tarajjin; and Friedländer translates: "not from any selfish motive, but from a natural generosity and kindness." In a note, Friedländer cites the translations of Ibn Tibbon, al-Ḥarizi, and Falaquera, and asserts that the phrase is rendered "more exactly" by the latter. However, he is merely following Munk, who cites Ibn Tibbon and Falaquera and remarks that "la version d'Ibn-Falaquera est plus exacte."[17]

While Friedländer constantly keeps his eye on Munk's French version, he certainly does not always follow him, and often explicitly rejects his translations in his notes. Thus, in *Guide* I 29, with regard to the exegesis of Genesis 6:6, he criticizes Munk's understanding of the object in the prepositional phrase *fīhi* as referring to God not Adam;[18] in *Guide* I 73, kalamic premise 4, he asserts that Munk's translation of *min aḥadihā* as "d'un accident quelconque" "cannot be correct";[19] and in *Guide* II, preface, Aristotelian premise 24, he faults Munk for translating *bi-al-quwwa* in the sense of contingency, not potentiality.[20]

Regarding the structure of the *Guide*, Friedländer took an original approach. He notes that in the epistle dedicatory Maimonides mentions subjects he intends to teach his disciple, the addressee of the book, Joseph ben Judah. These include "esoteric ideas in the books of the prophets," metaphysics, and "the method of the Kalām." In addition, Friedländer notes, in his introduction to part I, that Maimonides mentions two other goals: the explanation of homonymous, figurative, and hybrid words in Scripture; and the explanation of allegories in it. The *Guide* thus begins with a discussion

17. Friedländer 1:305–6 and n6; Munk-Joel 133, lines 13–14. Ibn Tibbon: *li-nedivut ṭevaʿim u-le-maʿalatam loʾ le-toḥelet*; al-Ḥarizi: *baʿavur ṭevaʿ nikhbad she-yesh bo we-yitron nefesh loʾ le-tiqwah*; Falaquera 2001, 191: *li-nedivut ṭevaʿ u-le-maʿalat yeṣirah loʾ le-toḥelet gemul*; Munk 1:372: "par générosité de caractère et par une bonté innée et non pas dans l'espoir (d'une récompense)"; and see Munk 1:372n2. In Friedländer's succinct translation, the adjective "natural" modifies both "generosity" and "kindness," thus rendering both *ṭibāʿ* and *sajiyya*, which are roughly synonymous. His free translation of *lā li-tarajjin* has no precedent in his predecessors and is an example of his own distinctive approach to translating.

18. Friedländer 1:103n3; Munk-Joel 42, line 16; Munk 1:100n2. Pines (63) agrees with Friedländer, not Munk. The word *fīhi* is not translated in al-Ḥarizi, nor in some texts of Ibn Tibbon, but in others it is translated ambiguously.

19. Friedländer 1:318n2; Munk-Joel 138, line 9; Munk 1:385n2. Friedländer's criticism is unclear. He seems to be criticizing Maimonides himself for his ambiguous use of *min aḥadihā*, which could be misconstrued to mean "of either of them," i.e., either substance or accident. Friedländer translates: "no material thing can be without them," i.e., without accidents. Pines (198) translates: "no body is exempt from one of them," i.e., one of the accidents.

20. Friedländer 2:8n3; Munk-Joel 167, line 18; Munk 2:21n2. Pines (239) agrees with Friedländer, not Munk.

of homonymous, figurative, and hybrid words (I 1–70); continues with a critique of *kalām* (I 71–76); moves on to a discussion of Aristotelian metaphysics (II 1–12); and then to esoteric expositions of Genesis 1–4 (II 13–31), of Prophecy (II 32–48), and of Ezekiel 1 (III 1–7). It concludes with an "appendix" treating sundry "theological themes" (III 8–54). The plan of the *Guide*, according to Friedländer, thus reflects Maimonides' comments in his epistle dedicatory and introduction.[21]

Friedländer was critical of Maimonides' esotericism. Many medievals, like Moses Narboni, Joseph Kaspi, and Profayt Duran (Efodi), and many moderns, like Leo Strauss and Shlomo Pines, give the impression that they have understood Maimonides' esoteric doctrine, and that their task is to reveal it discreetly to their readers. Friedländer's approach is different. He often points to Maimonides' esoteric hints and feigns ignorance of their meaning, and he sometimes intimates that they may have no meaning at all and that Maimonides embraces mysteriousness for its own sake. Thus, Friedländer writes: "When . . . we examine the work itself, we are at a loss to discover to which parts the professed enigmatic method was applied. His theories concerning the deity, the divine attributes, angels, *creatio ex nihilo*, prophecy, and other subjects, are treated as fully as might be expected."[22] True, continues Friedländer, "a cloud of mysterious phrases enshrouds the interpretation of *ma'aseh bereshit* (Gen 1–3) . . . and *ma'aseh merkavah* (Ezek 1)," but the "significant words" in these biblical texts are explained in part I of the *Guide*, and "a full exposition" of the two themes is found in parts II and III.[23] Maimonides, concludes Friedländer, writes explicitly while insisting that he does not.

Friedländer suggests that Maimonides' esotericism serves as a substitute for philosophical argument. When Maimonides adjures the reader not to reveal the secrets of the *Guide*, Friedländer writes: "Maimonides increased the mysteriousness of the treatise by expressing his wish that the reader should abstain from expounding the work, lest he might spread in the name of the author opinions which the latter never held. But it does not occur to him that the views he enunciates might be themselves erroneous."[24] Friedländer remarks that other philosophers, like Saadia Gaon and Bahya Ibn Paquda, "were conscious of their own fallibility, and invited the reader to make such

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21. Friedländer 1:xli–xliii.
22. Friedländer 1:xlvii–xlviii.
23. Friedländer 1:xlviii.
24. Friedländer 1:xlix.

corrections as might appear needful." Maimonides, however, wrote with "a strong self-reliance," which discouraged philosophical debate.[25] How can one debate with an infallible author? Friedlander thus charges that there is something unphilosophical about Maimonides' authoritarian style.

Although Friedländer was educated in German universities, he acquired a British distaste for abstract metaphysics, and this is evidenced in many of his notes throughout the *Guide*. In his popular book *The Jewish Religion*, he wrote: "Abstruse metaphysical disquisitions about the essence and the attributes of the Divine Being will be avoided in the present work," because trying to understand such things is a waste of energy and time.[26]

In short, Friedländer believed in translating plainly and simply, even if the text is not plain and simple. He had little patience for the niceties of metaphysics, and preferred a clear and felicitous translation over a strictly literal if awkward one. In order to appreciate his style and method, let us look at some examples from his translation. I have divided my discussion into two sections: "No Anxiety about Accuracy" and "Political or Social."

No Anxiety about Accuracy

We begin with the passage from *Guide* I 58, mentioned previously, which, according to Friedländer, illustrates Ibn Tibbon's "anxiety" about accuracy. In this profoundly abstract metaphysical passage, Maimonides writes that the existence (*wujūd*) or essence (*dhāt*) of the divine Being (*mawjūd*) does not suffice itself with its own Being, but many existences (*wujūdāt*) emanate from it (*'anhu*).[27] This is the sort of metaphysical statement that can give one a headache. Ibn Tibbon observes that there is an ambiguity in Maimonides' writing, which in his opinion should be preserved in translation. What is the source of the emanation of the existences? To what does the pronominal suffix of *'anhu* refer? Is the source of emanation the divine *Being* or the divine *existence*? Does the pronominal suffix of *'anhu* refer to *mawjūd* or to *wujūd*? This ambiguity is able to exist because the Arabic words *mawjūd* and *wujūd* are both masculine, and thus the masculine pronominal suffix of *'anhu* could refer to either. In Hebrew, however, *nimṣa'* (Being) is masculine, and *meṣi'ut* (existence) is feminine. Therefore a word-for-word translation, such as is generally favored by Ibn Tibbon, would *not* preserve the ambiguity in Maimonides' Arabic. The only way Ibn Tibbon saw to pre-

25. Friedländer 1:xlix.
26. Friedländer 1946, 3.
27. Munk-Joel 92, lines 21–23.

serve the ambiguity was to turn the Hebrew word *meṣi'ut* into a masculine noun, and that's just what he did. In his translation, the existences "overflow from it" (*shof'ot me'itto*), and "it" may refer equally to *nimṣa'* or *meṣi'ut*. Ibn Tibbon explains his thinking in a marginal note to his translation.[28]

Friedländer, who, to say the least, took metaphysics much less seriously than did Ibn Tibbon, writes calmly about the ambiguous reference of the pronominal suffix: "It does not make any difference as regards the sense of the passage."[29] Existence, essence, Being—they're all one in God anyway, according to Maimonides. There is no anxiety in Friedländer. He translates: "The existence, that is, the essence, of this being is not limited to its own existence, many existences emanate from it."[30] In a note, he offers a more literal reading: "As regards this existing Being, it does not content itself with its existence, which is the same as its essence, that it should exist alone."[31] While in his translation Friedländer preserves Maimonides' ambiguity, in his note he clarifies univocally that the pronominal suffix of *'anhu* refers to *mawjūd* (Being), not *wujūd* (existence).

Al-Ḥarizi's Hebrew translation was also unequivocal. Like Ibn Tibbon, he used *nimṣa'* and *meṣi'ut* to translate *mawjūd* and *wujūd*, but he parsed *meṣi'ut* as feminine. The existences are emanated from the divine Being (not from the divine existence): *ne'eṣlu mimmennu* (not *mimmennah*).[32]

Similarly, Munk, using the masculine "être" for *mawjūd* and the feminine "existence" for *wujūd*, translated the sentence unequivocally: it is the divine Being (not the divine existence) that emanates the many existences: "il [*not* elle] en émane de nombreuses existences."[33]

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28. Fraenkel 2007, 317: "*An apology of the translator*. I have by necessity used here the word *meṣi'ut* as masculine, for the pronouns 'its' and 'from it' may refer to 'Being' or 'existence,' and one differs from the other. If I were to parse *meṣi'ut* as feminine, I would have decided in favor of one way. I avoided this and translated word for word." It will be noted that not only here, but also throughout his translation of the *Guide*, Ibn Tibbon parses *meṣi'ut* (and similar words) as masculine. It is often presumed that his motive was stylistic. However, judging from this "apology," it seems that his motive was the desire to preserve ambiguity. In any case, it is clear from the "apology" that translating "word for word" included, for Ibn Tibbon, preserving ambiguities.

29. Friedländer 1:210n3.

30. Friedländer 1:210.

31. Friedländer 1:210n3.

32. In al-Ḥarizi's numbering of the chapters of the *Guide*, I 58 = I 57. Regarding the translation of the Arabic *fayḍ*, Ibn Tibbon prefers *shefa'*, and Pines "overflow," while al-Ḥarizi prefers *aṣilut*, and Friedländer "emanation."

33. Munk 1:243: "L'existence de cet être, laquelle est son essence, ne lui suffit point de manière à exister seulement (lui-même), mais qu'au contraire, il en émane de nombreuses existences."

As for Pines, he translated: "The existence of this being, which is its essence, suffices not only for His being existent, but also for many other existents flowing from it." By using "His" to refer to the divine Being (*mawjūd*) and "it" to refer to the divine "existence" (*wujūd*), Pines seems to translate, contra al-Ḥarizi, Munk, and Friedländer: the existences flow from the divine existence.[34]

As far as I understand this passage, I am inclined to believe that Maimonides intended to write mysteriously but *not* equivocally. I think that Friedländer, following al-Ḥarizi and Munk, has translated it correctly, and Pines has erred.[35] I think the best translation here is that of al-Ḥarizi. I also think that Friedländer was right in his criticism of Ibn Tibbon's *anxiety* about accuracy—which in this case led him to translate less accurately than al-Ḥarizi.

Friedländer's nonanxiety about accuracy may be illustrated not only by recondite examples, like the one from *Guide* I 58, but also by simple ones. At the beginning of *Guide* II, preface, Maimonides states with regard to the first twenty-five Aristotelian premises (but not premise 26) that Aristotle and the Peripatetics *atā 'alā burhān*.[36] Translators fretted over how to translate this phrase. Ibn Tibbon translated: *'aśah mofet*. Al-Ḥarizi: *badaq mofet*. Munk: "ont abordé la démonstration."[37] Friedländer translated simply: "have proved." He added the following note: "Literally, 'arrived at the proof'. . . . There is no doubt that, according to Maimonides, the school of Aristotle has not only attempted to prove, but has, in fact, proved all the twenty-five propositions."[38] Pines translates: "have come forward with a demonstration."[39] Maimonides' phrase is nuanced, but the meaning of this nuance is not of interest to Friedländer, who is confident that there is "no doubt" about Maimonides' view.

Political or Social

In explaining the advantages of Pines's translation of the *Guide* over previous translations, in particular Friedländer's, Pines and Strauss write:

34. Pines 136. Pines's curious use of "its" and "His" in this sentence seems to reflect an error in the editing.
35. Qafih (1:142) and Schwarz (1:145) translate like al-Ḥarizi, Munk, and Friedländer, although Schwarz recognizes the other possibility in a note (1:145n14).
36. Munk-Joel 165, line 8.
37. Munk 2:3.
38. Friedländer 2:1 and n1.
39. Pines 235.

"A single example must suffice: where Maimonides speaks of 'political,' previous translators speak of 'social'; where Maimonides says 'city,' they translate 'state'; where Maimonides speaks of 'political civil actions,' they speak of 'social conduct'. . . . An entirely different perspective is provided when the political is mentioned, rather than the social."[40]

Let's compare some passages.

In *Guide* II 40, Friedländer translates: "It has already been fully explained that man is naturally a social being (*madanī bi-al-ṭabʿ*), that by virtue of his nature he seeks to form communities (*mujtamaʿ*); man is therefore different from other living beings that are not compelled to combine into communities (*al-ijtimāʿ*)."[41]

This passage from *Guide* II 40 is translated by Pines as follows: "It has been explained with utmost clarity that man is political by nature (*madanī bi-al-ṭabʿ*) and that it is his nature to live in society (*mujtamaʿ*). He is not like the other animals for which society (*al-ijtimāʿ*) is not a necessity."[42]

Here, Maimonides makes reference to Aristotle's famous teaching that the human being is by nature "political" (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.1097b6; *Politics* I.2.1253a2). Aristotle uses the word *politikos*, which should of course be translated "political"—although there is an old and stubborn tradition of translating it as "social."[43] The Arabic *madanī* translates *politikos*. Friedländer, in translating "a social being," follows the old and stubborn tradition. Pines, in translating "political," follows Aristotle and Maimonides faithfully.

Ibn Tibbon translates: *ha-adam medini be-ṭevaʿ*; al-Ḥarizi paraphrases: *ṭevaʿ ha-adam huʾ ʿal minhag ha-medinah*; Munk: "l'homme est naturellement un être sociable."[44] Friedländer's translation, "man is naturally a social being," is borrowed directly from Munk.

In *Guide* III 27, Friedländer translates: "The general object of the Law

40. Pines vii.

41. Friedländer 2:189; Munk-Joel 270, lines 5–6.

42. Pines 381.

43. This tradition should not be dismissed simply as an error. It seems to reflect nineteenth-century connotations of the terms "social" and "political." It also has medieval Latin antecedents. Although William of Moerbeke, in his translation of Aristotle's *Politics* (ad loc.), wrote *homo natura civile animal est*, Aquinas often explained *civile animal* as *animal sociale* or *animal sociale et politicum*. See, e.g., his commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* I.1; commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* I.1; *On Kingship* I.1; *Summa theologiae* I, q. 96, a. 4; I-II, q. 72, a. 4; I-II, q. 95, a. 4; II-II, q. 109, a. 3; *Summa contra Gentiles* III, cap. 117, 128, 129, 147. Cf. Albert the Great, questions on *De animalibus* I, q. 8 (re *History of Animals* I.1.487b33–488a13): *homo est animal civile et sociale*.

44. Munk 2:306.

is twofold: the well-being of the soul and the well-being of the body. . . . Of these two objects, the one, the well-being of the soul, or the communication of correct opinions, comes undoubtedly first in rank, but the other, the well-being of the body, the government of the state (*tadbīr al-madīna*), and the establishment of the best possible relations among men (*ṣalāḥ aḥwāl ahlihā kullihim ḥasab al-ṭāqa*), is anterior in nature and time."[45]

The same passage from *Guide* III 27 is translated by Pines as follows: "The Law as a whole aims at two things: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body. . . . Know (*iʿlam*) that as between these two aims, one is indubitably greater in nobility, namely, the welfare of the soul—I mean the procuring of correct opinions—while the second aim—I mean the welfare of the body—is prior in nature and time. The latter aim consists in the governance of the city (*tadbīr al-madīna*) and the well-being of the states of all its people according to their capacity (*ṣalāḥ aḥwāl ahlihā kullihim ḥasab al-ṭāqa*)."[46]

The conciseness of Friedländer's translation, as compared to Pines's, is striking: Friedländer uses 70 words, Pines 84. This difference provides a clue both to Friedländer's *accessibility* and to Pines's *accuracy*. Friedländer omits Maimonides' characteristic exhortation *iʿlam*, presumably seeing it as a gratuitous manifestation of the author's imperious "self-reliance," whereas Pines duly translates it: "Know that as between these two aims . . ." Friedländer's phrase "the government of the state" translates the Arabic *tadbīr al-madīna*. Pines translates: "the governance of the city." The Arabic *madīna* renders the Greek *polis*; and Pines and Strauss are probably justified in their preference that it be translated as "city" and not "state." Ibn Tibbon translates: *hanhagat ha-medinah*; al-Ḥarizi: *hanhagat ʿinyane ha-medinah*; Munk: "ce que la société soit bien gouvernée."[47] Munk's translation is remarkable for its introduction of the social. As for Friedländer's streamlined phrase "the establishment of the best possible relations among men," it is more fluent but less precise than Pines's "the well-being of the states of all its people according to their capacity."

Let's look at one more passage on the subject of "political or social." The passage is in *Guide* III 31.

Friedländer translates: "But the truth is undoubtedly as we have said, that every one of the six hundred and thirteen precepts serves to inculcate

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45. Friedländer 3:129; Munk-Joel 371, lines 17–28.
46. Pines 510.
47. Munk 3:211.

some truth, to remove some erroneous opinion, to establish proper relations in society (*qānūn ʿadl*), to diminish evil, to train in good manners, or to warn against bad habits. All this depends on three things: opinions, morals, and social conduct (*al-aʿmāl al-siyāsiyya al-madaniyya*)."[48]

Pines translates this passage as follows: "Rather things are indubitably as we have mentioned: every commandment from among these six hundred and thirteen commandments exists either with a view to communicating a correct opinion, or to putting an end to an unhealthy opinion, or to communicating a rule of justice (*qānūn ʿadl*), or to warding off an injustice, or to endowing men with a noble moral quality, or to warning them against an evil moral quality. Thus all [the commandments] are bound up with three things: opinions, moral qualities, and political civic actions (*al-aʿmāl al-siyāsiyya al-madaniyya*)."[49]

The conciseness of Friedländer's translation, as compared to Pines's, is again apparent: this time Friedländer uses 60 words, Pines 85. Friedländer's phrase "proper relations in society" translates the Arabic *qānūn ʿadl*. Pines's translation "a rule of justice" is clearly more precise. Ibn Tibbon translates *seder yashar*; al-Ḥarizi: *ḥuqqim yesharim*; Munk, adumbrating Pines: "une règle de justice."[50] Friedländer's two-word phrase "social conduct" translates the Arabic *al-aʿmāl al-siyāsiyya al-madaniyya*. Pines's three-word translation is more faithful: "political civic actions." "Political," as Strauss and Pines correctly insisted, is usually the preferable translation of *siyāsiyya*. Ibn Tibbon translates: *maʿaśeh ha-hanhagah ha-medinit*; al-Ḥarizi: *ha-maʿaśim ha-yesharim*; Munk: "la pratique de devoirs sociaux."[51] Whereas Ibn Tibbon and Pines speak here of the political, Munk and Friedländer speak of the social.

In sum, Pines and Strauss's criticism of "previous translators" who used the term "social" instead of "political" applies not only to Friedländer but also to the vaunted Munk.

Conclusion

To conclude, I cannot resist quoting a passage from the *Guide* that appears in Dara Horn's novel *A Guide for the Perplexed*. The passage is taken from

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48. Friedländer 3:148–49; Munk-Joel 383, lines 9–13.
49. Pines 524.
50. Munk 3:248.
51. Munk 3:248.

Guide III 17–18, and presents Maimonides' own personal opinion on the problem of divine providence. One of the protagonists in the novel is said to have been "stunned" by this opinion of Maimonides'. The opinion is described as "heartless and beautiful," "utterly and cruelly logical," and "intolerant of nonsense." As quoted in the novel, in Friedländer's English, the passage reads as follows:

> My opinion on this principle of divine providence I will now explain to you . . . It may be mere chance that a ship goes down with her contents and drowns those within it, or the roof of a house falls upon those within; but it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance . . . Divine influence reaches mankind through the human intellect, and divine providence is in proportion to each person's intellectual development.[52]

Here is Pines's translation of the same text:

> As for my own belief with regard to this fundamental principle, I mean divine providence, it is as I shall set it forth to you. . . . If, as he [Aristotle] states, the foundering of a ship and the drowning of those who were in it and the falling-down of a roof upon those who were in the house, are due to pure chance, the fact that the people in the ship went on board and that the people in the house were sitting in it is, according to our opinion, not due to chance. . . . The divine overflow . . . is united to . . . the human intellect . . . [and] providence is graded as the human perfection is graded.[53]

Let us agree that Pines's 120-word text, which tries to reproduce the complexity of Maimonides' Arabic, is more suited for analysis in a philosophy seminar, but that Friedländer's 92-word text, written simply, directly, and dramatically, is more suited for a novel. The dramatic quality of Friedländer's translation is particularly important, since it is intimated in the novel that Maimonides' reference to "a ship that goes down" recalls the tragic death at sea of his beloved brother, David.[54]

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52. Horn 2013, 163; cf. 197, 322. Friedländer 3:74–75, 79–80.
53. Pines 471–72, 475.
54. Horn 2013, 321–22.

Since Friedländer's pioneering English translation in 1885, there have been several attempts to translate the *Guide* into English—either in whole or in part. In addition to Pines's excellent translation, one may mention the partial translations of Chaim Rabin (1952) and Lenn E. Goodman (1977), each of which has its own real strengths. That 128 years after its completion, Friedländer's translation—and not one of its more recent rivals—should be chosen by an accomplished author for use in her novel is testimony to its lasting worth.