



The Philosophy of Don Hasdai Crescas

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The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Ser., Vol. 10, No. 2/3. (Oct., 1919 - Jan., 1920), pp. 291-308.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF DON HASDAI CRESCAS

BY MEYER WAXMAN, New York.

CHAPTER VI

TELEOLOGY AND ETHICS.

THERE are four possible ends which may be the goal of human life, (*a*) either the practical-ethical, that is, the perfection of morals, (*b*) or contemplation, or happiness, which may be (*c*) material, or (*d*) spiritual. The object is, then, to determine which of these is the final end, for while all may be mediate ends, there must be a final one which is the highest of all. Crescas proceeds then to eliminate some. Material happiness cannot be thought of as a final end in view of the fact that we posited as a possible end also spiritual happiness. A final end must *eo ipso* be the highest; but material happiness, no matter how great, is only temporal, while spiritual, meaning the happiness of the soul, may be eternal. It follows that the balance is on the side of soul happiness. As for the perfection of morals, though it is undoubtedly a great end, it cannot be viewed as a final end. It is the means to purify the soul and overcome the passions that prevent the soul from reaching the desired perfection. It also helps to bring out the latent qualities and develop the powers of the soul, and as such it is a subsidiary one. It is rather curious to hear such an opinion from Crescas, who showed himself several times endowed with a true ethical spirit,

and giving an autonomous basis to good deeds, to speak of morality as preparatory to development of contemplative power, the very idea which he immediately combats.²³⁵ It may be explained that even Crescas had to pay his toll to the spirit of the age.

Crescas devotes some attention to the discussion of the perfection of thought and contemplation as a final end. Some (most likely he refers to Gersonides), he says, have developed such a theory. It is known that the mind becomes assimilated with the conceptions it perceives. In other words, the substance of the mind increases by means of the conceptions, and so we have finally an acquired mind (שכלהנקה) which is to a certain degree different from the potential mind, or, as Aristotle called it, the passive mind.²³⁶ Since this acquired mind is different from the potential in so far as the last is only potency, Gersonides as well as Crescas in exposition calls that *hiilulian*, after analogy of *ύλη*, matter, potential. It is eternal in spite of being generated, for it has no cause of destruction since it does not contain anything material. Eternal happiness will therefore consist in contemplation and reason, for it is this only that gives immortality.²³⁷ The higher the conception, the greater the degree of

²³⁵ ואולם שלמות המדות אין בהם היות סבה עצמית בזוכך הנפש ואורה והסר ממנה תלאתה והתקרשת מטומאות מתאוות הקנאה והנצוח שהם סבות הקרובות (מקרבות והכנה לפתח) לכבוי אורה אשר כל זה הצעה המושכלות בה *Or Adonai*, p. 52 a-b.

²³⁶ This idea of an acquired 'nous' was already taught by Alexander, from whom the mediaeval philosophers borrowed it. See Zeller, *Greek Philosophy*, p. 296; also *Milhamot* by Gersonides, sect. 1, chs. 1, 2.

²³⁷ לזה תהיה ההצלחה הנצחית במושכלות הנקנות וכל עוד שנושגין מושגים רבים תהיה ההצלחה יותר גדולה וכל שכן כאשר יהיו המושגים יותר יקרים בעצמם *Or Adonai*, p. 52 b; also *Milhamot*, sect. 1, chs. 7-14.

eternity and that of happiness. Even during life we experience pleasure from thinking, and so much more after death, when, freed from hindrances, the acquired reason unites with the active reason (*ποιητικὸς νοῦς*) and the range of conception is increased, and in the same degree also that of the intellectual pleasure. In that theory there are to be distinguished two tendencies, a more rationalistic and a religious. The first says that happiness increases with the number of ideas, of whatever character these ideas may be, whether of the physical or the spiritual world, for the active reason contains in itself the order of all existing things, and so the larger the scope of ideas the nearer the approach to the active reason on the part of the acquired. The second emphasizes the necessity of acquiring true ideas of God and the spiritual world.

Against this theory Crescas directs his criticism. If, as the intellectualistic theory asserts, the acquired reason is a separate thing, and remains eternal while the body as well as the soul, that is the perceptive one, perishes, it is impossible that this perfection should be the end of life. Otherwise, we should have the anomalous phenomenon of a being striving for an end which is really not its own perfection, but of another being which is quite distinguished from itself. It does not agree with reason nor with Divine justice that the reward and punishment should be meted out to a being which really has very little to do with the one who followed the precepts or transgressed them.²³⁸ Besides, the theory *per se* is full of contradictions, since the acquired reason is something different from the hiulian, that is the ordinary perceptive, mind, then it has no subject

²³⁸ *Or Adonai*, p. 53 a.

out of which it is generated; it follows, then, that it is generated out of nothing, which is contradictory to all principles. Again, there is a contradiction in terms in the dictum that reason acquires its essence through the conceptions. Which reason is meant here? Shall we say the hiilalian? But its essence is not acquired, it is given; and the essence acquired through conceptions is something different. It must then be the acquired reason; but it is impossible to speak of it as reason since it does not exist as yet.²³⁹ It is evident from the foregoing that the intellectualistic theory is untenable. It remains for us to find a *tertium quid* which shall serve as the final end leading to spiritual happiness and eternity. This Crescas finds in the love of God.²⁴⁰ It is not an intellectual concept by all means, and widely different from the Peripatetic notion as well as the Spinozistic, though the intellect may be a useful ingredient in it. It is best understood and conceived after the consideration of three propositions. First, that the human soul which is the form of the body is a spiritual being and potential in regard to conception. The second, that the perfect being loves the good and perfection, and that desire for it as well as its intensity is proportional to the degree of perfection the said being possesses. Third, that love and intensity of desire for a thing are not related to the intellectual vigour employed in conceiving that thing.²⁴¹ The establishment of these three propositions is very interesting, for the first proposi-

ומהם שהמאמר הזה סותר נפשו כי כשהונח שהשכל מתעצם ממשניו²³⁹ הנה אין הכוונה בו השכל ההיולני, וזה שהשכל שהתעצם כבר הונח נבדל מזה מההיולני ואם נבויין בו אל השכל הנקנה הנה אמרנו שהוא מתעצם

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53 b.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54 a.

tion contains in a short form the psychology of Crescas, while the other two relate to the foundation of his ethical theory. The soul is the form of the body, for we see that on its departure the body becomes corrupted just as do things without form. Again, it is spiritual, for it possesses powers which are not dependent on the senses, such as imagination, memory, and reason. It is potential of conception or reasoning, for it is evident that it is the subject of the reasoning power, since that one is related to the body by means of the soul. Crescas then endeavours to prove his statement that the soul is the subject of the potentiality. But as it is objected that since the soul is a form it cannot be a subject, for forms are not subjects for other forms, we must therefore suppose that this is done through the medium of the body.²⁴² This theory is primarily Aristotelean in its main concepts, except that it differs in the concept of immortality.

The second proposition treating of perfection and the love of good is evidenced from the following: God, who is the source and fountain of all perfection, loves the good, for this can be seen through his causing general existence of beings and the continual creation—here we see already the origin of the dictum, 'reality is good', which will play an important part later—and since the causality is all through His will, it is necessitated that the love of the good is an essential conception of His perfection. It follows, then, that the higher the perfection the stronger the love and the intensity of the desire to do good, for God possesses the highest perfection and at the same time the strongest will to do good as evidenced from creation.²⁴³ The third

²⁴² It is all Aristotelean.

²⁴³ ואם הב' תתאמת כן לבי שהוא ידוע שהשם יתברך מקור ומבוע

one, asserting that intensity of desire is independent of reasoning, is proved by definition of the terms. Will is a relation between the appetitive and the imaginative powers, and according to the degree of relation will be the intensity of the desire. Reason, on the other hand, depends on concepts and principles, both of which reside in the reasoning faculty, and that faculty is different from the imaginative and appetitive. It is evident that intensity of desire is independent of reason. After establishing these three propositions, Crescas formulates his theory of immortality and purpose, which follow as a result of the premises. Since it has been proved in the first proposition that the soul is a spiritual being, it may be immortal after its departure from the body, for it has no factors of corruption. The second proposition showed us that the love of the good is proportional to the degree of the perfection of the soul; the converse follows that the higher the good loved, the higher the perfection. It is evident, therefore, that the love of God, who is infinitely good, is necessary for the perfection of the soul. As for the independence of this love of contemplation and intellectual exercise, it was established by the third proposition.²⁴⁴ It is seen, then, that the essential thing for the perfection of the soul is something independent of contemplation, and that is the love of God. Since we have seen that there is nothing lasting about man except his soul, and

מהשלמיות כלם והוא יתברך לשלמותו אשר הוא עצמותו אוהב הטוב למה שנראה מפעולותיו בהמצאת המציאות בכלל והתמדתו וחדושות מיד זוה אמןם ברצונו הפשוט היה בהכרח אהבת הטוב משיג עצמו לשלמותו
Or Adonai, p. 54 b.

ולפי שהתבאר בני' שהאהבה והערבות בה זולת ההשכלה הנה העצמי ²⁴⁴
 לשלמות הנפש הוא דבר זולת ההשכלה והוא האהבה
Ibid., p. 55 a.

that the perfection of the soul consists in the love of God and the intensity of that love, it follows that this is the end and purpose of human life.

In positing the love of God as an end of human life Crescas laid the foundation of a high ethical system, for the love of God is urged not on religious mystical ground, as the Neo-Platonists used to speak of a longing of the soul to return to its source, but mainly because the love of God is really the love of good. The centre of ethical virtue is transferred from the mind to the heart, from the cold logical syllogisms to the warm feeling of man. It is not the contemplative side that is emphasized, as has been done continually from Aristotle down, but the practical side. This part, however, would not speak so much for Crescas's originality, for it simply keeps in line with the pure Jewish ethics, but what is interesting in Crescas is that he raises the ethical principle to a cosmic one, since he sees in it the basis of creation, as follows.

There are two final ends; though this statement seems contradictory at first, yet it can be made consistent. The word 'final' must be viewed under two different aspects, in respect to human life and action, and in respect to God.²⁴⁵ As for the first, we have already seen what that end is. As regards the Divine purpose, it must be the distribution of good. The final end spoken of does not refer only to the human genus, but to the universe as a whole. There is a manifest purpose in it, in spite of the prevailing necessity of natural law, and the purpose

²⁴⁵ אלא שמציאות ב' התכליות מחויבים כמו שקדם אבל בבחינות מתחלפות כי הנה בבחינת המצווה התכלית האחרון הוא האהבה ובבחינת מתחלפות כי הנה בבחינת המצווה התכלית האחרון הוא הקנאת הטוב *Or Adonai*, p. 56b.

is really one in genus in regard to man and the universe.²⁴⁶

But in order to conceive this 'purpose' clearly, a little more discussion as regards the becoming of the world is necessary. It is accepted that the universe in its manifoldness presents a certain unity and an interdependence of its parts. This unity would lead us to accept the unity of purpose, but here a problem presents itself to us. It is known that from the simple arises the simple, and since God is the absolute simplest being, whence then the multitude of composite beings? The various answers proposed to that problem are insufficient. The theory of emanations, which sees in existence a gradual descending scale from pure spirituality to materiality, is inadequate, for the problem is still there. Whence the matter? Another explanation, saying that the caused beings by being caused, that is, by being possible of existence, acquire compositeness, and the lower the being in the scale of emanations the greater the compositeness, for the cause of it is also possible, since it is the third or fourth emanation, is also weak. A thing may be composite in regard to its existence, but simple in regard to essence. Crescas offers, therefore, his solution. It is true that if the process of causation were a mechanical one there would be no place for composition, but the fact is that it is a voluntary one. It is the will of God that is the cause of all beings, and it is through it that they arise. But here the question arises, How can a simple being have more than one will? for in the positing of the manifold, we shall have to see

²⁴⁶ ואומר כי למה שהתבאר במה שהמציאות טוב והיה התכלית בזאת התורה הקנאת הטוב . . . הנה הוא מבואר שהתכלית לכלל הנמצאים ושאך התורה אחד בסוג הוא הטוב *Or Adonai*, p. 59 b.

a manifold expression of the will. To this Crescas replies that the unity of the will consists in goodness. The will to do good and distributing it is the predominant feature²⁴⁷ (the real question of will as creative cause will be discussed later in chapter VII, it is only brought in here casually). It is already manifest that the purpose in the universe is one. It is creative, not as an end to be realized, but as a cause. The conception of it, according to Crescas, is best put in syllogistic form. The will of God is the will to do good. Existence or reality is goodness. Hence the existing universe carries its own purpose within it.

In comparing the Spinozistic conception of the love of God (of = for) with that of Crescas, we cannot help noticing the striking similarity in form, yet there is a vast difference as to contents. There is much discussion on the subject, by those who assert that Spinoza in this important teaching of his was greatly influenced by Maimonides and Crescas, his predecessors, and those who deny such influence. Of the first, the most vigorous is Joel, who ventured to go as far as to assert that Spinoza's expression, 'The intellectual love of God', is borrowed from two sources, the 'love' from Crescas, and 'intellectual' from Maimonides.²⁴⁸ That Joel went too far in his assertion, and that his conclusions are unjustifiable, is evident from a strict comparison. However, a thorough investigation of the theory and that of Maimonides would be beyond the limits of our work; we shall, therefore, limit ourselves to Crescas.

וזה שאם היות השכל יחייב היות לאחד הפשט רצון אחד פשוט²⁴⁷— גם כן הנה יתאמת אחדות הרצון הזה בהטבה— ולהיות כל מציאות טוב— היה להטבת האל יתברך, *Or Adonai*, p. 60 a.

²⁴⁸ Joel, *Spinoza's Theologisch-Politischer Tractat*, Vorwort, X.

The conception of the love of God in Spinoza forms an integral part of his system, as any of his fundamental ideas. It is strictly connected with his conception of freedom, as well as with his psychology. The freedom of Spinoza, as seen,²⁴⁹ is freedom from emotions, and doing such things as follow from the very essence of man and tend to self-preservation. This freedom can be obtained by inculcating in the mind a kind of controlling idea or power. But in proportion as a mental image is referred to more objects, so it is more frequent or more often vivid, and occupies the mind more.²⁵⁰ It follows, then, that the idea of God, which really means the comprehension of the exact order of the universe, and through which man conceives himself clearly and distinctly,²⁵¹ is such an idea which may control the mind,²⁵² and therefore occupy the chief place in it. This endeavour to reach the heights of understanding is termed love, for love is by definition²⁵³ pleasure accompanied with the idea of an external cause. In this conception of God we have pleasure, for pleasure is defined as a transition from lesser to greater perfection, and in conceiving the idea of God we are acquiring greater perfection, that is, more of reality and truth. Again, we conceive the causality in its fullest aspect. It is also the highest virtue of the mind, for virtue in the Spinozistic conception is power or man's essence.²⁵⁴ This love arises only through the third kind of knowledge, or intuition,²⁵⁵ namely, the possession of an adequate idea of the absolute essence of God which is eternal, for God is eternal, hence

²⁴⁹ Cp. above, chapter VI.

²⁵⁰ *Ethics*, V, proposition XI.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, proposition XV.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, proposition XVI.

²⁵³ Definition of Emotions, 6, II.

²⁵⁴ *Ethics*, III, def. VIII, 4, p. 28.

²⁵⁵ Scholium to proposition XLI, Book II, p. 32.

also the knowledge of Him; it follows also that the love which arises through it is eternal. It is the quality of eternity which Spinoza connects with the love of God, that supplies a basis to the doctrine of immortality. There is something eternal in the human mind, for in God there is something that expresses the essence of the body and the mind, that essence must therefore be eternal.²⁵⁶ The eternity increases the more the mind conceives things under the form of eternity,²⁵⁷ and this is accomplished by the knowledge of God. It follows therefore that the mind which possesses the love of God is blessed, for it attains to acquiescence of mind,²⁵⁸ and perfect, since it is more of reality that it conceives, and eternal.²⁵⁹ Such is Spinoza's conception of the love of God.

From the foregoing it is evident that there is very little in common between the Crescasian and the Spinozistic love of God as far as the contents are concerned, and that Joel can hardly be justified in saying that Spinoza borrowed a part of it from Crescas. The first is voluntaristic, emotional, and special emphasis is laid upon the degree and intensity of the love. The second is intellectualistic and causal. Yet, as we remarked on previous occasions, in spite of their divergence there are some points of contact. Both systems have perfection for their basis. Crescas as well as Spinoza asserts that the love of God is intimately connected with perfection, and the more perfect a man is the higher the love of God; and, moreover, perfection in both systems has a background of reality. Again, according to both of them, the love of God is a means to obtain immortality, the first reaching it by a religious

²⁵⁶ V, p. 23.²⁵⁷ V, p. 39.²⁵⁸ p. 28.²⁵⁹ p. 39.

ethical yearning, the second by a kind of thought absorption.

Looking upon those two kinds of the love of God from an ethical point of view, namely, valuing them as ethical factors in human life, the preference ought to be given to that of Crescas. His love of God is a glowing emotional force. It is a strong desire to do good for the sake of God, for this is the way to perfection, while that of Spinoza, though serene and sublime, yet breathes cold; there is the fate of necessity hanging over it, and while it may endow a man with a brave stoicism and a kind of asceticism, yet it can hardly arouse emotions of altruism and self-sacrifice, for it is more of a negative than positive character.

That there is no purpose in nature follows from the whole system of Spinoza. He who sees everything *sub specie necessitatis* and eternal law, must perforce be a stringent antagonist of teleology. Spinoza accordingly expresses himself in his scholium to the First Book of *Ethics* deploringly of those who posit final causes in the world, or that God works for a certain end. Such a conception, according to him, is a lowering of the notion of God, and he says that it arose merely through human imagination. He is, therefore, at the first glance, wholly contradictory to Crescas, for the latter speaks of a purpose on the part of God in creating the world, yet, as has been already pointed out, the purpose of Crescas is merely an ethical one, and is not an end but a cause of beginning. As such all Spinozistic arguments against teleology fall short of it. Crescas, strengthened by the theory of purpose, makes his ethical view, the will to do good, a cosmic principle. The 'purpose' of Crescas, if examined thoroughly, amounts almost to the necessity of Spinoza, but this will be brought out in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

DIVINE WILL AND CREATION.

CRESCAS, in basing his theory of creation, begins with a long polemical essay against those who maintain the eternity of the world, as well as against Maimonides and Gersonides, examining the physical arguments of the former, and proving the insufficiency of the defence of creation by the latter. We thought it necessary to omit all these arguments, as most of them are based on a false and antique view of nature. We shall limit ourselves to Crescas's own view, and select those points which have philosophical value.

In introducing his view, Crescas produces a general argument against those who posited the co-eternity of matter—the Peripatetics—Gentile as well as Jewish, Gersonides representing the latter. If, he says, as we have proved, God is to be conceived as the only being who is necessary of existence, it follows that all other beings, whether spiritual or material, are possible of existence and related to God as a fact to cause in some way. We cannot speak, therefore, of matter as co-existing, but as sub-existing. It is brought about by God, and it does not matter whether that bringing about is by necessity or free will. Crescas here makes a peculiar use of the term creation. He does not endeavour to prove the novelty as against the eternity of the world in the Maimonidian sense, but *creatio ex nihilo* to him means that everything was caused by God, and

outside Him nothing exists.²⁶⁰ There is, however, a great difference whether we assume the world eternal or novel, for in the first case we assume the potency of God infinite, in the other finite. Moreover, since God's potency is also eternal, it follows that existence is produced by God always and necessarily.²⁶¹

However, existence may be caused by God in a two-fold way, either through emanation, where the effect flows from the cause in a natural way, or through will. Crescas assumes that although the existence of the universe may be necessary, yet it is not through emanation but through will. Since we conceive God as a thinking being, it follows that together with the bringing about of existing things there ought to be a conception or presentation of that existence. Again, a thinking principle wills what it desires, we therefore conceive creation as through will. Moreover, the theory of emanation will always have to grapple with the problem of the manifold and the one. Since we have established that God is the sole principle of existence, the question of the existence of the composite is a menacing one. We must therefore have recourse to the theory of the will. Existence as a whole is good, and from this side as far as it is good it is simple. It is true that viewing it from a different angle it is manifold, but the goodness and perfection of existence consist in the manifold being one. It is evident, therefore, that since reality is good and one, God in so far as He is good must necessarily create, hence the necessity of existence through will.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ אבל הכונה באמרנו יש מאין הוא שנתהוה אחר ההעדר ושלא היה קודם, ל' נושא נמצא קודם, *Or Adonai*, p. 69 a.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Further הטוב במה שהוא טוב אחד פשוט . . . ועוד שמה מבורא

It must be admitted that Crescas has not made philosophically clear how matter was created, and in what relation it stands to God. While he combats vigorously the co-existence of matter and makes it dependent upon God, he does not point out in what way it was brought about. To all difficulties arising from the manifold and one, or the generation of matter from form, he answers that the fact that creation was through will meets the difficulty.²⁶³ But how and in what way the will expressed itself so as to produce a world of matter is not explained. To one form of the problem which expresses itself in the objection that since like produces like, how then could God who is form produce matter which is unlike, he answers that since existence arose through the goodness of God the rule holds true: God is good, reality is good, so the like produced a like result. This, however, does not answer the question, for the difficulty how matter arose still remains. He seems to fall back evidently on the religious conception that God as omnipotent can do everything.

A stronger relapse from his strictly logical principles into the upholding of a religious doctrine, which is absolutely contradictory to Crescas's whole trend of thought, is noticed in his asserting the novelty of the world. According to his remarks, in refuting some arguments, it follows, since God stands in no relation to time, and all times are the same to Him; and the more, since the world is dependent on His will and that will is eternal, that the creation is eternal. Yet he seems to be frightened at his own conclusions, and

בעצמו ששלמת הטוב כשיפעל הטוב כשיפעלהו ברצון הוא יותר גדול
לאין שעור משיפעלהו בזולת רצון קוא הנהו מבואר שמהנחתינו חיוב
המצויאות ממנ' יתחייב שיהיה על צד הרצון
Or Adonai, p. 69 a.

²⁶³ *Or Adonai*, p. 70 a.

turns around and says: 'After all, the real truth is as it is handed over in tradition, that the world was created at a certain time.' He hesitates, however, at accepting it at its surface value, and attempts to say that it is possible that there are series of worlds continually being created and destroyed, and that the novelty expressed in tradition refers only to the present world. At any rate, he does not consider it a dogma of faith. Crescas here, like all such theological thinkers, pays the price of stopping short of his own logical conclusions by being inconsistent.²⁶⁴

In comparing Spinoza's view of creation with that of Crescas, we see, as usual, points of likeness and disagreement. Spinoza defines creation as an operation in which there are no other causes but the efficient one, or that created things are such to whose existence nothing is presupposed but God.²⁶⁵ What Spinoza intends by this definition is to exclude not only a material cause but also a final, as he himself explains in the same chapter.²⁶⁶ It is exactly in the same spirit that Crescas conceives creation, as has been shown. Crescas's whole tractate, though named 'Concerning the Novelty of the World', tries only to prove that the world was created *ex nihilo*, and, as has been shown, in the sense that nothing exists outside God and that matter is not co-existing. Spinoza says that he omitted the words *ex nihilo* because those who use it construe it as if the *nihil* is a subject out of which things were created.²⁶⁷ In the same strain writes

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ 'Creationem esse operationem in qua nullae causae praeter efficientem concurrant, sive res creata est illa quae ad existendum nihil praeter Deum praesupponit, dicimus igitur' *Cogitata Metaph.*, Pars II, X.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 494 'Quin illi $\tau\acute{o}$ nihil non ut negationem omnes realitates consideraverunt, sed aliquid reale esse finxerunt aut imaginale fuerunt'.

Crescas, that his *ex nihilo* does not mean that *nihil* is a subject, but simply that there was no other outside subject co-existing with God. The fact that Crescas sees an end in the creation of the world, while Spinoza's definition aims to exclude it, does not destroy the similarity, for the end that Spinoza combats is an external one, but that of Crescas is in the essence of God, as has been shown, and differs but little from Spinoza's necessity according to his nature.

Spinoza, like Crescas, comes to the conclusion that the basis for an eternal world is the conception of the infinite potency of God.²⁶⁸ Spinoza, in his first attempts, was not so eager to establish the eternity of the world as much as the continuity of creation, for since the will of God is eternal, creation is eternal.²⁶⁹ The same thought is found in Crescas, as was shown above. Again, a similarity is also found in the conception of the will and intelligence of God as a creative power. It has been already remarked above²⁷⁰ that such a similarity exists, yet to reiterate in passing, Spinoza as well as Crescas sees in creation a kind of reasonable act. In his scholium to proposition XXXII in the First Book of *Ethics*, Spinoza definitely says that God necessarily understands what He wishes, and so things could not be different from what they are, for then God's understanding ought to be different.

As for the divergences, very little ought to be said, for they are patent. Spinoza's term of creation conveys an entirely different meaning from that of Crescas. It is only a convenient word, but in reality it carries with it a necessity, such a necessity as Crescas sought to escape, namely, an

²⁶⁸ 'Nos illam durationem non ex sola contemplatione creaturarum rerum sed ex contemplatione infinitae Dei potentiae ad creandum intellegere.'

²⁶⁹ *Epist. LVIII.*

²⁷⁰ Chapter IV.

immanent one. God acts according to His nature, but whatever that nature is, there is only one thing clear that there is no room in it for voluntary actions in the usual sense. It is just this element that Crescas introduces by his voluntary creations. It is true that Crescas proves the necessity of creation by asserting that God is essentially good, and that he does not conceive of the will of God in the way that we speak of that of man's, but there is the personal element attached to it, from which Spinoza tries to escape. The fact is that the immutability of things, which forms a very important part in Spinoza's system, for it is intimately connected with his principle that things flow from God in the same way as the equality of the three angles of the triangle to two right angles, was wholly missed by Crescas. He, like Spinoza, speaks of continual creation but with an entirely different meaning, for he makes use of it to prove the possibility of miracles. Up to a certain point these two thinkers go together, but later they part company.

It is difficult to describe definitely the extent of influence an earlier thinker may exert upon a latter, especially when the latter does not name the first, but comparing the ideas expressed in *Cogitata Metaphysica*, chapter X, 'De Creatione', and those of Crescas, we find them decidedly similar, and it is a possibility that the latter took his cue from the former.