Since his rediscovery in modern literature, Meister Eckhart has often been celebrated as one of the greatest mystics in European intellectual history. At the same time, it is clear for us today that Eckhart’s thought represents a rather unique kind of “mysticism,” one that is deeply rooted in the scholastic rationalistic tradition, somewhere between the German Dominican school established by Albert the Great (“Albertschule”)¹ and the Parisian scholastic theological tradition.² Both traditions are heavily connected with the Christian Latin reception of Arab rationalism that took place between the mid-12th and mid-13th centuries. Hence Eckhart’s mysticism stands at the end of a complex transition process from Arabic falsafa to Christian scholasticism.³ Eckhart’s point of departure, both from his European predecessors and his Arab sources, seems to be closely related to his “modern,” extreme, and often provocative, idealistic formulations.⁴ And it is also connected with a political dimension, where Eckhart the preacher consistently popularizes complicated metaphysical and theological discourse in order to form his “vernacular theology.”⁵ In the following I would like to claim that the major place in which Eckhart expresses simultaneously both his indebtedness to and his liberation from his sources, especially in the last phase of his life, is strongly connected

with one particular source of inspiration—the Arab Jewish writings of “Rabbi Moyses,” alias Maimonides (Arabic: Müsa ibn Maymūn al-Qurtubi; Hebrew: Moshe ben Maimon; Acronym: RaMBaM, 1138–1204). Eckhart’s encounter with Maimonides, as we shall immediately see, is most fascinating precisely because it does not present some simple case of “influence” or some creative but indifferent usage of information ready at hand. Instead, it confronts us with a most rich and complex intellectual encounter, one that bears some surprisingly fruitful results.6

In the framework of this short chapter no full account of that rich intellectual phenomenon can be given. Instead I will try to highlight some essential elements in Eckhart’s reception of Maimonidean ideas and to analyze the basic structure of his methods of reading and interpreting Maimonides’s text.7

Maimonides’s Guide of the Perplexed (arab. Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn, hebr. Moreh ha-Nevukhim, lat. Dux neutrorum seu perplexorum), written in Arabic in Cairo during the last decade of the 12th century, made its way into

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