MAIMONIDES ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

Although Maimonides’ discussion of creation is one of his greatest contributions – he himself claimed that belief in creation is second in importance only to belief in God – there is still considerable debate on what that contribution was. Kenneth Seeskin takes a close look at the problems Maimonides faced and the sources from which he drew. He argues that Maimonides meant exactly what he said: the world was created by a free act of God, so the existence of everything other than God is contingent. In religious terms, existence is a gift. To reach this conclusion, Seeskin examines Maimonides’ view of God, miracles, the limits of human knowledge, and the claims of astronomy to be a science. Clearly written and closely argued, Maimonides on the Origin of the World takes up questions of perennial interest.

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Abbreviations

CCP  The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus, edited by Lloyd P. Gerson
EN  Plotinus, The Enneads
GP  Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed
M  Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Joseph A. Buijs
MP  Maimonides and Philosophy, edited by S. Pines and Y. Yovel
MS  Maimonidean Studies, edited by Arthur Hyman
MT  Maimonides, Mishneh Torah
OTW  On the eternity of the world [by] St. Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant [and] St. Bonaventure, translated by C. Vollert, L. H. Kendzierski, and P. M. Byrne
PEC  Herbert Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy
PSO  Edward Grant, Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos
PM  Perspectives on Maimonides, edited by Joel Kraemer
SFDG  Kenneth Seeskin, Searching for a Distant God
SHPR  Harry A. Wolfson, Studies in the History and Philosophy of Religion
ST  Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica
TCC  Richard Sorabji, Time, Creation, and the Continuum
WL  Gersonides, Wars of the Lord