
7

The Elegance of Precision On Pines's Translation of the Literary Parts of the *Guide*

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When Shlomo Pines's translation of the *Guide of the Perplexed* was first published, published with it was the "Translator's Introduction." As translators' introductions go, this is a peculiar one, since it says practically nothing about the translation: in vain will we search for an exposition of the language and style of the original Judeo-Arabic text, or of the style and method chosen for the English translation. Instead, most of the introduction is explicitly dedicated to "indications, which may prove helpful . . . concerning Maimonides' philosophic sources, his evaluation of them, and the way in which he utilizes them."¹ Moreover, even simple technical notes that one would expect to find in a translator's introduction, such as a note on the translation of biblical verses—did they follow one of the many English translations available at the time, or were they translated by Pines himself?—are conspicuously absent from the introduction. Only a few sentences on the first page of the introduction tell us, in a somewhat roundabout way, what Pines considered to be typical of the style of the *Guide*. Juxtaposing Maimonides' "systematic, lucid, and authoritative legal code" with his "often dislocated and broken

1. Pines 1963, lviii.

up” *Guide*, written some twenty years later, Pines remarks that Maimonides “had [not] lost his gift for lucid exposition,” and adds: “Indeed this gift is brilliantly displayed in certain passages of the *Guide*.” Pines further says that “the disconcerting impression” that “the peculiar method used by Maimonides in composing [the *Guide*]” (namely, that same “often dislocated and broken up text”) is “apt to produce at first upon most of its readers . . . was certainly aimed at by Maimonides. His book’s impact depends upon it.”² One would have expected the translator to say whether he sees it as his task to follow Maimonides’ “peculiar method,” or, rather, to emulate his “gift for lucid exposition” by translating Maimonides’ ideas into a clear and accessible English. But neither these tasks nor any others are spelled out in the introduction. Conventionally, introductions serve, among other things, to introduce and highlight, in one way or another, what the author regards as the main points of his work; in Pines’s “Translator’s Introduction” to the *Guide*, however, the translator’s work is hardly noted.

I suspect, although I cannot prove it, that the misleading heading “Translator’s Introduction” was not chosen by Pines but, rather, decided by others.³ Be that as it may, it seems that Pines did not intend to offer a typical translator’s introduction, and it is even possible that he consciously avoided writing an introduction of the kind that the title seems to assign to him. The content of the introduction that he *did* write strongly suggests that Pines regarded his translation primarily as a scholarly endeavor, rather than a literary one. Notwithstanding the enormous investment that such a translation demands, Pines’s introduction seems to minimize the significance of the translation as such, and to highlight its import as part of analytical research carried out by a historian of philosophy. That this is indeed how Pines regarded his introduction can be clearly seen in the fact that its Hebrew translation appeared later as an essay, independent of the English translation of the *Guide*. The Hebrew translation of the introduction was fittingly titled “The Philosophical Sources of the *Guide of the Perplexed*,” with only a note referring the reader to the original context (the *Guide*’s translation) in which this essay first appeared.⁴

A peephole into the difficulties of translating the *Guide* as well as of the choices made by the translator was nevertheless opened through Pines’s correspondence with Leo Strauss, parts of which were published by Joel

2. Pines 1963, lvii.

3. See below, n. 15.

4. Pines 1977; and see below, n. 15.

Kraemer and Josef Stern.⁵ As this correspondence shows, Pines made a deliberate decision to translate “every Arabic technical term by one and the same English one.”⁶ According to Kraemer and Stern, this decision allowed Pines to keep the nuances of meaning in the *Guide* that Maimonides used as directives to the discerning reader.⁷ This decision also seems to have meant that Pines ignored Maimonides’ own advice to Samuel Ibn Tibbon regarding the translation of the *Guide* into Hebrew.⁸ Maimonides’ instructions to Ibn Tibbon would have necessarily meant explicating the esoteric parts of the *Guide*, and since Ibn Tibbon “spontaneously” (in Pines’s words) decided to preserve in his translation the esoteric aspect, he (Ibn Tibbon) thus acted contrary to “Maimonides’ explicit (or exoteric) instructions. And Pines follows Ibn Tibbon, not Maimonides, in his own method of translation.”⁹ As Kraemer and Stern convincingly argue, Pines had a clear notion of his method of translation, a method that he was following consistently.¹⁰ He consciously adopted Ibn Tibbon’s fidelity to the peculiar syntax of the *Guide*, and in his translation, syntax and terminology were rather consistently translated.

Kraemer and Stern cite Pines, who describes Maimonides’ style as “loose” and who consciously follows it. Herbert Davidson also speaks of “the loose syntax typical of the *Guide*,” or “the loose and choppy style characteristic of the *Guide*.”¹¹ Maimonides’ syntax is indeed often anacoluthic, as is common in Middle Arabic in general and Judeo-Arabic in particular,¹²

5. Kraemer and Stern 1998.

6. Kraemer and Stern 1998, 23. Goodman (1977, 435) quotes Pines’s statement to this effect from his introduction (vii: “Every Arabic technical term has been rendered by one and the same English term . . .”) with no further comment regarding the translation. Goodman clearly regards this sentence as the cornerstone of Pines’s translation, as well as of what Goodman regards as its shortcomings.

7. Kraemer and Stern 1998, 17: “Maimonides frequently uses near-synonymous but subtly different Arabic technical terms, with the intention that his discerning reader will be drawn to the relevant philosophical distinction from the shift in terminology.”

8. See Maimonides 1988, 2:532–33; Kraemer and Stern 1998, 17 and n11.

9. Kraemer and Stern 1998, 17.

10. Kraemer and Stern 1998, 15.

11. Kraemer and Stern 1998, 17–18; Davidson 1992/93, 83, 103.

12. See Blau 1981, 97–98. According to Blau, the large number of anacolutha results from the fact that “many authors of Judaeo-Arabic texts seem not to bother to arrange their thoughts prior to writing, but write down directly the first idea that occurs to them, only afterwards fitting it as best they can into the framework of the sentence.” Blau regards this “carelessness in language” as “one of the chief characteristics of Judaeo-Arabic style.” The assumption that anacoluthic writing reflects the spoken language is also shared by Daniel Gimaret, who regards it as one of the signs of a text composed by dictation (*imlā*’); see

and, as is the case with other philosophers, his syntax certainly deviates from what is taught by textbooks of classical Arabic,¹³ but it is anything but loose. Just like the *Guide*'s terminological and lexical precision (noted by Leo Strauss when he speaks of "a book as carefully worded as is the *Guide*"¹⁴), and like its intricate but deliberate, carefully planned structure, the syntax of the *Guide* is measured and calculated to direct the reader according to his (Maimonides would not bother to add "or her") capacity. The treatment of the *Guide*'s syntax as "loose" ignores Maimonides' use of changing styles as a tool for the same purpose.

From Pines's correspondence with Strauss it appears that Strauss had been aiming at achieving a uniform translation as far as possible, and also that he had encouraged Pines to adopt a literal translation—an injunction that at some point Strauss had felt Pines was following too literally. In the published letter, Pines asks Strauss for clear directives as to the method to be employed. Strauss's response is unfortunately not available to us, but whatever this response may have been, Pines was a person who ultimately did what *he* understood to be right. I assume that this is also what happened in the present case, despite his uneven status vis-à-vis Strauss, a status that followed from the context of a commissioned translation and that emerges clearly from the published letter.¹⁵ The English-Arabic glossary provided by Pines at the end of the translation also confirms that Pines indeed adopted a

Gimaret 1981, 22. While the associative thinking-while-writing phenomenon may well be reflected in letters and other Judeo-Arabic compositions, it can hardly be considered to have characterized Maimonides' modus operandi in writing the *Guide*. Notwithstanding the cultural background for the development of the anacoluthic syntax in Judeo-Arabic, by the time it reached Maimonides it seems to have become an integral feature of the Judeo-Arabic language as Maimonides knew it, a style that is also kept in very carefully thought-out texts.

13. The philosophers' peculiar Arabic syntax often follows the translations from the Greek texts, on which their works were based. The specificity of the translations' syntax is recognized by Gerhard Endress and Dimitri Gutas, who include syntactical issues in their *Lexicon*; see Endress and Gutas 2002, intro., 1* and 6*.

14. Strauss 1963, xxv.

15. Compared to the authoritative and intriguing heading of Strauss's introduction ("How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*"), the dull, technical heading "Translator's Introduction," stressing the role assigned to Pines, also underlined their difference in status. This is so even if the heading was decided by Pines, and certainly so if, as I suspect, it was not. In this uneven work-relationship, Pines's de facto refusal to write a conventional translator's introduction was also a (conscious or unconscious) assertion of his scholarly authority, highlighting the primary significance of his translation as an independent scholarly work. See above, nn. 1–4.

consistent translation of the terminology, where every English term almost always translates the same Arabic word.¹⁶

Michael Friedländer's translation notwithstanding, Pines's translation of the *Guide* into English has been a watershed in introducing Maimonides to the world of scholars of medieval Islamic philosophy.¹⁷ Its publication in 1963 coincided with the start of momentous transformations in the academic world: the consolidation of English as *the* universal academic language, on the one hand, and the beginning of the dramatic expansion of higher education, on the other. In this context, the new English translation offered by Pines was, and remains to this day, the single most effective vehicle for introducing Maimonides to scholars and to students of medieval Islamic philosophy.

Nevertheless, over the years, users of the translation have occasionally, and perhaps growingly, expressed reservations regarding the style of the translation. More often than not, the criticism is not published or explicitly written—out of respect for Pines's stature, out of appreciation for the overall authority of the translation, or for whatever other reason. But one often hears reservations concerning the translation of this or that passage, and, more generally, concerning the present value of the translation. Quite often, the criticism leveled against Pines's translation targets precisely his uniform, somewhat literal translation, and the fact that he kept the same word for the same term, thus creating what critics regard as stiff, archaic, or inelegant translation. Such a criticism is evident, for example, when Lenn Goodman says:

There is a natural tendency on the part of a translator to confuse literalism with accuracy. When consistently followed, this tendency can render any translation of a medieval Arabic work unintelligible.

16. Although quite a few English terms also refer the reader to another entry in the glossary, where another term renders the same Arabic word. Thus the English verb "apprehend" translates the Arabic verb *adraka*, but the glossary also refers the reader to another English verb, "grasp." See Pines 639–41. By comparison, see the fluctuations in the translation of this term noted by Michael Schwarz in Goodman's translation, fluctuations that Schwarz assumes result from Goodman's attempt to show the contemporary relevance of Maimonides; see Schwarz 2002, 2:762–63; Goodman 1977, 56–57, 64.

17. Friedländer's translation, published in 1881–85, was reprinted in 1947. On this and other (partial) English translations of the *Guide*, see Schwarz, "The Guide of the Perplexed: Its Translations and Translators," in Schwarz 2002, 2:742–66; see also the introduction to this volume, as well as Zev Harvey's contribution (chapter 6).

Although Goodman does not mention Pines's name, the object of his criticism, within the context of Goodman's introduction to his anthology of translations of Maimonidean texts, is obvious. Goodman regards Maimonides' style as "a clear, flexible, and direct Arabic, not overburdened by cumbersome terminology and jargon," and therefore he sees "no reason why the same clarity cannot be rendered in English."¹⁸

Furthermore, Pines's very fidelity to the Arabic text seems to have been perceived as unnecessarily pedantic. Goodman, for instance, says (again, without mentioning Pines's name):

Arabic syntax is not English syntax. . . . It is impossible to translate from Arabic to English simply by substituting one English term consistently for a given Arabic term. By ignoring these fundamental facts Arabic scholars have produced fairly extensive shelves of books which are of great value to other Arabists . . . but are of no particular use to anyone who does not have a good Arabic text before him and the ability to use it.¹⁹

The thinly veiled target of Goodman's criticism is again Pines's supposedly rigid style. Moreover, beyond his explicit criticism, one can further detect in the sentences quoted above an impatient tone; the very insistence on the all-important original Arabic text of Maimonides seems to irritate. Goodman's implicit claim here is that many of the rank and file of Maimonides' contemporary readers do not read Arabic, and do not care to be constantly reminded of the Arabic original in particular or of Maimonides' integration into the Arabic-speaking cultural world in general. One can see how, with such a public in mind, Goodman's introduction employs in his English text the translated Hebrew name of the *Guide*, *Moreh nevukhim*, rather than the original Arabic name *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*.²⁰ Apparently, he assumes that for his English-speaking readers the Hebrew name is (or should be) nevertheless meaningful, whereas the original Arabic name remains, like the faithful translation, "of great value to . . . Arabists . . . but . . . of no particular use to anyone who does not have a good Arabic text before him and the ability to use it." In view of this translation policy, one should not be surprised to find in Goodman's introduction a summary of the intellectual backgrounds of Maimonides' philosophy that includes only two subsections: one on the

18. Goodman 1977, vii–viii.

19. Goodman 1977, viii.

20. Goodman 1977, xi.

Greek tradition, and another on the Judaic tradition, but no subsection on the Arabic, Islamic tradition.²¹ The fact that Goodman himself is a qualified Arabist, versed in the Islamic philosophical tradition and well aware of its importance for Maimonides, makes this self-censorship only more regrettable.

Pines's methodology in studying Jewish thinkers gave prime of place to the cultural world in which these thinkers lived and wrote. Without ignoring the continuity of the Jewish tradition, Pines believed that, qua philosophers, Jewish thinkers belonged to their time and place, and contemporaneous philosophy was the primary influence on the development of Jewish philosophy. Particularly regarding the Islamic Middle Ages, Pines argued that "in the sphere of philosophical literature . . . Jewish thinkers had recourse primarily to the books of their Moslem counterparts," whereas "rare and only of secondary significance is their relationship to the teachings of their Jewish predecessors."²² In our context, Pines's position would mean that the fact that Maimonides wrote in Arabic cannot be treated as a minor issue, of interest only to Arabists. The Arabic language in which Maimonides wrote was one aspect of his integration into the Arabic-speaking cultural world. His opinions and arguments are couched in the nuanced Arabic language of this world, and the full weight of his carefully chosen Arabic terminology must be appreciated as a window on the philosophy that it reflects.

From the outset it should be said that, of course, no translation is free of faults, and Pines's translation is no exception. Furthermore, it is only natural that, half a century after its publication, any faithful reader of this translation will have accumulated a list of his or her own suggested corrections to it. Nevertheless, and despite the other valuable translations available—Ibn Tibbon's, Salomon Munk's, Michael Schwarz's—for Maimonidean scholars, Pines's translation remains indispensable. This is not only because of Pines's undisputed erudition and understanding of medieval Arabic philosophy in general and of Maimonides' philosophy in particular, which are reflected in the translation. As I will try to show here, it is precisely Pines's above-mentioned terminological and syntactical consistency that is, rather than a weakness, a veritable asset.

21. Goodman 1977, 16–34; the meager two pages dedicated to the Muslim tradition (30–31) are squeezed within the discussion of the Judaic tradition.

22. Pines 1967, 1. On the significance of this position within the broader discussion of the methodology of studying Jewish thought, see Stroumsa 2009, concl.

In order to demonstrate this claim, I wish to revisit the question that was most hotly debated in the last years of Pines's life and in the decade following his death—namely, the human possibility of attaining knowledge of metaphysical realities. This philosophical problem is already noted, briefly but quite clearly, in Pines's introduction to his translation of the *Guide*, where he explicitly says that “we are faced in Maimonides' text with a fundamental ambiguity.”²³ Indeed, it is often the case that one finds in Pines's introduction, ensconced in a few sentences, the insights that he was to develop and expound upon in later publications. But the debate in question started in earnest only after the publication, in 1979, of Pines's article on the limitations of human knowledge according to al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja, and Maimonides.²⁴

In this article, Pines grappled with what he regarded as a fundamental and perplexing problem presented by the *Guide*—namely, the irreconcilable contradiction between the narrow limits that Maimonides sets to human knowledge and his affirmation that the human being's ultimate goal and felicity consist in knowledge and contemplation.²⁵ Pines endeavored to show that “this contradiction need not remain unsolved”²⁶ and to identify Maimonides' solution to it by putting forward some very bold assertions. He argued that, according to Maimonides, the “intellection of the immaterial entities and of the union with them . . . are impossible for man,”²⁷ that Maimonides held “an agnostic position with regard to the thesis of the permanence of the intellect,”²⁸ that “it is . . . on the face of it unlikely that the immortality of the intellect, which in the judgment of Maimonides of the *Guide* is an obscure and problematic matter, should be considered by him as the goal of the human individual,”²⁹ that “apprehension of God may, in view of the limitations of the human mind, be equated with the knowledge of God's governance,”³⁰ and, finally, that for Maimonides, “the practical way of life . . . is superior to the theoretical.”³¹

23. Pines 1963, cv, and see also lxxix–lxxxii; compare Davidson (1992/93, 53), who says that in putting forward these arguments, Pines abandons his hitherto held view that Maimonides' esotericism is “a form of deism in the Aristotelian mode.”

24. Pines 1979. See also J. Stern 2013, 4–6, 133–34.

25. Pines 1979, 82. See also Pines 1981, 1986.

26. Pines 1979, 100.

27. Pines 1979, 99.

28. Pines 1979, 97.

29. Pines 1979, 97.

30. Pines 1979, 99.

31. Pines 1979, 100.

In putting forward these assertions, and in the analysis that led to them, Pines relied heavily on reports regarding al-Fārābī's lost *Commentary* on Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, as well as on a text by Ibn Bājja, which was still unpublished at the time. Since then, the publication of Ibn Bājja's text and its analysis by several scholars have corrected Pines's reading of this text in ways that made it unresponsive of Pines's argument.³² Nevertheless, the initial question asked by Pines regarding the seemingly irreconcilable contradiction in the *Guide* remains.

The fiercest response to these claims came from Herbert Davidson, for whom Pines's article turned the *Guide* into "the most bizarre work in the history of philosophy, a 450 page book written . . . with the purpose of concealing a handful of remarks that, sotto voce, undermine virtually everything the book says."³³ Davidson contested the accuracy of Pines's reading of al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājja, as well as Maimonides' dependency upon them, which he regarded as at best conjectural.³⁴ But his main critique addressed Pines's esoteric reading of the *Guide*. For Davidson, "in ascertaining an author's intent, even an author who indulges in esoteric expression, the starting point surely should be what he himself says."³⁵ Therefore the *Guide*, like any other philosophical book, must be taken seriously to mean what it says, and therefore, if Maimonides says that the human goal is the achievement of knowledge, then he must consider this knowledge attainable for humans.³⁶ Davidson reviews seven passages in the *Guide* that were discussed by Pines, and concludes that "if we respect Maimonides' words and refrain from interpreting him as perversely meaning the opposite of what he says . . . the passages fall into a comfortable and consistent pattern."³⁷

Pines's question indeed revealed a fundamental ambivalence in the *Guide*, an ambivalence that Davidson's response, seeking to establish "a comfortable and consistent pattern," does not recognize. At the same time, Pines's own attempt to resolve this ambivalence also fails to accept what I consider to be its inherently unresolvable nature.

32. The text, preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Pococke 206, was published in Ibn Bājja 1983, 197–202. See also S. Harvey 1992b, 225–31; Vallat 2004, 102–26; Genequand 2010, 10–13.

33. Davidson 1992/93, 54.

34. Davidson 1992/93, 67.

35. Davidson 1992/93, 84.

36. Davidson 1992/93, 87. Davidson's methodological disagreement with Pines applies also to other issues, such as the creation of the world; but it is on the possibility of attaining metaphysical knowledge that his article focuses.

37. Davidson 1992/93, 86.

In this context, the philosophers' position toward the religious doctrine of the resurrection of the body is revealing. The Qur'ān, and thereafter the Muslim tradition, speak specifically and repeatedly about resurrection. The Hebrew Bible does not discuss this issue, but by the twelfth century the resurrection had long become a commonly held and undisputed doctrine in Judaism as well. Consequently, and despite the different positions of their respective scriptures, this doctrine presented a similar problem for Jewish and Muslim philosophers. We therefore find Maimonides and Averroes negotiating their positions in a similar way—namely, admitting the doctrine as such on the force of the religious tradition, while refusing to discuss it philosophically.³⁸ The philosophers' delicate position is particularly obvious in the case of Maimonides, who treats this topic as a Pandora's box: better left unopened. To the extent that he had to advocate for resurrection, he limited it to the messianic era, insisting that the resurrection is not for eternity: those risen from the dead will die again. Maimonides was the first Jewish thinker to present resurrection as a binding article of faith, but neither this fact nor his more elaborate discussion of the issue in his *Epistle on Resurrection* averted the accusations that he, in fact, did not believe in the resurrection. The ensuing protracted "Maimonidean debate" also had some political aspects, but it resulted mainly from the fact that Maimonides' tight-lipped policy concerning this issue was perceived as betraying what is indeed likely to have been his genuine position: that the resurrection was an article of faith rather than a probable truth.³⁹

Regarding the immortality of the soul, or, rather, of the intellect, the philosophers' difficulty was less obvious, as this topic seemed to be more amenable for harmonization with their conflicting authoritative texts. The scriptural language on this topic is less explicit, and therefore it gave more space for philosophical, demythologizing interpretations. Furthermore, the philosophical tradition also suggested some sort of immortality that could be achieved through conjunction with the separate, immaterial intellect. We therefore find that the philosophers usually displayed confidence in humans' intellectual ability to achieve this goal and managed to find evidence for it in their respective traditions.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the philosophers' observations and teaching indicated to them that the attachment of the human intellect to the inherently temporal body is a constant that

38. See Averroes 1998b, 555–59; 1954, 359–63; Maimonides 1939; and see the references in nn. 39–40 below.

39. On the philosophers' position on resurrection, see Stroumsa 1998a, 56–57, 70; 1998b, 325, 331; 1999, x–xiv; 2009, 165–83.

40. On the philosophers' hereafter, see Stroumsa 1998a; 2009, 153–65.

defines humanity, just as much as the ultimate intellectual human goal defines it. With the philosophers' firmly held belief in the corruptible nature of matter, and their somewhat puritan disdain for the coarse body, it is only natural that they would at times lose heart and lapse into uncertainty or even disbelief regarding the immortality of anything human. Their position regarding the resurrection of the body reveals how strongly they felt the insurmountable gap between the human, attached to the temporal body, and anything that can aspire to be divine or eternal. Their statements about the possibility of immortality therefore vary in intensity, and sometimes even in content. These fluctuations are not due to what Paul Veyne, following Michel Foucault, called two "programmes de vérité," nor do they reflect a double truth of the kind attributed to Averroes.⁴¹ In Maimonides' theoretical attitude toward immortality, the religious and the philosophical "systems of truth" could agree with each other, and he considered it possible for people like him, who belonged to the philosophical elite, to harmonize them (whereas, regarding people who did not belong to this elite, Maimonides' explicit instruction was to hold on to the religious truth and not to delve into the philosophical discussion).⁴² The ambivalence regarding immortality that Pines detected in the *Guide* therefore does not reveal a shift in Maimonides' theoretical position. It does, however, faithfully reflect his fluctuating psychological confidence in the attainability of an immensely daunting goal.

Obviously, we cannot expect to find Maimonides, or any other philosopher, admitting this fluctuation explicitly, just as we cannot expect them to say explicitly anything that could sound like a denial of religious doctrines; only the difference of intensity between the various references to immortality betrays these fluctuations. It would therefore be incorrect, in my view, to weigh Maimonides' statements on this particular issue against each other in search of his single true belief, to be reflected by one statement as opposed to another statement, which would be only camouflage.⁴³

It is remarkable that, while Pines's articles attempted to push Maimon-

41. Veyne 1983. On Averroes' double truth, and its actual connection to Ibn Rushd's philosophy, see von Kügelgen 1994, 2–3; Wirmer 2008, 10–12.

42. See his response to Ibn Jābir regarding a similar metaphysical issue in Maimonides 1988, 1:414. In this, Maimonides adopts Averroes' position as expressed in *Faṣl al-maḡāl*. Maimonides diverts from this position only regarding God's incorporeality, where his position is that of the Almohads. See Stroumsa 2009, 73–79.

43. The topic of immortality, and the possibility of attaining metaphysical knowledge, thus differ, in my view, from other esoteric issues, where one can expect to detect, behind the conflicting statements, Maimonides' unequivocal firm conviction. In these other issues, a scholar refusing to acknowledge Maimonides' different statements ipso facto also cannot admit Maimonides' true but esoteric position.

ides to one side of this ambivalence, his translation gracefully and subtly follows the pendulum of Maimonides' emotions in this respect. Without abandoning his method, which aimed at a uniform and consistent translation of technical terms, Pines follows in his translation the changing mood of the *Guide* in ways that convey fully and with precision the different philosophical stress of each chapter. The *Guide's* usually even and measured style changes at times abruptly, moving to exclamations, to direct address to the reader (such as "know that . . ."), or to a more poetic style. Such sudden changes serve as pointers, awakening the reader to the importance of the passage or highlighting the need to read it carefully, with an eye to a central or withheld truth that it may contain.

Furthermore, there are several passages in the *Guide* that, while they do not belong strictly to the genre of poetry, can surely be described as literary or even poetic, and in which the metaphorical, elated prose seeks to convey an exalted state of mind. Pines's sensitive English translation is attuned to the calculated shifts in Maimonides' style. The more literary parts of the *Guide* belong to the category of passages that mark a change in the flow of the *Guide's* usual style. In the translation of these literary passages, Pines's sensitivity to the *Guide's* shifting mood is evident. At the same time, one is struck by his fidelity to Maimonides' vocabulary, on the one hand, and to his own methodical principle in the translation, on the other. For instance, in his aforementioned controversial article, Pines cites the lightning simile. He notes Maimonides' likely indebtedness to Avicenna's *Ishārāt* and the Sufi overtones in Avicenna's terminology.⁴⁴ He also notes Maimonides' possible indebtedness to Ibn Bājja. His own translation of the passage, accordingly, reflects these sources, and the English text rings with the same Sufi overtones.⁴⁵ At no point, however, is Pines carried away by the poetics of the translated text so as to forget the uniform terminological translation he adopted. Thus, the most frequent epistemological term used by Maimonides in the lightning simile, *l-w-ḥ*, is translated by Pines as "flashes" or "flashing," but when Maimonides introduces into the same poetic text the technical term *idrāk*, Pines faithfully renders it by his own technical translation, "apprehension."

Another example is *Guide* III 51, which contains the parable of the king in his palace and Maimonides' explanation of the midrashic image of death through God's "kiss."⁴⁶ Pines mentions this last passage as "the only passage

44. Pines 1979, 89.

45. *Guide* I, intro. (Munk-Joel 4; Pines 7).

46. *Guide* III 51 (Munk-Joel 454–63; Pines 618–28); and especially the passage beginning with the "call to attention" (*tanbīh*) (Munk-Joel 457; Pines 621).

in the *Guide* which contains an apparently unambiguous affirmation of the survival of the intellect,⁴⁷ while Davidson, for his part, remarks that Maimonides' language here "falls short of technical precision."⁴⁸ "Falls short," however, does not strike me as a fair description of what must have been Maimonides' conscious change of style in order to expand on his perception of the hereafter, a change of style that, just like the heading "A call to attention" (*tanbīh*) in the middle of this chapter, serves as a pointer to the importance of this passage. For Pines, the change of style highlights Maimonides' ambivalence in this chapter; for Davidson, it seems to be of negligible importance.⁴⁹ I agree with Pines that the change is too remarkable to be ignored, but if the style of the text is significant, then what it says is also of primary importance. Borrowing terminology used by Pines in the same controversial article, we can distinguish in Maimonides' *Guide* between "epistemological sections" where he follows Aristotelian epistemology more closely, and parabolic (or, in Pines's terminology, "metaphysical") sections, which "lack semantic rigor."⁵⁰ Indeed, we can distinguish different kinds of sections even within the same chapter. In the "epistemological sections," a central term that appears repeatedly is "apprehension" (*idrāk*). *Guide* III 54 is peppered with twenty-nine occurrences of derivatives of *adraka*, but they are not evenly distributed. In the more parabolic or metaphysical sections of the chapter, this term is less prominent and sometimes altogether absent.⁵¹ Pines argued that from the appearance of this term in the last chapter of the *Guide* (III 54) "it is evident that *idrāk* of God does not mean an intellectual act that brings about the identity of the subject and object of intellection. The meaning of the term is much weaker."⁵² In translating the *Guide*, however, Pines adhered to the uniformity of translation, preserving the word "apprehension" in the parabolic sections as he did elsewhere. For example, we hear that Moses, "for his great joy (*ightibātīhi*) in that which he apprehended (*adraka*), he did neither eat bread nor drink water."⁵³ Maimonides expresses the joy of illumination with the term *ightibāt*, a figurative term that rings with Sufi and Avicennian undertones, but he

47. Pines 1979, 95.

48. Davidson 1992/93, 98.

49. See Stroumsa 1998a, 51–77, especially 74–75.

50. Pines 1979, 84, 86, 93. The lack of semantic rigor is attributed by Pines to Ibn Bājja.

51. The same phenomenon can be detected in other such sections of the *Guide*. See, for instance, the lightning simile in the introduction (and see above, p. 236); *Guide* I 62 (Pines 152); *Guide* II 4 (Pines 258), quoted by Pines 1979, 90.

52. Pines 1979, 91, in reference to *Guide* III 54 (Pines 636, 638).

53. *Guide* III 51 (Munk-Joel 456; Pines 620).

immediately checks the exuberance with the more semantically rigorous Aristotelian *adraka*. Pines unfailingly keeps to Maimonides' pace, changing registers as drastically and as often as Maimonides does.

As a result of this rigorous method, Pines's translation allows us to verify, and at times to criticize, Pines's own analysis. Regarding the possibility of attaining metaphysical knowledge, Pines's translation allows us to see where both he and Davidson try to erase Maimonides' ambivalence. As a translator, Pines followed the most scrupulous scientific standards, whereby it should be possible to repeat the experiment so that others can verify it. Indeed, Pines demonstrated scientific detachment throughout his work; as many will recall, he often concluded his lectures by saying that "further research will confirm or disprove the results offered here" (or something to that effect). His translation of the *Guide* gives readers the tools necessary for conducting such further research.

As mentioned above, with the passing of time, Pines's translation of the *Guide* has been occasionally censured for what its critics regard as inelegant rigidity. I have attempted to show here that precision rather than rigidity is what characterizes this translation. Maimonides was not a poet, and his attitude to poetry was, on the whole, ambivalent at best. But he had a soft spot for poets, like his favorite disciple, Joseph Ibn Shim'on, who put his pen at the service of the philosophical quest.⁵⁴ On rare but significant occasions, Maimonides himself indulged in such poetry, as when he chose to open and conclude the *Guide* with short Hebrew verses. Furthermore, as we already saw, there are several passages in the *Guide* that, although not belonging strictly to the genre of poetry, can surely be described as poetic, where the metaphorical, elated prose seeks to convey an exalted state of mind. Pines's sensitive English translation is attuned to the calculated shifts in Maimonides' style. Significantly, Pines's translation includes both the opening and the concluding verses of the *Guide*, as compared to the first edition of Schwarz's Hebrew translation, which omitted the opening verses, reflecting some doubt about Maimonides' authorship of them.⁵⁵ This doubt was rather common at the time, until the discovery of an autograph fragment of the opening verses eventually dispelled it.⁵⁶ Pines, for his part, does

54. See Yahalom 1997.

55. See Schwarz 1996; Stroumsa 1997, 141–42. In the subsequent publication of Schwarz's full translation in 2002, the poem was reintegrated into the text; see Schwarz 1:1, 2:676; Tzeri 2002.

56. Kraemer 1999, 61n18; Sirat 2011, 199–200.

not seem to have doubted that such poetic writings were as authentically Maimonidean as the more arid parts of the *Guide*.

Pines took great care to follow Maimonides: the technical, scientific, and Aristotelian Maimonides as well the poetic, elated, and Sufi Maimonides, the Maimonides certain of the validity of the school's metaphysical tradition as well as the disheartened Maimonides, consumed by doubts. Pines put forward his own bold conclusions in a number of scholarly articles. In the translation, however, respecting what he saw as Maimonides' "gift for lucid exposition," Pines seems to have stepped aside and attempted to let Maimonides speak, without editing him and without presuming to create a more coherent and perhaps more elegant Maimonides. The resulting translation is endowed with the enduring elegance of precision, and is therefore likely to remain indispensable for many years to come. In this, Pines promises to join the league of Ibn Tibbon.

