

MAIMONIDES LECTURES ON SCEPTICISM

JULY 5, 2021
18:00

BEYOND SCEPTICISM — MAIMON'S RATIONAL DOGMATISM AND THE METHOD OF FICTIONS

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It is rarely noted that Salomon Maimon not only raises crucial sceptical challenges to Kant's arguments, but that he also offers an important criticism of Kant's method of philosophising. Although he agrees with the latter that the task of critical philosophy must consist in setting metaphysics on "the secure course of science," he disagrees substantially as to how this transformation is to be brought about. In Maimon's view, critical philosophy must employ a new method, which he characterises as the "method of fictions." Only if it employs useful fictions can critical philosophy assume the status of a proper science. In my talk, I will examine Maimon's method of fictions in order to explain why he took it to be essential to transforming metaphysics into a proper science. In doing so, I reject the dominant interpretation which takes this method of fictions as expressing his "empirical scepticism," since it misconceives the role and status of fictions in Maimon's system. I arrive at this view through consideration of the two distinct kinds of fictions (i.e., fictions of the imagination and fictions of reason) that he describes throughout his major works, only the former of which should be taken as a result of empirical scepticism. The other kind, however, has to be explained as a consequence of Maimon's infamous "rational dogmatism" and is what he characterises as philosophical fictions. I will argue that for Maimon, philosophical fictions provide the methodological means to first articulate the epistemic ideal and cognitive standards, which are the sole grounds from which empirical scepticism and its consequent identification of fictions of the imagination can arise.

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