

At times the truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Matter and habit then draw a veil over our perception, and we return to a darkness almost as dense as before. We are like those who, through beholding frequent flashes of lightning, still find themselves in the thickest darkness of night.

Moses Maimonides.

Through the quote, Maimonides implicitly establishes that we are estranged further from truth due to the nature of humans to influence by the nature of our being, namely matter and habit. However, does the exploration of truth necessitate a perfect, ontologically inert truth that we can ground our foundations on? Does truth, necessarily have to shine as brightly as Maimonides states? I will explore this facet in my essay, providing my stance on why certain facets of Maimonides' position are faulty in the sense that truth is not necessarily akin to the light of day that he posits, but to extrapolate further from that, on why the establishment of the definition of truth being an object that has to be independent to that of matter and habit, and not one that can be reconciled with it instead is one that instead disparages man further from it.

To then lay down a few key definitions, with how Maimonides presents his quote, there are a few things that we have to understand:

1. The phrase 'truth shines so brilliantly' refers to Maimonides' ontologically sound basis of truth at hand, which happens to be the truth that is often estranged by matter and habit itself;
2. Matter refers to that not of physical matter that's held or touched, it instead refers to affairs that often concern our lives, i.e. sociopolitical affairs, economic affairs and so forth;
3. Habits, that we as humans more often than not fall back onto, like our routines, activities and repetitions of daily life that we are very much used to, and likewise, formulate biases that we often fall back upon;
4. The 'frequent flashes of lightning' then being certain objects that challenge and question our beliefs, habits and biases to bring us closer to the presumed 'light' or ontological truth that Maimonides, freeing us from the 'thickest darkness of the night' that refers to the estrangement of us from said truth. The 'frequent flashes of lightning' then, act as a beacon that, albeit unpermanent, seemingly provide temporarily relief of the light of truth.

The first critique I'd posit in regards to the quote is that the existence of matter and habit do not draw a veil over our perception, they instead aid the seekers of truth to reach a closer, more refined version of the truth they seek. From the quote, Maimonides posits that the biggest inhibitors to our perception are that of matter and habit, in regards to how they enshroud us into darkness even further. The reason why I am then inclined to disagree with this is due to how human beings are often products and culminations of their social realities, and likewise matters and habits – to illustrate, an individual existing in the realm of social academia and adjacent institutions would often have their beliefs rooted, or at the least affected by the teachings of lecturers and teachers around them. If we were to say that these objects of thought around them would not teach them to question themselves and allow them to get a closer truth, would that not be egregious? A result from questioning and discourse, is that they would be forced to defend the beliefs and assumed truths they yield. We are then forced to question ourselves because of matter and habit, which function as the flashes of lightning instead of a veil. The reason why I am aligned in disagreeing with his definition of truth and how matter and habit enshrines us from it, is that if we were to hold onto the constant unchanging belief that a certain object needs to be right and forever right to be the truth, we would instead have no progress or questioning socially, and we would be led to ground our beliefs on unchanging assertions. Questioning is what allows individuals to reach closer to the truth, even if it may not be the ontologically unchanging and inert truth of Maimonides, as if one constantly holds something to be true without questioning, it would most often than not end up

being a primitive, ignorant belief resulting from one shutting themselves out from rigid questioning of their truth. Take the matter of questioning gender for example, which was inherently seen by many to be fundamentally unchanging – past precedences such as misogynistic behaviours that fundamentally displaced women for centuries, earliest seen through statements by Plato stating that the ontological truth was that women couldn't be considered as beings with souls, to the extents of Marx saying that even if sociologically, everything around us would shift and change, that genders would remain discrete and inert. Many of these claims prove to be wrong, as gender can be seen to have undergone ameliorations in regards to assisting not just women, but also gendered minorities via movements such as the feminist or LGBTQ+ movement as a whole, all serve as reminders that the assumption that matter and habit draws a veil over our perception, is in fact, false. To further illustrate my point, I am inclined to integrate Harding's belief of feminist standpoint epistemology – whereby there are certain experiences that are just inaccessible by virtue of epistemic access (the ability to access one's experiences, senses etc. fully as if they were their own), such as the pains of biological structures like childbirth, or that of sociological oppression through disenfranchisement of basic rights like voting, owning property and others. Truth is only further illustrated when women present what the matters and habits that have systemically oppressed them were, and it is very much clear that men at that time have not felt the same pain, being the arbitrators of power as well as those who committed unto women said oppression.

It is clear to us now that the equality of genders is required, and even to an extent, a truth that must exist in society, but this truth was never present in the minds of great thinkers then – the veil of perception was then not because of matter, or habit. It was instead, broken by matter, matters that have displaced women for years, as well as habit, that of self-preservation that drove women to fighting against the unjust displacement of women as a whole. It has led us to shape a new truth that is relative to the protection of salient groups, evolved from the matters and habits that we have.

However, even if we were to say that certain truths are relative, it would be egregious to claim that all truths are, as it would mean that everything would have to change given a specific degree of time. Ontological structures require fundamental starting points to derive conclusions from, and how I would further illustrate this argument is by first bringing in Luther's stance on religion and faith, which is widely regarded as an unchanging truth for many, as well as Bentham's underlying foundation of utilitarianism in terms of the Greatest Happiness Principle. Luther's claim, is that the bifurcation of the state's affairs and religious faith has to always be in place (I've already elaborated on the former in the previous argument) due to how the operation of faith necessitates unchanging belief. Attempting to assign change to God, would defeat the purpose of religion and God in the first place, as one's belief in God is contingent on His greatness. For example, Christian thinkers like St. Paul, Aquinas, Luther etc. state that the Commandments are done not because of a social reason, but as a reason-in-itself. This is because by assigning matters and habits such as morality and social realities would instead estrange the whole point of them. If we were to commit to the Commandments out of morality, it would mean we were attempting to fulfill a degree of goodness in our own interest, to feel good for being a pious individual. If we were to commit to the Commandments out of the belief that God is all knowing, and we would be punished for it, it would mean that we were acting out of self-interest, to not go to hell and instead corrupt the value of truth and goodness within the Commandments. However, do not assume that this claim is only present in religious faith – Bentham's principle in utilitarianism may be seen to be an object completely independent of faith to operate, yet it also assumes an unchanging truth, which is that of the goodness within the Greatest Happiness Principle. If we were to bring the greatest degree of utility to society, we would have to build our basis on it, the basis of providing the most amount of happiness to the most amount of people. After all, the whole of utilitarianism and its goals to assist the people would not stand if we had a constantly changing moral base, with no grounded truth on right and wrong. There are structures of truth which would need to stand firm for us to be able to

gain benefit, and these truths are unaffected by matter or habit, for to help the most amount of people, we would have to ensure that we have a firm ground to stand on.

To quote Bentham, 'to move the Earth, one must stand on another', it is shown that if we were to question unchanging truths, it would always come from the point of another facet, and thus, would be hard to fully credit within the field itself due to certain nuances not carrying over from one domain to another. We can't use social realities to change the essence of faith of believers, and likewise we would not be able to change morality with considerations outside that of the happiness of people. Maimonides' belief of matter and habit clouding our perception then shines through in this instance.

However, the issue with the above critique is that faith and belief are not necessarily grounded, as so with morality. The issue with asserting an inert truth is that it is most often authoritative, it is most often suited and crafted by those who had power in the first place, and it is more often than not, a reflection of the needs, social realities and habits that people have had. 'Truth' is the arbitrator – but not one that is just, nor is it one that is correct. Think faith, the previous example that I portrayed. It is not as unchanging as one may say, as a lot of the doctrine, dogmatic belief that churches held in antiquity, were more often than not, metrics set to oppress that of the other and instead consolidate their own power in the state. The bifurcation of the state and faith that Luther presents is precisely a critique of this, as faith had proceeded to affect social realities and powers of the state, and likewise, to maintain powers of the state, religious officials held egregious claims that stemmed from their unchanging dogmas of faith, much like how they thought that homosexuality was unnatural, or how nonbelievers were necessarily sinners who would go to hell, unjustly punishing those who did not fit into their confines of truth. Their truth that they assumed to shine brilliantly, instead affected others and led themselves astray from a truth accessible to all as a result of them rejecting the matters at hand and habits of others. They only fell back to their rigorous belief systems, unable to convince others of a similar truth. Conversely, thinkers such as Aquinas successfully avoid making the same mistake, attempting to ameliorate Christian thought with the consolidation of Aristotelean psychology and metaphysics to convince and allow for more individuals to opt in. Only falling back onto dogmas can be seen to convince many who are religious, but it is only through consolidation from outside fields that we would be able to generate intersectionality between thinkers. Intersectionality, however, does not just apply to strictly religious contexts, but also that of morality. The belief Bentham holds that there is always an unchanging Greatest Happiness Principle is not applicable, as even the definitions of happiness vary from person to person, and considerations of utility are in the end, contingent on predictions that don't always yield true. One could enjoy the pleasures of monetary wealth, but would pleasures of monetary wealth necessitate happiness of everyone? Truths vary from person to person and are relative to circumstance, and there are realities in which morality simply does not function in an unchanging vacuum – there will always be differences and deviances which we fail to account that contribute to us getting closer to a better system. Even in systems of law such as the Beccarian model (the belief that holds that the standard prioritises semblances and similarities instead of every minute detail within a case), which function as a medium to ensure that individuals would not be subject to disparagement, and to get closest to the truth, are still affected by circumstance. One would be charged guilty of homosexuality in a religious country but not that of a secular state, cases may not account for one's mental state at the time of committing a crime, or individuals may even be trialed as guilty just because of their skin colour. One may then ask, isn't it exactly because these issues occur, that it is a concession that matter and habit affects morality unjustly? If one were to follow the code and truth of law to smallest detail, wouldn't that mean we could avoid them? My answer is no, because even if we do agree that matter and habit draw veils over perception, the assumption of unchanging circumstance would lead to no social change – people would not have intersecting beliefs, and the power of arbitration then lies in that of the people in power. There

would be no regulation or amelioration of the truth. The more we believe that the truth is unchanging, the more that we use truth to shut down avenues of enshrining and consolidating it. The dismantling of past precedences and cleaving of rigid assumptions is how we get closer to a truth that could help all, and even if we have longer periods of darkness in the night, we would have more frequent flashes of lightning, more discourse and questioning in which its value lies within shaping a more perfect truth in the end. Solely relying on rigid, authoritative and oppressive beliefs has seen to instead displace more people from the truth. The more essentialist a truth presents itself as, the more the reason for us to question why exactly we come to those conclusions, and we instead free ourselves from said limitations.

We have established that truth within morality is relative, however, given the nature of truths, this is not enough to disprove Maimonides' statement. If truth is deemed to be relative, can we then yield the same assumption in a metaphysical, ontological sense? Is truth, then ameliorated by matters and habits that we yield, allowing us to be closer to a pure, ontologically reliable truth? The shift from truth of morality to the truth within ontology is then crucial, as it instead becomes a matter of tackling the basis of what truth exactly presents. We then need to shortly redefine what matter and habit refer to here to better suit that of ontology:

1. Matter is no longer just a consideration of relative, social matters. It becomes the perception that individuals yield towards beings, structures and truths that occurs within the timeframe of our existence;
2. Habit is defined as the natural limitations of humans due to our nature, whereby we are unable to fully experience objects as-is their essence, but only within our perceptions and timeframes of them.

Even with essentialist critiques and positions of thinkers such as Aristotle, Spinoza and others, I posit that ontological truth is one that cannot remain dormant, precisely because it discredits the processes of change in the process of one object becoming another, and thus, having their essence changed. Why Aristotle and Spinoza both fail in this regard, is in attempting to assign essences to objects in the sense that they cannot change, which I will discredit by illustrating how essences shift and change with time and how time affects the truth of objects even in an ontological sense. It may seem extremely obvious to us that a rock is a rock, but when a rock is no longer a rock by how it is weathered by the seasons into sand, would that rock-essence still stand true? Under an Aristotelean or Spinozean lens, it is now sand, and not a rock, but we cannot say the essence of a rock is gone. We can only say that the essence that the form currently holds is that of sand. Through an essentialist lens, one would say that it is because of matter and habit within our perception that the essence of the rock is now lost, or that it is because of the form of the object that makes it so that we believe otherwise, yet the issue lies within the fact that essence only sees objects as one, or the other, and not a process that can be bridged by time. It is precisely because we have a grasp of temporality, the sense of time and being, that we know that sand is formed from rock, and whilst the essence of a rock does not exist now, it precedes the existence of sand, thus changing its essence to sand. We are able to free ourselves from the darkness of the ever-changing nature of objects that are caused by our mattering and habits, precisely because we have the recognition that they exist in contexts and times. I am then aligned to further strengthen this with Heidegger's philosophy, via bridging Heidegger's idea of temporality to that of Maimonides' perception of truth, matter and habit. Heidegger's critique towards ontology, is that because the whole of ontology treats the idea of 'being' as is, that being is just a matter of existence and the fundamental focal point that ontology falls back to as a starting point (in the sense that nobody bothers to define what being is simply because it is seen as a truth in itself), that it is because of this, that we are unable to properly define what 'being' is simply because it has been boiled down to a brilliantly shining truth of Maimonides. Perceiving 'being' as clear as day is what leads to the blindness of man. It is easy to assume that being is just being, completely independent of our matters and habits like many philosophers of forms and essence talk about, but is it really true that we cannot use matters and habits to gain more from the truth? It is because we have the perception of Wasein (being, but affected by time and its

processes) that we are able to restructure an ontology that accommodates for the matter and habit that draws veils over our perception – it is then here that Maimonides' claim that matter and habit, which I define as both being temporal processes, veil over our perception. We recognise the temporality of objects precisely because we are affected by time, but it is because we have this recognition that we do not limit ourselves to that of an oppression of knowledge by virtue of accommodating for unchanging truth. Maimonides' consideration is that of an unchanging essence, but these essences become disjointed in the presence of time, which is then considered by a Heideggerian lens.

What this entails is that the presuppositions we yield towards objects, are more often than not, only states of being that an object has. We can say that truth shines brilliantly in these places, but even if one were to say that it fades and becomes dark due to our matter and habit, attempting to forcefully accommodate an ontological structure that does not account for these issues, and instead trying to shut off these issues like most philosophers of essence, would instead diminish the truth further. Ontological truths are then also relative to circumstance and evolution of time, and the recording of this evolution can only be done through that of matter and habit.

This argument, however, still falls flat because it does not discredit the fact that attributes can be shared among objects. Through a Spinozean lens, essences of objects can share attributes as extensions of themselves, and in this case, the process of a rock forming sand is still logical, and within the confines of that ontological structure. It is a truth in a different form, and we are able to account for this even without the process of time. We can then say, that the presence of matter and habit serves no purpose because temporality isn't a matter of consideration then, it is only an add-on to that of other faculties such as reason that we can deduct processes of objects from. Matter and habit then become inferior ways to achieve this, especially in the metrics of reason that has been structured. We have to note, the reason why matter and habit become inferior to Spinoza's essence, is because that time itself can become the 'truth' that we fall back onto as an assumed, unchanging force. After all, if we note that perception differs from person to person as stated earlier by virtue of epistemic access, how can we then be so sure that matter and habit are even reliable? Reason is not contingent on said perception, as seen through things such as formal logic, where we can see clearly that logical concepts do not require time for us to come to conclusions, and we can deduct and theorise as is without that of matter and habit. We are able to use reason to free ourselves from the faultiness of matter and habit, and as such, shape a structure of ontology that has a reliable fallback point that would not be subject to the authoritative critique of the previous paragraph. Reason also prevails in the sense that it functions to bridge relations of objects in regards to certain exceptions and deviances, making for a system not contingent on that of solely perception. The essence of objects is no longer contingent on perception, it is how we reason and come to conclusions of what exactly they are, how they have come to be and what they will be that we are then able to detract ourselves from the biased, inaccurate perception of time that we yield. If we were to push forward with the assumption that matter and habit, in this case, being both limiting factors that further our pursuit to that of an unchanging truth due to how they are both by nature, temporal, then we would only result in an ontology that is inconsistent and different from individual to individual. It is then inapplicable for all, with matter and habit being privations of truth, whereby reason, which is accessible to all, may act as the way to properly ensure that we do not fall prey to our biases in perception.

The conclusion that this argument yields to detract the ontological superiority of humans, is that we are inhibited by our perceptions simply because of how subjective and inconsistent they are, especially in regards to time. If we were to then use matter and habit as a medium of truth, then we would draw a veil over our perception because of how it is akin to peeling apart a veil with a veil. Attempting to use our perception to overcome issues of our perception, becomes a self-perpetuating cycle that reduces the value of truth itself.

Why can we then assume, however, that reason is fully reliable? After all, reason too is a culmination of our senses, as seen through how we first observe objects in our senses before we can subject them to reason. Matter and habit here then becomes crucial in the sense that both of these temporal processes are the prerequisite to having reason in the first place, and I will explain why an ontology of relations and temporality is one that best suits the 'faulty' perception of man. Our deductions are results of our observations, so if we were to say that those observations were false in the first place, wouldn't that discredit the entirety of reason by saying that the basis of it were faulty? Understanding that essence has changes, and thus extrapolating relationships of objects from it, is how we are then able to get closest to an ontological structure that properly accommodates for that of changes. I am going to further illustrate this with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, which is even more extreme in regards to relationships between objects. To draw comparisons of matter and habit towards D&G's philosophy, we can compare it to that of their explanations of machines within *Anti-Oedipus*. Objects do not exist as essences, but instead as results of processes from attaching themselves onto machines within the body-without-organs, a surface that is deemed to be in constant flow, change, and difference. This is akin to the time and temporality that matter and habit is concerned with, whereby the results of truths are then existing in relation to objects. We can say that a wooden surface with four legs is a table-machine, and a comfortable chair with cushions is a sofa-machine, and that a display with black borders that shows pictures of shows is a television-machine. However, if we were to put these three together, the relation of that would be seen by many as something like a living room. Truths then become relative not just to time, but also their spacial circumstances. How is this then concerned to matter and habit? These two faculties then become a synthesis of the spatiotemporal, whereby it is how we are able to perceive objects through time. Matter may make it so that we always seen objects relative to their circumstance, but it is only through this that we do not restrict ourselves to the rigid confines of just a singular essence at a time that Spinoza has. Habit may make it so that we cannot grasp essences of objects, but this is outside of the concern, as the essences of objects are irreconcilable with humans precisely because we are always beings of time.

Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is vastly different from that of traditional essences, as it completely disregards the essences of objects and reframes essences through that of a machine-esque nature defined by relations, but it is in the end, most suited to the limited perceptions of man that are always affected by his surroundings. Seeking connection is what we are able to do best within our confines of habit and matter, and not attempting to brute-force that of perceiving abstract essences that aren't affected by time.

Briefly, humans are different from other objects and essences in the sense that we are beings affected by time, in which attempting to assign a rigid, unchanging truth that may exist forever is nigh impossible for us. Whilst matter and habit may affect our perception, it is not through discrediting them that we find a release from said issue. It is only through the understanding that we are beings of relativity, that we soon seek to form connections from one to another, getting closer not just to a social, but also an ontological truth that reconciles our temporality with relation, forming a spatiotemporal domain for us to seek connections within. We cannot focus on that of assigning rigid truths to objects, especially in times of change. We can only seek to find more connections that bring us closer to a truth that is relative to all.