Hasdai Crescas on the Moral Implications of Determinism

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Preface

The following work is a translation of Abstract V, Part 2 of The Light of the Lord by Hasdai Crescas, and commentary on Chapter 5. This book, a major work by an important thinker of the Middle Ages has not yet been given the attention it deserves. Aside from Harry A. Wolfson's Crescas' Critique of Aristotle, which deals with the first part of Crescas' work, no serious treatment of Crescas exists in English in print.

In the material subsequent to the first part, no subject treated in The Light of the Lord is more interesting than the subject dealt with in our text, where Crescas goes against the flow of Jewish tradition and denies that humans have choice over their actions. The manner in which Crescas tries to harmonize this view with the fact that he nonetheless maintains a doctrine of divine reward and punishment is most interesting indeed, and represents the bulk of our analytical work in this thesis.

The thesis consists of three parts.

In the first part the subject of the translation and commentary is introduced. Some background material on one aspect of the problem which will tie in with the conclusions drawn in the commentary is also presented.

In the second part the translation itself is presented. The reader will note that Chapter 5 is heavily footnoted. These notes indicate areas of analysis in the third part of the thesis.

The third part of the thesis analyzes in some detail the fifth chapter of the translation. This commentary attempts to follow and elucidate the flow of Crescas' argument as he offers his solution to the problem he has posed.

It should be noted in closing that this thesis barely scratches the surface of the text. A good deal more work remains to be done on this Abstract, not to mention the rest of the book, before its relation to the history of philosophy is fully understood.

Introduction

The first three chapters in The Light of the Lord form a dialectical whole. In these chapters Crescas introduces and develops the problem of the nature of the existence of possibility (contingency) in causation as opposed to necessity. In Chapter 1 he presents the view that possibility exists. In Chapter 2 he presents the opposite view, viz., that view that denies possibility and asserts absolute necessity in causation. In Chapter 3 Crescas claims to dissolve the differences posed by the first two opposing sets of arguments by presenting a synthesis of the two, which, he will argue, constitutes the truth of matters on this subject. As Crescas points out in the Introduction to Abstract V, the problem of whether what occurs occurs contingently or necessarily shall be determinative for the consequent view of God's knowledge of particulars, God's Providence, and man's moral accountability for his actions. It would seem, for example, that in a world of contingency, i.e., in a world where what shall happen tomorrow cannot be predicted with certainty from any view of things, to say that God does not know what will happen tomorrow, will determine a particular view of what omniscience is. On the other hand, in a world where what will happen tomorrow will happen necessarily, i.e., God knows what will happen in

some way is the cause of what will happen, and this denies contingency, severe repercussions vis-a-vis man's moral accountability for his actions will follow. For, if the good or bad deed that is to be committed tomorrow is already caused and known by God, and human volition does not play any formative role in determining the outcome of a given situation in which a man is required to make a moral decision, then how shall reward and punishment be said to have any relationship to that deed?

Crescas' problem is caused by his desire to have it both ways. He wants a God who knows particulars as particulars in order to argue for a fully omniscient supreme being, yet he wants moral accountability in order to claim that reward and punishment are operative matters in the universe that are just.

We shall see presently the unfolding of this argument from Crescas' own view as presented in our text, as well as Abstract I of Book Two, in addition to which we will look briefly at an earlier critical debate between Gersonides and Maimonides which has obviously influenced Crescas.

In the first chapter of Abstract V Book Two of The Light of the Lord Crescas presents those views which prima facie prove the existence of the nature of contingency, a problem, he tells us, will be solved both from the point of view of philosophy and Torah. That is, he will offer several arguments in favor of the nature of contingency, and will do so by two distinctly different methods, philosophic and

Toraitic, each understood as existing separately. Now, one of the issues that will pervade our analysis of Chapter 5 is that of the authority of these two sources, i.e., which source is of greater authority for determining a view on a given problem, or, if of equal authority, how are determinations made between them where contradictions appear. This is the classical issue of medieval Jewish philosophy, which takes on an interesting visage with Crescas, as we shall see. In these first three chapters, the argumentation of philosophy and Torah is presented separately, as though each tradition is of equal value. However, as the analysis of Chapter 5 proceeds, it will become clear that in Crescas' view the final authority is to be Torah, though philosophy as a source of knowledge even for determining the appropriate position on a religious problem cannot be totally disregarded.[1] For purposes of our discussion of Chapter 1, I shall describe three of the philosophic arguments, and both of his Toraitic arguments.

The first of these arguments is an argument from causation. According to Aristotle all things come into existence by means of four causes. They are: (a) the efficient cause, that cause through which a thing has being; (b) the final cause, that on account of which a thing has being; (c) the material cause, that in which a thing has being; (d) the formal cause, that into which something is changed. If, for example, I wish to manufacture a pot in order to cook spinach, the causes that militate the existence of

that pot are as follows: The efficient cause is the manufacturer of the pot (me). The final cause is the cooking of spinach. The material cause is the clay. The formal cause is the form or distinctive property of a spinach cooking pot.[2]

In this argument Crescas states that in the case of some things, some of their causes exist and some do not exist. If we stay with our spinach cooking pot example, let us say all of the causes for the existence of this pot exist except the material cause, the clay; there is no clay available. Without clay the other three causes, which do exist, are effectively unable to collaborate to produce the pot in which to cook spinach. Since this kind of situation might conceivably exist, it follows that contingency exists because the assumed breakdown of causes shows that a thing need not necessarily come into existence should one or more of the four causes be lacking.

This is a highly problematic argument, one with which Crescas will take issue in Chapter 3.

Crescas' second argument, which we will see later in similar form with Gersonides, claims that contingency exists because of the nature of human will which can will or not will to bring a thing into existence depending upon any number of circumstances. This argument claims that of those things whose existence depends upon an act of a will, the existence occurs based upon a choice made by that will, and that that willed choice was in no way compelled. There-

fore it follows that the nature of contingency exists. That all choice is uncompelled is not claimed here. That some choice is uncompelled is all that is being claimed here. The major premise of the proposition, viz., that it is clear that man has the power to will or not will, already presumes the existence of contingency, in that the will is defined as a freely choosing entity, which it need not necessarily be. Crescas takes issue with this argument, too, in Chapter 3.

The strongest arguments in this first chapter in support of contingency are those presented from the view of the Torah, which are themselves in actuality certain clear presuppositions of belief, viz., that God gave the Torah to Jews, whose content, commandments, entail a God-human relationship in which God rewards people for obedience and punishes them for disobedience. The individual Jew might obey or not obey the commandments, but it is understood for a system of this sort to function it is necessary to posit a view in which a man is capable of choice in the matter of his conduct. If the existence of commands, and reward and punishment is to be logical and just, Crescas' argument in this chapter contends, there must be some way in which a man's deeds are not determined. For if this were not so--if man's actions were determined--then the commands would be in vain, i.e., they would have no effect upon a man's actions, and reward and punishment would be a perversity, i.e., they would be given by God for illogical and immoral

reasons, since what one does is something over which one has no control. Therefore, these two related arguments about (a) the need for human choice in actions and (b) the perversity of Torah if choice did not exist, claim it is necessary to posit the existence of contingency in order to assert that man's actions are not determined, and its corollary, that since reward and punishment "is one of the most essential principles of the Torah, it necessarily follows that man possesses absolute will over his actions and (that he) is free from any compulsion and necessity." (Quoted from the end of Chapter 1.) It follows from the argument that contingency exists.

In Chapter 2 Crescas offers a series of counter-arguments to the arguments presented in the previous chapter.

The first two arguments are related. The first argument says that if we examine the causes of a thing at the point at which it comes into being, and thereby abstract it from the chain of causation of which it is a part, at that abstracted moment, the existence of the thing would <u>appear</u> to be contingent. To return to our example of a spinach cooking pot, if we were to examine the process that resulted in the manufacture of that pot at the point at which the pot was made, we would see the collaboration of the four causes, or the absence of one or more of them, in a way that would appear as though its existence was contingent upon the unity of the four causes. If by chance the four causes did not unite to create the pot, i.e., if one or

more of them was somehow lacking, it would appear as though possibility existed; it just so happened that one or more of the causes was absent. But if one were to look more closely at the causal chain and see the totality of the events as they developed, one would see that in fact there was no chance involved in the creation or non-creation of that pot. For the view that is being expressed here claims that things are part of a finite chain of causation which terminates in God, who is understood in this argument as the First Existent, i.e., that existent in which all other existents ultimately inhere, some nearer, some more distant. Since the being of all existents is ultimately rooted in God, and all being acquires existence through participation in the chain of causation which somehow emanates from God (it is not obvious from the argument how this process occurs), it follows, according to this argument, that contingency is in fact a non-existent category.

In the second argument, it is stated essentially that to bring x into existence cause p is required. If p is non-existent, then x will remain non-existent. Viewed in this abstracted moment in the causal chain, it would appear that x's existence depends on p which either will or will not come into existence, meaning that it is impossible to indicate whether or not x will come into existence, a state of being which seems to support the existence of contingency. But when viewed from the perspective of the chain of causation in which these two elements participate (or do not if

x and p are non-existent), one could discern clearly whether p would be available at the critical moment to cause x to come into existence. If one could make such a judgment--if sufficient information were available to a human observer--one would see that either x was necessarily the case or not. In either outcome it would be clear from the view presented in this argument that contingency is, so to speak, an illusion.

In both of these arguments a finite chain of being is posited which terminates in God, where God is spoken of under two related aspects, First Existent and First Cause. By these two aspects Crescas understands that God sets into motion the causal process by which all things come into being. An existent is at once the effect of its causes, proximate and distant, and the proximate and distant cause of future effects. This forms a pattern of causation which could be predictable to one who understands the process and possesses sufficient information to make the necessary judgments. A human in such a position, admittedly hypothetical, would judge all apparently contingent events as they really are, viz., necessary. But only God can truly be in such a position.

The fifth and final arguments deserve special attention in that they are central to what Crescas is attempting to accomplish in arguing for the existence of necessity.

In the fifth argument Crescas reminds us that in the first Abstract of Treatise 2 he argued that God's knowledge

encompasses knowledge of particulars as particulars. That is, God knows all existents, past, present, and future, their origin and their fate. If they have not yet come to be and God knows they will come to be, then they must come to be, for otherwise--if it were possible to claim that x may or may not come to be--then God's knowledge of future existents would be incomplete or erroneous. To posit error of God is to contradict an essential feature of God's nature, viz., that God's knowledge is perfect. In order to avoid a logical position in which error would be posited of God's nature, Crescas finds it necessary to claim that God knows exactly what will happen before it happens, at the beginning of the chain of causation to be exact. If we are to argue in this manner, says Crescas, it is absolutely essential to deny any type of contingency. Further, it is absolutely essential to assert necessity in all events in order to have a system in which God's knowledge of events would be perfect and thereby eliminating the possibility of predicating error of Him. As stated we shall present this debate in some detail at the end of this introduction.

The final argument is a Toraitic assertion, or better, a faith claim. This claim, essentially what has already been argued philosophically, is that according to the Torah God's knowledge encompasses all particulars through all time. It would at this stage in the proceedings that even the Toraitic claims in the two chapters clash.

The final Toraitic faith claim in effect caps Crescas' argumentation. He is caught on the horns of a major dilemma as the Toraitic faith claims of both chapters will attest to. In Chapter 1 we saw that contingency is crucial for making sense of commandments, reward and punishment as moral categories. In Chapter 2 we see that necessity is crucial for Toraitic claims about God's knowledge.

He begins the third chapter by stating the situation in which he finds himself, in that he has powerfully argued both sides of the question, and that "there remains no (alternative) except (to conclude) that the nature of contingency exists in one respect and does not exist in another respect."

In the first place, he says, the first two arguments presented in favor of contingency in Chapter 1 commit the logical fallacy of petitio principii, i.e., they beg the question, and in so doing result in proving not the existence of contingency in the absolute, but only contingency with respect to the thing itself. What this means will be explained below.

With respect to the first argument presented in Chapter 1, which argued contingency based on the four causes necessary to produce a thing, Crescas says that this does not prove contingency. Rather, the contingent nature of the four causes itself is at question. That is, the argument presupposes that the Aristotelian breakdown of causation into four causal elements are themselves contingent,

which may or may not be the case, but which is hardly proven by the argument. Since contingency is presupposed in an argument which seeks to prove contingency, it begs the question of the ultimacy of contingency, and at most proves contingency's existence from the narrow view of the thing itself.

Similarly, the second argument, which claims that the will is the final determinative factor in causation of some things, commits the fallacy of petitio principii. Since the argument presupposes that the will comprises a contingent element in the understanding of how a thing that has been caused through the agency of human will, it cannot be used to prove contingency itself in the ultimate sense. From this argument it is only possible to say from the view of the human will itself, those things which are brought into existence through the agency of the human will seem from the view of the will to exist contingently. To say that the will wills contingent upon its own volition without any further causation is erroneous from the view of the argument. In point of fact Crescas says that which moves the will to will that which it wills, may be said to move the will necessarily. That is, if I will to make a salami sandwich for myself, my decision has been caused by factors which necessarily struck in me the urge for a salami sandwich. If in the process of making that sandwich I will not to make it after having originally decided to make it, a cause external to the will may be said to have moved my

will to will the opposite of what it originally chose. In short, the will, which seems free, is not free at all, but rather a participant in the chain of causation. This is a major claim which brings Crescas into conflict with the logic and morality of commandments.

By now the solution Crescas poses to the problem is becoming clear: A thing he says may be said to be necessary from the view of the causation of the thing, while from the view of the thing itself the existence of the thing may be said to be contingent. What he means by this is as follows: If we were able to view everything sub specie eternitatis, the cause and fate of every phenomenon would be obvious, since we (i.e., Crescas) have posited a finite and integrally connected chain of causation that terminates in a God from whom this chain emanates irrevocably. In such a view, if we could perceive the causal chain of each phenomenon as it terminates in God, or vice versa, we would know the cause of everything, and the fate of everything. With respect to God's knowledge, then, where it is assumed that God knows particulars qua particulars as it is so assumed here, God knows the effect of every cause which originates with himself, even if from our time-bound view of things such a cause-effect relationship has not as yet even come to be.

With respect to the things themselves, however, things are contingent. By this Crescas means that since we humans are not God, and cannot consequently view things sub specie

eternitatis, we necessarily cannot know the outcome of a given situation a priori, and cannot therefore act as though the Torah with its warnings, for example, is a vain thing. That is, my own knowledge that God knows whether or not I will steal does not permit me to avoid exercising my will as best I can to try to prevent myself from stealing, though I might steal and steal again since I myself do not know the outcome of things. With respect to my place in the scheme of things I cannot know the outcome of the collision of causes, and so to me it seems as though I have choice in matters. Therefore, my striving to be good, even if it is doomed to failure, matters with respect to reward and punishment, as we shall see particularly in Chapter 5.

Thus does Crescas begin to solve the moral problem posed by a view of causation that holds to necessity in all forms of causation: if you do not know that the causes that impose themselves on you are there or cannot yourself be divine master of the causation, it is impossible to be fatalistic about them. As long as things are viewed as contingent in themselves, that is, as long as the necessity for which Crescas is arguing is not felt at the level of individuals, the utility of Torah, commandments, reward and punishment all follow, he argues.

Crescas makes a prudential point when he states in this chapter, "Making this truth generally known would harm the masses since that would necessitate victory of evil deeds (if they did not feel that punishment follows from choice as

effect follows from cause." That is, having discovered a revolutionary way of viewing causation, keeping in mind that this view has radical implications vis-a-vis Torah, commandments, and reward and punishment, this view should not be publicized among the masses who could be led astray by it.

Nonetheless there is in Crescas' view a critical point to be emphasized, a point that will play an important role in the moral theory he offers in the fifth chapter. That point is that there are activities which a man is compelled to do which he feels compelled to do, and activities which he is ultimately compelled to do but in which he does not feel compelled. Both are necessitated or compelled activities according to Crescas' theory, but only those activities which appear to emanate from the individual will, i.e., activities where one does not feel the necessity, qualify for reward and punishment.

This then is Crescas' synthesis of the two diametrically opposed theses argued in chapters 1 and 2, namely, "every thing is contingent in one respect and necessary in another respect." Whether he succeeds in harmonizing the resulting theory with his moral theory is a question which we shall deal with in our analysis of Chapter 5. For the remainder of this introduction it is appropriate to augment what we have been discussing with specific material which will illumine the problem as we see it.

As stated, what is at stake in Crescas' position is the nature of God's knowledge, i.e., how "omniscience" is

to be defined. In Abstract I of Treatise 2, Crescas discusses this question at some length, but it is not until he reaches our Abstract, four chapters later, that he alleges to have solved the problem. His opening affirmations in Abstract I indicate his position:

> It follows necessarily according to the roots of the Torah and what we extract from it (God's knowledge must include) three matters: The first is that His knowledge encompasses that which is infinite. The second is that His knowledge (encompasses) that which does not (yet) exist. The third is that His knowledge, may He be blessed, (encompasses) the contingent without changing the nature of contingency. (p. 28b)

These three assertions augmented by the consequent assertion that God knows particulars as particulars as we shall see differ little from Maimonides' view on this matter. Crescas' three claims about God's knowledge tell us that according to his conception of the matter it is the case that God knows absolutely everything, that He knows infinity; He knows that which does not as yet exist; and He knows what is possible without changing the nature of possibility. For our purposes, the third affirmation is the important one.[3]

The first major discussion of this question for our purposes occurs in The Guide of the Perplexed. In Part III Chapter 20 Maimonides says that God's knowledge of particulars does not entail plurality in His knowledge, nor is His knowledge increased when something which previously did not exist comes into existence. Moreover, it is the case that God's knowledge encompasses the infinite. (Note the similarity with Crescas' affirmations above.) This Maimonides

contends in the face of a good deal of philosophic opposition. The main point which he brings to defend his position is the absolutely equivocal nature of the term "knowledge" when applied to God and applied to men.

> My opinion is this: the cause of the error of all these schools is their belief that God's knowledge is like ours; each school points to something withheld from our knowledge, and either assumes that the same must be the case in God's knowledge, or at least finds some difficulty how to explain it ... His knowledge is not of the same kind as ours, but totally different from it and admitting of no analogy.[4]

Now, when it is claimed and accepted that our knowledge and God's knowledge are absolutely equivocal terms, it becomes impossible to deny Maimonides' larger claims concerning God's knowledge. It is a clever step which serves to mute the objections.

Concerning the philosophic objections to affirming God's knowledge of particulars Crescas himself provides us with sufficient examples of which I will present two. (1) If God knows what does not yet exist, he knows that at some future point it will exist. When it comes to exist, God knows that that which did not yet exist now has come into existence, a state which would entail a change in God's knowledge. But if God's knowledge is perfect, it is impossible to predicate change of it. (2) If God knows the contingent then he knows that tomorrow one of two possibilities might come to be. Tomorrow when one of those two possibilities comes into existence God's previous knowledge of those two possibilities will necessarily be contradicted, which will require a change in God's knowledge. To predicate change in that which is

perfect is absurd.

Between Crescas and Maimonides lies Gersonides. In The Wars of the Lord Gersonides takes issue with Maimonides' theory of God's knowledge in a precise analytical way, and poses several objections and proposes several solutions. I shall briefly discuss some of them.

All human knowledge says Gersonides originates in sense experience. In a complex epistemological theory Gersonides holds that through sense experience man abstracts universals or the intelligible ordering of the world. Since that is so, our knowledge of the essence of the thing is an effect of the thing. However, God knows the essence of that thing as cause of that thing without recourse to sense experience. It follows therefore that knowledge of the thing for God and for man is indeed a different term, but not, as Maimonides suggested absolutely equivocal, for there remains an important similarity in the knowledge of God and man.

> Rather it is the case that knowledge as applied to God is perfect knowledge and as such constitutes the prime instance or meaning of the term, whereas human knowledge, which is less perfect, is a derivative use of the term. Such a relationship is called "pros hen equivocation."[5]

Moreover, Gersonides says, Maimonides is guilty of intellectual dishonesty in this matter. Maimonides knows that religion affirms God's knowledge of particulars as particulars, yet he is also aware of the philosophical objections to the problem. To solve the problem, Gersonides accuses, Maimonides creates the idea of the absolutely equivocal nature of

knowledge as terms governing God and man.[6]

Gersonides goes on and argues that God knows particulars, but not as particulars. In the third of three arguments he says:

> ... It is clear from what was stated above that the Active Intellect in some way knows these things subject to generation in this lower world. This being so, and it (further) being (the case) that God, may He be blessed, is the cause, the form, and the end of all other separate intelligences, as is explained in the Metaphysics, it necessarily follows that cognitions of all other intelligences are found in God. This is because those cognitions proceed materially from the cognition of God, may He be blessed. Similarly it is the case that an architect of a house should know the form of the bricks and the beams which these workmen know who are engaged in those arts which aid the art of the architecture. But he who is engaged in the primary art will have more perfect knowledge of them with respect to their being part of (the total plan of) the house, as was mentioned above. This being so, it is clear beyond any doubt that these cognitions which the Active Intellect has of these things (are possessed) by God, may He be blessed, in a more perfect manner. This also shows that God, may He be blessed knows particulars.[7]

Aware of the philosophic objection of predicating error to God, as well as multiplicity, change and imperfection to a God who knows particulars, Gersonides, after having argued the possibility that God knows particulars, must harmonize the two apparently opposing views. He says, " ... These contingents are defined and ordered in one respect and are contingents in another respect."[8] The respect in which God knows particulars is their intelligible ordering. "The respect in which He does not know them is the respect in which they are not ordered, which is the respect in which they are contingents. This is because in

this respect it is impossible that they should be known."[9] The outcome of this view is that God knows about particulars, He knows what particulars are, He knows how particulars are. But "He cannot know what any specific particulars are."[10]

Gersonides' doctrine has a powerful effect upon his theory of divine providence. As originated in Maimonides, the prophet is a man whose intellect has been sharpened and trained, who, in the prophetic state knows things in the way the Active Intellect knows them, viz., not particularly but essentially or universally, for the prophet in this state does not utilize his senses. In this state the prophet knows what is essentially true of things without knowing what is true of particular things.

> For example the prophet Jeremiah knows the essence of Israel, the essence of Babylonia, and what is universally necessarily true in warfare ... Hence Jeremiah can say to King Zedekiah that it is necessarily the case that if Judah goes to war with Babylonia, Judah will be destroyed. But this does not mean that it is determined that Judah will in fact be destroyed. This particular fact is contingent with respect to human choice. In other words Zedekiah has the option of going or not going to war with Babylonia. What is known is what will be the consequence of his choice. But his choice itself is not determined. Hence the destruction of Judah is not determined.
>
> It is in this way that all human events are both determined and free.[11]

Note the flow of the argument. Gersonides (1) denies absolute equivocation of God's knowledge with human knowledge; (2) shows in what respect God knows particulars; (3) derives a theory of human choice dependent upon the intellect knowing universals in the way the Active Intellect knows them.

On all three counts, Crescas disagrees, though step #2 is the key. In order to affirm God's knowledge of particulars as particulars, he is forced to deny human choice as argued by Gersonides.

I have spent considerable space explicating Gersonides' view on this matter for three reasons. (1) He offers a serious response to the Maimonidean doctrine which (2) logically denies God's absolute knowledge of what goes on among His creatures, (3) in a way in which Crescas is aware and thinks that he must take account of in his own formulation of the problem.

In Abstract I, Treatise 2, Chapter 4, of The Light of the Lord, in summary form, Crescas presents Gersonides' objections to Maimonides' position with regard to God's knowledge. Keeping in mind that Crescas will argue for the three assertions he makes at the beginning of the chapter which we quoted above, he is forced to say about Gersonides' case:

> This is the essence of all his (Gersonides) claims and destructive arguments against the Master (Maimonides) ... We sought to claim that that which he thought he had grasped about the words of the Master were not that which were fitting to pay attention about them. But his words (Gersonides' words) are correct and true, (p. 32a)

i.e., Crescas acknowledges that Gersonides had a good point.

The key to Crescas' solution to the problem emerges in our chapter. Until Crescas, some kind of absolute choice in matters was preserved among Jewish philosophers. We have looked briefly at Gersonides' position on the matter,

which flows logically from his view that God knows only the intelligible ordering of things. This being so, it is possible for humans on occasion also to know the intelligible ordering, that being the essence of prophecy, and, ultimately, reason itself.[12] But the logical trade-off is that neither God nor prophets (when engaged in the act of prophecy) know about the particulars as particulars; they know only essences which guide them in appropriate conduct. This reduces in effect the authority of religious tradition which would have it that God knows particulars as particulars, a position Maimonides tried to hold to, a position which in the end could not stand up to Gersonides' critique, as long as contingency were to be asserted, and as long as choice was said to be at least in some measure free. But if it were to be posited that contingency did not really exist, that all causes and effects were essentially predictable because the causal chain which emanated from God were a strictly determinist chain; if it were to be posited that possibility was not really operative save from the view of the person, then it would follow that the objections posed by Gersonides' critique of Maimonides' affirmations of God's knowledge would melt away. If there were no such thing as choice from the view of causation, then imperfection, change, and error in God's knowledge would not be operative objections, and the problem would be solved.

So it seems that the doctrine presented in our text on choice is necessitated by the earlier debate on God's

knowledge. In the light of Gersonides' argumentation in The Wars of The Lord, in which it is clear that the authority of philosophy overrules the claims of revealed religion, Crescas, who will wish to argue philosophically as much as possible for the ultimate primacy of the authority of Torah, devises a metaphysics in which being is enmeshed in an incontrovertible causal chain. This causal chain determines all events, leaving no room for the intellect to choose freely from one of two opposing possibilities, for it is already known in the mind of God just which possibility will be chosen.

It is now to the other side of the dilemma we must turn. This dilemma, mentioned previously in this introduction, and clearly delineated by Crescas himself (as we have seen), involves two Toraitic desiderata: on the one hand Torah claims God knows particulars as particulars, on the other hand Torah is a document filled with commandments for which we are told we receive reward and punishment in appropriate measure depending upon our relationship to those commandments. If the solution to the problem of God's knowledge of particulars entails a determined universe in light of Gersonides' argumentation, how then do we solve the problem of reward and punishment for deeds we have in fact not chosen to do? The substance of this question is taken up in Chapter 5 of this Abstract, and will be subsequently analyzed at some length.

Notes to Introduction

[1]Crescas' philosophical acumen is undeniable. Cf. Harry A. Wolfson, Crescas' Critique of Aristotle, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929:

> In his work are mirrored the achievements of five centuries of philosophic activity among Moslems and Jews, and in his method of inquiry is reflected the originality and the independence of mind which characterize the Jewish philosophic writing of his time--an originality and independence which is yet to be recognized. P. IX.

[2]G.B. Kerferd, "Aristotle," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 1, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1967, pp. 156-157.

[3]The material that will be brought in here will relate largely to this third proposition. This is not the place to enter into an in-depth discussion of the medieval Jewish philosophic debate on God's knowledge. The interested reader is referred to Norbert M. Samuelson, Gersonides, The Ward of the Lord Treatise Three: On God's Knowledge, Ontario, Canada, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1977. This book, though focusing on Gersonides' view, presents a detailed analysis of the problem.

[4]Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed, 3:16. Quotes from trs. by Michael Friedlander in J. David Bleich, With Perfect Faith, New York, N.Y.: Ktav, p. 436.

[5]Samuelson, op. cit., p. 28.

[6]Ibid., p. 33.

[7]Ibid., pp. 230-231.

[8]Ibid., p. 232.

[9]Ibid., p. 233.

[10]Ibid., p. 49.

[11]Ibid., pp. 50-51.

Treatise 2, Abstract V

The Light of The Lord by Hasdai Crescas

Choice

Introduction

According to what has preceded us one of the foundations of religion is choice, and that responsibility is given to each man so that the one commanded would not be compelled and forced to do a certain thing. Rather, it must be posited of his simple will (that he be able to do) each one of the alternatives. Then what has been commanded of him will be fitting and connected. The foundation of choice has been the existence of the nature of contingency. (Our) predecessors have struggled hard to try to solve (this problem). And we have found differing opinions among them according to what has come to us from their words. Therefore it is necessary that we investigate them according to Torah and speculation.

According to the opinions that we have found there are two contradictory divisions (in this matter). Therefore we have divided this Abstract into three chapters. The first two (chapters) are of two opinions and their claims (concern) that which comes in accordance with the strength of their words. (In) the third we shall explicate what follows about it (about this matter of choice) in the Torah and

speculation, according to (the way) it appears to us. It is fitting that we not be lazy in this investigation, because this principle is a great foundation and pillar in (the matter) of God's knowledge of existents such as we explicated in Abstract I. An error (in the explication of the concept of choice) shall bring great and mighty errors (with regard to matters of the concepts of) God's knowledge and His providence over existents. Thus we have added another three chapters as shall be seen through our discussion in this Abstract, with the help of God.

Chapter 1: Concerning the clarification of the view of he who seems (to believe) that the nature of contingency exists.

This is clarified (both) with respect to speculation and with respect to the Torah.

With respect to speculation he seems (to hold the view) from (various) perspectives:

(1) (One) of them is that it is clear that natural or angelic things only come to exist by (means of) four causes, namely, efficient, material, formal, and final, as is explained in the Physics. It seems to us that concerning some things, some of their causes exist and some of them do not exist, but it is impossible that all of them exist or none of them exist. Therefore, through the possibility of the causes of things, the possibility of the things themselves necessarily follows.

(2) Another of them is that we see that many things depend on will. Since it is clear that man has (the power) to will or not to will, for that which if it were necessary would not be (subject to) will but would be (subject to) necessity and compulsion, therefore it is clear that the nature of contingency exists.

(3) Another of them is that it has been clarified in the Physics that some things occur by chance or by accident or spontaneously, and if all of these things were necessary, such as would have to be the case if the nature of contin-

gency did not exist, it would be necessary that each one of these things would come to exist. But it is not correct to say that that which necessarily comes to exist comes to exist accidentally. For it is not correct (to say that) tomorrow's sunrise shall occur accidentally. Therefore, it is clear that not all things are necessary, and contingency exists.

(4) Another of them is that if contingency did not exist, (then) all of man's activities would be necessary, and effort and decision would be in vain. Necessarily teaching and learning as well as preparing and introducing would all be in vain. (The same would be true of) diligence in collecting acquisitions or useful things, and fleeirg from harmful things. All of this is the opposite of what is commonly accepted and sensible.

(5) Another of them is that (inasmuch as) what is the human will inheres in the rational soul which is separate from matter, it is not fitting that a material thing should act upon it, i.e., (in the way) the bodies of the spheres act upon the lesser bodies where it is clear that what is separate is especially (suited) to act and matter is especially (suited) to be acted upon, as is made clear in the Metaphysics. Therefore it is not fitting that one should think that the spheres, which have bodies, act and cause the human soul to flee. Rather his (man's) soul is removed and negated from all necessity.

Therefore from all of (these) perspectives it would seem that with respect to speculation the nature of contingency exists. With respect to the Torah (this view) is also clear from (various) perspectives.

(1) (One) of them is that if all things were necessary, and (if) all of man's actions were necessary, then all of the commands of the Torah, and its warnings would be in vain, since they would be of no use, because the actions of man would be compelled and he would (therefore) not possess power and will over them.

(2) Another of them is that if human actions were necessary, reward and punishment for them would be, God forbid, perversity with reference to God, may He be blessed, since it is clear that through His council the reward and punishment for actions only occur by means of voluntary human actions. But it is not possible that there should be reward and punishment for actions that are necessitated and compelled. And since reward and punishment is one of the most essential principles of the Torah, it necessarily follows that man possesses absolute will over his actions and (that he) is free from any compulsion and necessity.

From this (respect) it is clear that the nature of contingency exists, which is the intention of this chapter.

Chapter 2: Concerning the clarification of the view of he who seems (to believe) that the nature of contingency does not exist.

This (view) also is clarified both with respect to speculation and with respect to the Torah. With respect to speculation, he seems (to hold this view from) various perspectives.

(1) (One) of them is that what is clear about natural quantity is that the existence of all things which fall under the (rules of) coming into being and passing away of necessity are preceded by four causes, and by the existence of the causes the things caused necessarily are brought into existence. Therefore, it is necessary that the existence of the things caused have contingency. But when we also speculate about this concerning the existence of the causes, then (we see that) it also is absolutely necessary that the existence of other causes precede them by whose existence the existence of those causes are necessitated. Thus it necessarily follows that their existence is necessary (and) not contingent. When we seek other causes for those causes there would be the same judgment about them, until (the causal process) terminated in the First Existent that has necessary existence, may His name be blessed. Therefore, it is clear that the nature of contingency does not exist.

(2) Another of them is that it is known (to be) self-evident and agreed upon that (concerning) some things such that it is possible that it will come into existence or it will not come into existence requires a cause to incline (it towards) existence over its absence. And if not (if this cause does not incline it toward existence) its privation will persist. And thus when we posit a certain possible existent, it necessarily follows that a cause preceded (it) which necessitated (its) inclining to existence over its absence, and therefore the existence which was assumed to be contingent is necessary. And when we also speculate about the preceding cause, if it (also) has been posited to be contingent, when we posit it to be existent (the same procedure) would apply logically to it (to its being inclined to existence) as followed necessarily from the first contingent (thing) which was posited, until (the procedure) terminates at the First Cause. And the First Existent, blessed be His name, is that which has necessary existence.

(3) Another of them is that one of the things that is self-evidently known and agreed upon is that every (thing) which is brought from potentiality to actuality requires an actualizing agent other than itself to actualize it. Therefore it necessarily follows that when the will of man is created to activate some thing, then the will that was in potentiality is brought into actuality, (and) then its actualizing agent is of necessity something other than itself. It is (some) thing which moves the appetitive

power to unite and agree with the imagination as is made clear in On the Soul (Aristotle), for it (the imagination) is the cause of the will. Therefore when that unity which is the cause of the will exists, then the will is necessary, and the unity also is necessary.

When the mover exists, and then it is posited about this (matter) that the mover of that will is only the will (itself), which is the opposite of being necessary, then one of two absurdities necessarily follow from this. Either (a) the thing will move (i.e., be the cause of) itself, and will bring itself forth from potentiality to actuality, which is the opposite of the conventional assumption about the matter; or (b) the will will have (another) will prior (to itself) to move it and bring it forth from potentiality to actuality, and prior to this prior will will be another prior will, and there will necessarily follow for this (3rd) other will and infinity of wills. But this (claim) would be utterly absurd if (it were not the case that) each one follows necessarily from the one that preceded it, and also that there is no contingency.

(4) Another of them is that one of the things that is self-evidently known, as it was said, is that every created thing requires a creator to create it, for a thing will not create itself. Thus it is inconceivable that two people would have the same situation, mixture, disposition, essence, and relation to some thing (else) without any difference at all. It would be impossible to choose the exis-

tence of one (thing) and the other its non-existence. Rather it necessarily follows that one would choose what the other chose and willed. This is so because if they were different with respect to choice, one would desire that there be a difference, the creation of which requires a creator. But would that I knew what the cause of the creation is(!), since they agree in mixture, birth, disposition in all respects. And if it should be said that the existence of two such people is impossible, then the necessity is not with respect to its impossibility, but rather with respect to its contingency. But when it is made clear concerning them that it is necessary that there should be one will (in them), then it would necessarily follow consequently that it is not contingent.

(5) Another of them is that is already was clarified in Abstract I of this Treatise that the knowledge of God, may He be blessed, encompasses all particulars insofar as they are particulars. If (they are known by God and) they are privations that have not yet come into existence, then necessarily they must come to be. But if (this is) not (the case), there would be no knowledge (of them). Rather (there would be only) opinion or error. Therefore there is no escape from (the conclusion viz.,) that what has been assumed contingent is (in fact) necessary.

(6) Another of them is that if the nature of contingency came to exist then the existence of the will would
47b necessarily refer to one of / two parts outside of the

cause that necessitated them to be contingent. It would follow necessarily therefore that His knowledge of it would not be from His essence, for this knowlege of existents consists of (knowledge of) their causes, but (in this case) His knowledge would be acquired and emanated from their existence. And it is utterly absurd that His knowledge should have its beginning from something other than Himself.

(7) Another of them is that it is clear that providence over particulars, when it is not with respect to the general order, is only possible through the hylic power and it (this) is impossible with respect to His law, may His name be blessed. Therefore in that existence is from a respect which is different than a necessitating cause, thus (existence) is not conceived with respect to the general order.

Thus is seems from all of these things (i.e., arguments) with respect to speculation that the nature of contingency does not exist. And with respect to the Torah, it is clear, the truth of which is beyond doubt from what we discussed concerning God's knowledge, (God's knowledge) encompasses all particulars, even if they are absent. Also concerning the prophets we find that they made known many particular events before they came into being. If they were not necessary in themselves, (they would have brought about) some (act of) will that is dependent on choice, as in the case of Pharoah (whose heart was hardened by God, making his apparent choice no choice at all). For all of

this is a clear proof (intended to teach that) the nature of contingency does not exist, which is the intention of this chapter.

Chapter 3: Concerning the clarification of the true view which (both) Torah and speculation necessitate.

We say that since there are arguments which necessitate the existence of the nature of contingency and arguments which necessitate its absence, therefore there remains no (alternative) except (to conclude) that the nature of contingency exists in one respect and does not exist in another respect. What are these respects? Would that I knew.

I say that when we speculate about the arguments that necessitate its (the nature of contingency's) existence then (we see that) they only necessitate its existence with respect to itself. For the first argument (which asserts that (what it means to say that) some things are contingent is that all of their causes exist or do not exist, (commits the fallacy of) petitio principii. For the contingency of the causes is also at question. Therefore no truth at all is offered by this (line of) inquiry.

The second argument, which is derived from the will, in which it is clarified that man has (the capacity) to will or not will, also commits the fallacy of petitio principii. For the one who asserts the privation of the nature of contingency asserts that (if) the will moves that which moves it necessarily begins (the process of acts of) will in that thing. Or in the opposite (state of affairs, viz., if the will is at rest) that rest is the cause of the will. Therefore the mover will be what necessitates the beginning

of the (final act of) will together with (all of) the other (intermediate) instances of (acts of) will. Now (the given activity or inactivity of the will) is not necessary or compulsory because with respect to its essence (the will) may will equally one of (a set of) opposites, (for) perhaps (some) mover will necessitate it to will a different one (than it happened to will). (It is for this reason that the will) does not feel any necessity or compulsion. Since with respect to (a thing) itself it is equally possible that it (the will) should will (either) one of two opposites, a will is said not to be necessitated.

The third argument, which is derived from what is made clear about the natures of certain things occurring accidentally, it (i.e., the argument) only necessitates the nature of contingency with respect to (a thing) itself. And in this respect it is true that their occurrence is accidental. But it is not impossible (i.e., it is possible) that they (these occurrences) are brought into existence by their causes which necessitate their existence.

The fourth argument, whose basis is industriousness and effort, clearly necessitates only contingency of things with respect to their self. For example, were it posited that this (specific) man were fated to be wealthy in virtue of his essence, then his effort to accumulate acquisitions would be an absurd thing. But if it (the acquisition of things) were posited to be possible in virtue of his self and necessary by virtue of its cause, that he is industrious

and uses effort would not be in vain. But, if the cause were essential to the accumulating of acquisitions and the accumulating of acquisitions would be its (the essential cause's) effect, then the only way to say that the cause of the effect was in vain (would be to say that) the effect with respect to itself was necessitated for its essence by the existence of the cause or by something else. Then it would not be a cause.

The fifth argument clearly yields no truth in any respect. For the rational soul is not incorporeal. Rather it is hylic, and is affected by the (material) mixture of that which possesses the soul. Therefore it is possible (concerning) the (material) bodies of the spheres, and all the more so concerning their movers, that they are affected by the mixture of what has their soul. The appetitive faculty which by means of its harmony with the imaginative faculty becomes the will is what moves (these heavenly entities) as is made clear in On the Soul. Whether the movement is established to be necessary or contingent is not made clear by this argument.

48a Thus it is clear that / all of these arguments with respect to speculation only prove the existence of the nature of contingency in reference to the essence of existent things, and not in reference to their causes.

The arguments with respect to the Torah also only necessitate the existence of (the nature of contingency) with reference to their essence.

(1) For the argument which is derived from the commands of the Torah and its warnings, that if things were necessary, then commands and its (the Torah's) warnings would be in vain (establishes) contingency (only) with reference to their (finite) selves. For it is clear that it does not necessarily follow that if these things were necessary things with respect to their selves, (then) the commands and warnings would be in vain. If these things were contingent with reference to their selves and necessary with reference to their causes, (then) the commands and warnings would not be in vain; rather (they would be) absolutely esteemed. For the causes are the movers of things which are contingent in their essence at the level of causes which are causes to their erfect in diligence and zeal in the collecting of acquisitions. These are profitable things and (things) which cause flight from harm. Thus it is true that in this argument there is nothing that will necessitate the existence of contingency with reference to causes.

(2) The second argument, which is derived from reward and punishment, (which argues) that if a man were compelled in his deeds (i.e., to do what he does), then reward and punishment for them (i.e., his deeds) would be perversity with reference to Him may His name be blessed, and it seems to be a strong argument for the vanity of all necessity. However, when we examine it (the preceding argument) there is no release from that which is difficult. The reason for

this is that if reward and punishment were necessitated by sacrifices which were necessary effects of causes, then it will not be said that they are perverse, just as sacrifices are not perverse for the fire which burns them. But if one's sacrifice were (caused by) something other than will, then (the case is different) as will be explained in Treatise 3, God willing. So it is clear that there is nothing in all of these arguments with respect to speculation and with respect to the Torah to necessitate the existence of the nature of the contingent with reference to their cause.

Similarly when we speculate about the arguments which necessitate its (i.e., contingency's) absence, it only necessitates (its absence) with reference to its cause. And the reason for this is that the meaning of the first, second, and third arguments which are derived from the causes of things and their movers which draw (them) forth from potentiality to actuality, and clearly also the fourth argument about compulsion (all of which) only establish necessity with reference to causes. But with reference to themselves they remain contingent, such as (you would say about) prime matter, which is contingent with reference to itself (with respect) to receiving the forms which come (upon it) one after another. (For example) with reference to the movers it is necessary to bring a chain into being from bronze with reference to its causes, while at the same time its (coming to be) contingent with reference to itself which does not pass away.

Similarly, the arguments, which are derived from the instances of God's knowledge (of what will happen) in the future, and (His) making known future events to the prophets as well as the choices which depend on its (knowledge), (these arguments) clearly do not necessitate the negation of possibility with reference to the (things) themselves. Rather, things are contingent with reference to themselves and necessary with reference to their causes. With respect to their necessity it is the case that they are known (by God) before they become necessary. Thus it is clear that there is nothing in all of the arguments with respect to speculation and with respect to the Torah which would require the necessity of this with reference to their selves. Thus the absolute truth, according to what the Torah and speculation require, is that the nature of contingency exists in things with reference to their selves, not with reference to their causes.

However, making (this truth) generally known would harm the masses since that would necessitate victory of evil deeds (if) they did not feel that punishment follows from choice as effect follows from cause. Thus it was an instance of wisdom of God may His name be blessed to ordain them, i.e., the commandments and warnings (which were ordained to be) intermediary movers and they are strong causes to set man on the right path to human happiness. (The reason for) this concerns His lovingkindness and absolute goodness which is the divine foundation which is

referred to when it says "(And you shall consider in your heart) that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you." (Deut. 8:5) It is known that a father does not chasten his son with the intention of vengeance, but only for ultimate uprightness for the son's benefit. Similarly, when God sets a man on the right path the intention of it is not vengeance, and ultimate political uprightness is only appropriate when man (acts) absolutely by his (man's) own will and not by any compulsion or force. Rather (uprighteness is proper only when) the intention which he intends by (his act) is the good of the entire nation. Thus (it is also fitting) that what is required with reference to His Sabbath is for the good of man. However it is required in order to arouse him (to feel) this necessity, that it should happen in some way, that the
48b agent should feel no / compulsion or necessity about it (i.e., that act the agent should perform), which (viz., this feeling of not being compelled) is a foundation of choice and will. But as regards compelled activities, i.e., (activities) that a man performs which he is compelled (to perform), which a man does not do by his own will, that which is not performed by (means of) the harmony of his appetitive faculty with his imaginative faculty is not a mental act. But if it is fitting that punishment be associated with it (then it must be an act of choice and will). And the reason for this is compelled actions are not introduced (into consideration) when warnings and com-

mandments would be the movers of (someone doing) them or refraining from (doing) them. For (in this case) it is not possible to have a command or a warning for what a man has no (ability) to introduce. And punishment for sins would not be an instance of divine uprightness (i.e., justice), since no good would follow from it. However, if it is impossible (validly to have commandments, warnings, and punishments) without saying that the will is necessitated (or) similarly that that which is willed is necessitated (or) similarly that (the will) does or does not will, by (means of) something other than an external mover, then according to the Torah, it is possible to introduce the (same) alternative in the (same) way that we took (it) in the first Abstract of this Treatise (i.e., Treatise 2, on God's knowledge). The reason for this is that a thing may be contingent with reference to itself and its causes, but necessary through His knowledge, just as is possible when (something) existent and known is posited to be contingent with reference to itself, but with reference to its existence it thus becomes necessary in that it is known if He, may His name be blessed and exalted, knows things before they come into being. Therefore it would seem that what is necessary before it comes to be is not contingent, (and) indeed it is not contingent with reference to His knowledge, but it is contingent with reference to itself. Since His knowledge does not occur in time, His knowledge of (what is in) the future is like His knowledge of existing

things which are not compelled or necessitated by the essence of (these) things.

However, when we raise a difficulty and ask, is His knowledge acquired from existent things, as with the last two doubts mentioned above, we may reply and say that we do not know how He knows, since His knowledge is His essence. This is the path of the Master (Maimonides), according to our view. However, it is possible to say further in response, that it is clear that perceived things are not perceived according to the nature of perceived things (themselves), but rather according to the nature of the one perceiving. For it would seem that (concerning) sight it is clear that (with respect) to understanding of the senses, the sense of touch will perceive its percept when it is drawn close to it and measures it, but it will only perceive cold or warmth, hardness or softness at the place where it is touched. But the sense of sight will perceive a place and its meaning from afar. Similarly (it is possible) to extend (this) analogy to the other (senses). Therefore, when this perceiver is eternal, without dependence upon time, it is fitting that His perception be perceived according to His level which does not depend upon time and this is (at the level of) His essence. Thus Eternal Providence will perceive that which does not (yet) exist as if it existed. And the general (rule) that arises from (these) things is that all that occurs to this contingent material (occurs through) choice. And if we say

that the nature of the will, just as what it wills or it does not will, is necessitated by a mover other than itself, it is a correct way (to speak) since the Torah (affirms) that things are contingent with reference to their causes and their essence, but necessary with reference to God's knowledge. And if they are contingent with reference to themselves, diligence is fitting for them, (i.e.,), commands and warnings and reward and punishment for them, since if the opposite were chosen, God's knowledge, may He be blessed, would have consisted of that opposite.

The only question that remains is how God, may His name be blessed, knows contingent things. We have already considered this (topic), both according to the view of the Master (Maimonides) and according to our own view. In general, knowledge of what acquires its own existence from other existents (can) properly (have) necessity (posited of it). And there is no escaping (from the judgment) that the roots (to understanding) how (this) state of affairs (could be the case) is (that) every (such) thing is contingent in one respect and necessary in another respect.

The perfect witness that enters in peace to and departs in peace from all of the complexities in (this) brief treatise is the saying: "All is forseen and responsibility is given; but by goodness shall the world be judged, each according to the amount of deeds." (Mishnah Avot 3:19)

By saying "all is forseen" (the teaching) indicates that all things are ordered and known, which is the real

root principle, concerning whose truth there is no doubt, over which the legs of some of our sages have stumbled. They (the sages) came to reveal this secret, because many of our nation have (to) this (very) day rebelled against it.

By its saying "responsibility is given" it testifies to the secret of choice and will. For responsibility is given to every man with reference to his self, because no consequence occurs through compulsion and necessity.

By its saying "but by goodness shall the world be judged" it testifies to divine uprightness in judgment, i.e., in matters of reward and punishment. For (it is done) neither for the purpose of vengeance nor for the intention of seeking mass political uprightness. This is because the only cause for which this (response) is necessary is the
49a cause of the good, as has been previously stated. /

By saying "each according to the amount of deeds" it may possibly testify to the necessity of causes of which there are proximate and distant (causes). As it is said, "For He who is exalted above exaltation guards". (Ecclesiastes 5:7) Or it may refer to the known root principle (which is that) according to the tradition the world shall be judged according to its number (of deeds). Or it possibly may refer to a great root principle that shall be made clear in Abstract VI, God willing.

Chapter 4: How this view of necessity (can) be affirmed, whether it is necessity with reference to causes or necessity with reference to His knowledge, may He be blessed.

(1) It is referred to in places in the scriptures, especially in Ecclesiastes, and in the sayings of the sages, may their memory be for a blessing; in those places they say: "A man does not lift up his finger below unless it is decreed above." (Tractate Hullin 79) And it was interpreted by the saying: "Because the one who is about to fall will fall from it." (Deut. 22:8) (This means) that it is fitting that this (man) should fall from (what was determined during) the six days of creation, yet (it is possible that) he does not fall. The text only calls him "one about to fall" because one brings about merit by means of the meritorious and guilt by means of the guilty. If there occurred from a set of possibilities which (was determined) to occur from the six days of creation (i.e., if it were predetermined that Joe would fall), it would be fitting for this (one) to fall, but the proximate cause (for the fall) is the absence of some parapet. If this (fall) were to be related to accident, then knowledge (of the fall) would be impossible for man since (his knowledge) does not encompass the particulars in that they are infinite. However, this knowledge is necessary for He who is infinite.

(2) (Another example) of what also teaches this (doctrine) is their statement "David was not suited for that

act, and Israel was not suited for the act; rather, (this case) should say to you that if an individual should sin they will say to the individual, "Cease," and if a community should sin, they would say to the community, "Cease," and together with this (admonition) they would be punished." (Tractate Avodah Zarah 5a) One could only be at ease with this (ruling) in the way that we have explained (the relation of determinism and choice).

(3) Another (example) of what teaches about necessity is their statement "At the moment when the Holy One Blessed be He said to them, "Would that you had such a heart," (Dt. 22:8) they could have said, "give, you give," (i.e., You God give us such a heart). However Moses only alluded to it after forty years. From here (we learn) that a man only descends to the end of the knowledge of his teacher after forty years." Many statements beside these add doubt and confusion according (to what) appears from them (i.e., from their surface meaning), but (the doubts) are set at ease in this way, according to their simple meaning.

(On the other hand an example) of what is taught that affirms (the validity of) effort together with (affirming) necessity is their statement "If I am only for myself who am I; when I am only for myself what am I; and if now now, when?" And (there are) many (others) beside this one, but there is no need to mention them. (For example) it is said in the talmud, Tractate Sukkah (28a) "For the sake of six

things the sun goes into eclipse." (A second example is) as (the issue) is introduced in Tractate Makkot (11b) "If a high priest should die before his verdict is finished and they appoint a different high priest, after the verdict is finished he (the refugee) goes back on the death of the second." And we have said in the gemara: What was there to do? Draw an analogy between mercy when judgment is completed to his benefit--but he did not so analogize. For all these statements can be affirmed only if by what was explained, since all things are ordered and known to Him, may His name be blessed, whether they are natural or volitional. That is sufficient for our intention.

In the sixth Abstract things that pleasantly agree with this will be introduced, which will be of the nature of self-evident truth, and will agree in every respect, and in which the great doubt will be solved to which we have testified in the first Abstract of this Treatise in order to solve that upon which here many of the legs of the predecessors have tottered, because they did not calculate how to harmonize (the notion) of necessity with divine Toraitic uprightness. If mundane political uprightness (i.e., justice) does not endure it, how much the more so (would this be the case) according to the view of the Torah. But it is correct that its (the Torah's) view is in agreement with mundane political uprightness.

Praise be to God.

Chapter 5: Concerning additional clarification of this view by solving this grave doubt over which the predecessors did not cease to be in doubt.

And it (the difficulty) is how to harmonize divine justice in reward and punishment with necessity.[1] If it is the case that they can be harmonized, what is the difference between that necessity which refers to causes other than the feeling of compulsion and force, and necessity which refers to the feeling of compulsion and force? The reason for this is that one would think that if the per-
49b formance of commandments / and (commission of) sins are the causes, and their reward and punishment are their effects while at the same time both are necessary events, then it would not be fitting to separate necessity other than the feeling of compulsion from necessity with respect to the feeling of compulsion whether reward and punishment are consequent effects (or are not consequent effects), since there is no avoiding necessity in any case.[2]

And if it should be that we grant this distinction that is in the feeling of compulsion there would be no place for reward and punishment, since this would not then be a volitional act at all. One calls "voluntary" an act where one does not feel compulsion (even if) it is necessitated: however when one does not feel compelled, then (according to) opinions which are among the Toraitic cornerstones, would that I knew how for them there could be reward and

punishment.[3] For it is clear according to the tradition, that punishment for them (for sins) is wondrous, as they say, except for the scoffers and heretics who have uprooted the Torah, and uprooted resurrection of the dead. And they say in the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10): "These are the ones who have no part in the world to come." And it seems among them (the acts) that will and choice have not been introduced by them at all.[4] This is so for many reasons.[5]

First: If the will were necessitated in (matters of) belief, then the level of belief would not be (at the level) of truth. This is so because one could have a will such that it would will or not will so that one would be able to believe two different opinions that come one after another. And so it would be constantly. This is so if he wills to believe them (then he must do so). This is absolutely absurd.[6]

Second: If the will necessitated belief, then therefore the mover which causes that belief would be in doubt with regard to the truth in it. This is so (because) if the agent did not doubt the truth at all, then there would be no need to will anything concerning it. But if the generator did doubt the truth in it, then there would be need for an (act of) will. If the generator doubts the truth about it, then therefore the truth of that would be doubtful.[7]

Third: It would seem from this respect that will in-

troduces nothing to belief. This is so because belief is nothing other than the conviction that is something external to the soul as it is in the soul, for that which is external to the soul is not dependent upon willing the belief that it is so, then therefore belief has no dependence upon will.[8]

Since this is clear I say that the believer believes something, all the more so (does he believe) if it is a demonstrated belief, concerning which it is impossible not to feel absolute necessity and compulsion to believe that belief. This is so because when the causal agent (i.e., the truth) strongly necessitates (belief), one cannot escape from it (i.e., the conclusion that X is true). When we have posited a belief as a demonstrated belief, it is an absolute proof. Then the necessity and compulsion are clearly revealed and felt by him (by the one to whom the truth has been demonstrated), for it is impossible in this connection to believe the contrary of that belief.[9]

If concerning this kind of felt compelled willing, reward and punishment are not fitting concerning it, as has been posited, then I could not figure how reward and punishment are possible in matters of belief. And therefore what it is fitting to say in solving these doubts is as what we would claim:[10]

Here is the first: Since divine justice always points toward the good and toward perfection, and good and perfection bring into being causes which move toward good effects

which necessitate through divine justice the bringing into being of commandments and reward and punishment for them (and) since they bring into being causes that move toward good effects, and the causes are movers of the reward and punishment associated with them, just as an effect is associated with a cause. Therefore will and choice will only move what they move drawing to it and drawing from it. Thus it is settled that it is fitting to bring into agreement divine justice (with choice), just as reward and punishment (are associated) with necessity.[11]

However (since) there is a distinction between that necessity which is other than the feeling of compulsion and force and necessity which (involves) the feeling of compulsion and force, therefore what I have said is fitting.[12] The reason for this is as shall be clarified in that which will be brought forth with the help of God in Abstract VI both with respect to speculation and with respect to Scripture, which is in agreement with the statements of our rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing (who) in different places (said) that the sought after end of acts of service and good deeds is the love and happiness in them (service and activity), which is nothing other than the pleasure of the will in performing the good.[13] This is so because He, may His name be for a blessing, (causes) absolute love and pleasure to overflow to produce the good. The cohesion to and relation (with God) therefore would be to walk in His ways inasmuch as possible. Therefore, when

this delight and this pleasure are in the mind it (constitutes) a mental act which would mediate between what is connected and what is separate. And thus it is fitting that reward and punishment would follow from it as the effect (follows) from the cause.[14]

And when the mind lacks an instance of this delight
50a as would be the case when a man / feels compulsion in his activities, then that deed would not activate the mind, and cohesion or separation would not follow from it necessarily, since the activity (would be) abstracted from the mental will, and thus reward and punishment would not be at all fitting.[15] And this difference has also been settled.[16]

But when this difference is settled, how will reward and punishment with respect to belief be settled (with the fact that belief is necessitated)? The reason for this (question) is that concerning those who bear witness to reward and punishment (in beliefs) it is impossible for them to associate will and choice with beliefs. This is so because there are reasons which prevent them from doing it, since it has been posited that man does not have choice about beliefs and the will does not have any influence upon them (beliefs).[17]

Some of our sages have been deceived in accordance with what seems to be the implication of their words, (namely) that reward for beliefs does not fall under the category of justice and injustice, since reward is natural and is necessarily associated with a concept. That is,

when the mind of man settles on the truth of beliefs, they become (thereby) his concepts. When they are external to the mind, then the mind is substantiated by means of them and becomes eternal, which is the ultimate reward for man.[18] It is thus clear that this view has no admissibility in relation to the Torah, as shall be clarified in that which will come later, God willing.[19]

If this (the idea of some of the sages in the previous paragraph) were the case, then it would be sufficient for us to direct ourselves in (only) some of the views that are in the Torah. We would not need the multiplicity of bifurcations from the commandments and their many ramifications by God; rather there would (only be a need for) the multiplicity of philosophical consequences. And what comes about them in the Torah (about philosophy) is very very little.[20]

If the soul were substantiated from the truths of the concepts, then as in Sefer Yesodot (Euclid) and in Sefer Haharutim (Apolonius) there are very many concepts and the geometric soul[21] would be much more perfect than the Toraic soul.[22] But it is clear that this view is absurd according to the view of the Torah in that it is in itself very distant, as will be clarified later, God willing. For the ever enduring reward would be the concept alone. Would that I knew (what it means when we say that) when a soul forms a concept, which was explained in Sefer Hayesodot, i.e., that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right

angles, (and if the soul) formed no other concept (would that I knew) how this concept alone becomes substantiated and persists eternally. If it persists (eternally) would it persist in the way as that soul that has been substantiated (from the acquisition) of the concept there (in Sefer Haharutim), i.e., that the square of the diagonal of a square is equal to the two squares of two sides of the square, or from some other concept. Or if it be the case that it (the concept) will change (the nature of the substantiated soul), then will it change, (the substantiated soul) except that all of this is ridiculous and an absurdity of the imagination.[23]

However, since the eyes of the Philosopher (Aristotle) were never opened in the light of the Torah, and, from another view, since he was forced to this improbable explanation from a powerful teaching which taught (the doctrine of) immortality of man's soul, invented a fabrication, and conceived ideas (in order) to establish these fictions; and if they are utterly distant from the mind, and all the more so from the Torah, we therefore may posit this way (namely, our view).[24]

We say that since it is clear that with respect to beliefs, nothing is introduced about the will except that the believer feels a necessity which he has when he believes; (since that is the case) therefore, clearly the only alternative is to consider choice and will in the sense of being joined and conjoined with those beliefs

which are associated to them from their respect, namely the pleasure and joy which become ours when God favors us (with) belief in Him[24a] and diligence to establish truth, which is the meaning, then, without doubt, of (the terms) "willed" and "chosen". The reason for this is one can imagine the truth of the beliefs without conceiving of he who has the belief being stimulated (to feel) joy in being he who has that belief. Thus it is clear that the arousing of joy and the striving for speculation about His (i.e., God's) truth are matters attached to will and choice by means of which the matter of reward and punishment shall be settled, as shall yet be clear from what shall come (later), God willing.[25]

And I say furthermore, that they (reward and punishment) are also in (the category) of effects (as is apparent) when one speculates in truth (and reaches the conclusion that) reward does not (belong to) the essence of primary effects, rather, (it belongs to) the choice of the act when one makes it. This is so because when a man performs some act he brings into actuality through his choice one of a pair of equal opposite extremes which had been potential. Since it is thus clear that that which is actual is (no longer) potential or possible with respect to it being actual, rather it is necessary and necessity necessarily follows for it, therefore reward and punishment which belong to choice and will do not (relate) to the act itself when one performs it, but (instead reward and punishment

are related) to one's choice of the act at the point at which one makes it (i.e., the choice).[26]

Thus, how fitting is this statement of our sages, may they be remembered for a blessing: "The contemplation of a sin is worse than the sin." (Tractate Yoma 29a) This is so since a sin is a combination of two states (which are) either the activity itself or (the activity's) being chosen or willed. The punishment which occurs in (connection with) it (occurs) only with reference to will and choice, which referred to in this rabbinic saying as "contemplation". It is clear that the more difficult of the two of them is will, i.e., contemplation.[27]

It will also be affirmed as true that when they are conceived as separated, (namely, when) the activity (is conceived as) something other than contemplation and will, such as (when) one says "compelled activity", or "will" (as) something other than activity, the punishment is conceived (to apply) to thought and will. (This is) in accordance with what is clear from the true tradition, (namely that) "a burnt offering atones for the contemplation of the heart." (Leviticus Rabbah 7)[28] Punishment is not conceived (to apply) to (compelled) action such as (is affirmed in) our root principle, "God forgives the person who is forced". (Tractate Avodah Zarah 44a)[29] However, more severe beyond doubt is the punishment for willing when joined to the act than is the punishment for merely willing when not joined to the act. This teaches also that (punish-

ment is connected) with the act, but is more severe when connected with will, and especially when (will) is joined with act. This is a true matter about which there is no doubt.[30]

Thus this grave doubt has been solved. It (has been) settled that reward and punishment in beliefs is connected with pleasantness and joy which are ours through them (when we employ) diligence and effort to understand them, which is what we wanted to clarify.[31]

Chapter 6: Concerning the explanation of what has been made clear about this (doctrine) with respect to speculation.

(Speculation) agrees with the view of the sages, may they be remembered for a blessing. This (claim) will become clear from what is explained in this chapter in two senses:

First, belief in views is acquired by (means of) something other than will. Second, reward and punishment are (directed towards) the will.

If (you hold that) our effort is rewarded with happiness and joy for belonging to the class of (those who hold) this (true) belief, or if it punished, then (you would say that) these two states of affairs are alluded to in one saying in (Shabbat 88a). It says there, "And they stood at the bottom of the mountain." (Ex. 19:17) This teaches that the mountain covered them like a roof, "If you accept (the Torah), good, and if not, your burial place shall be there." Rava said, "From here we learn a great acknowledgment of the Torah. He said to him, they received it in the days of Ahasuerus, as it says, "The Jews established and received." (Esther 9:27) According to this (view) the explanation of this (text) is that since it is clear that belief is acquired by means of rational propositions (but belief is nevertheless subject to reward and punishment) all the more so is (what is acquired) by means of prophecy (subject to reward and punishment), even though it is the case) that

will introduces nothing at all over and above the notable act (of prophecy). Therefore they (had to) believe it whether they willed to or they did not will to. Thus therefore they were forced to (hold) the belief, and that compulsion was like the mountain covering them like a roof, so that they would accept (the Torah) against their will. If not they would die there, which is recognized to be force and compulsion. The case is the same with most of the mighty signs.

By extending this position (it follows that) they believed in the (entire) Torah by force since if they would turn aside from it, they would incline (away from what is correct to the way of life which is nicknamed "death and burial". Thus, (another) sage said, "from here (we learn) a great protest against the Torah". For since it is without a doubt true that if belief was forced upon them, will introduces nothing in (this matter). Perhaps by (means of) their voluntary will they would not have accepted that to which we are subject ever afterward. And this is (because) it is clear that since the belief is true that we would not be subject to (the Torah) if we did not accept it there is no way to (make sense of) the great punishment (which functions) as if we accepted it by our will ever after. So they accepted it again in the days of Ahasuerus, as (Scripture) says, "The Jews affirmed and accepted." That is to say that since it seems (to be the case) that by means of the joy which they enjoyed concerning the signs and the redemption

that was created for them in those days, they affirmed that which they had already accepted. (However) the (latter) acknowledgment negates it (the former one) because pleasantness and joy on which reward for beliefs depend already were fulfilled in the days of Ahasuerus.

All of this is an example of what is explained by our words, (namely that) belief in views is (caused by) something other than the will, or the reward is (related) to the will and the joy belongs to he who holds that belief, so that joy causes pleasure and contentment to the believer. Our root principle is that it is forbidden for a man to enjoy this world without a blessing that has been acquired from the nature of the blessings; therefore (we say), "Blessed be He who haw not made me a gentile, and a slave, or a woman," such as we will elaborate upon later in this book in Abstract VI, God willing.

This is enough for now according to our intention. Praise and glory be to God alone who is exalted beyond blessing and praise.

Commentary to

Chapter 5 of Abstract V, Part 2

[1]Having developed the position we have seen in which events are necessary with reference to their position in the chain of causality and consequently with God's knowledge, and contingent with reference to the thing itself, Crescas now poses the most critical religious problem in the Abstract: If it is the case that things are determined with reference to causes and God's knowledge, how can one account for the belief in divine reward and punishment for actions? That is, if what one does has been causally determined, and is known definitely in the mind of God, how can we make sense out of a belief system in which divine reward and punishment play an essential role, where it is assumed that God is just?

[2]Crescas now adds an important addition to the problem which will have serious ramifications as the argument develops. There are things we do because we feel forced and compelled to do them. On the other hand, there are things we do, not because of their obvious and overt compulsion, but out of choice, where the choice to perform that action is at least apparent if not real. For example, if it is true that $A^2+B^2=C^2$, then it should be the case that once the truth of this equation is made manifest to me, I shall

feel compelled to accept it as true. The incontrovertible truth of the equation constitutes a cause which refers to "the feeling of compulsion and force", since by its compulsion and force (i.e., the compulsion presented by the idea itself) I am forced and compelled to accept it as true.

On the other hand, it may be good not to murder. No matter how many attempts are made to convince me to abstain from murder, however, no matter how many times I assent to the proposition that murder is wrong, whenever some driver honks his horn behind me the moment the light turns green, I still possess the urge to strangle the man for his utter lack of consideration. But as I go to open the door of my car to commit an act of murder, I remember that murder is wrong, and cease and desist from my activity.

If the truth of "do not murder" functioned the same as "$A^2+B^2=C^2$", I would not have even had the urge to send my rude road companion six feet under. My decision not to send him to gehenom was, from my view of things, a choice that I made, one made not out of compulsion and force. This second kind of act, therefore, comprises what Crescas refers to as an act that proceeded in a way "other than the feeling of compulsion and force", i.e., I perform an act but I do not feel forced to do so.

The difficulty inherent in this distinction arises when we recall that Crescas holds to a theory that whatever we do is in fact causally necessary, whether it appears from our view of things to have been necessitated--as was

definitely the case with $A^2+B^2=C^2$--or whether it appears to have been voluntary--as in the case where I decide not to murder the road hog. Whether we feel our action to have been necessitated or not, it has in fact been necessitated. Another structurally similar way of stating the problem is this: To what extent can we be held morally accountable for our actions? Matters that proceed on a level of truth ($A^2+B^2=C^2$) are really not moral issues. Issues of murdering or not murdering are, however, clearly moral issues; yet if we murder or do not murder necessarily by virtue of causes beyond our control, how then can we be held morally accountable?

If we accept Crescas' description of acquiring knowledge as a necessary phenomenon (see notes 5-8, and the material discussed in note 10), then <u>even in a world where contingency exists with reference to causes</u>, we would acquire our ideas necessarily, and feel the force of that necessity. All the more so it is true that we both acquire and feel that we are acquiring our ideas necessarily in a universe of necessity. For Crescas the implication here is that for this form of necessity, even from a metaphysical view where contingency exists, reward and punishment should not be the logical outcome of holding true ideas, since we hold true ideas by the force of their truth, i.e., necessarily. And what is necessary, and, evidently with the qualification that it is felt so, should not be determinative in matters of reward and punishment. This implication

shall be of importance later in this chapter when Crescas takes issue with a conventional notion of medieval thought of the eternity of the soul contingent upon the acquisition of true ideas. (For a full explication of this see note 9.)

Since Crescas' metaphysics consists in the view that contingency exists only with reference to the essence of a thing, it does not seem fitting to speak of reward and punishment in either category, if we are to assume a just God, whose justice vis-a-vis humans is in some way humanly comprehensible as just, which seems to be the direction of Crescas' thought. All indications thus far suggest that Crescas' problem is precisely that he wishes to construct a religious view in which God's justice is humanly comprehensible and related to Torah and tradition, that God rewards and punishes human beings for something they have or have not done. That he succeeds ultimately to harmonize divine justice with necessity is a problem that will be discussed at some length at the end of the commentary.

[3]Crescas now makes plain the distinction between acts where one feels compelled and not compelled. The latter he calls "voluntary"; by inference the former would be "involuntary". But regardless of label, the problem still remains, as is clear when he states, "Would that I knew how for them there could be reward and punishment" even for voluntary acts.

[4]The problem is compounded at this point. One might be tempted to argue that Crescas holds to a position in which he solves the problem in the same way as the Ashirya, i.e., acts are necessitated and reward and punishment are irrational, or in a manner similar to the "scoffers and heretics", i.e., deny the Torah. But in these few sentences Crescas clearly suggests that he wishes to separate himself from such an identification, and tells us implicitly that his solution will not uproot the Torah. This further compounds his predicament.

Despite his commitment to Torah, Crescas has for philosophical reasons pulled himself into a bit of a quagmire. As we have seen in the introduction, his determinist view seems rooted largely in a commitment to argue for a view of God in which it is clear that God knows particulars as particulars, yet cannot have error thus predicated of him. To solve this problem he develops his determinist position to avoid the prediction of error in God's knowledge. Now, compelled by the logic of his view, he is trying to harmonize determinism with divine justice, i.e., Torah in, let us say, a rabbinic sense, if possible.

[5]Crescas is about to present three related arguments intended to prove that belief has no logical relation to acts of the will. We have seen a demonstration of this thesis in our two examples in note 2. Rather, he will claim, what we believe we believe on the basis of a correspondence theory of truth (argument 3) which falls into

the category of "involuntary" acts, and therefore functions outside of the will. Further, we are compelled to believe something is true because we have been shown through some method of demonstration that it is true, and human will has absolutely no bearing on the acceptance and/or rejection of such a truth claim. For Crescas will is a determinative element for the issue of reward and punishment, as we shall see. Now he is concerned primarily with showing how acquiring knowledge must of necessity have nothing to do with will.

That Crescas ties reward and punishment with moral categories is ultimately the critical issue, and an issue with which he parts company with his philosophical predecessors. The general medieval philosophical view--to be developed at some length below (see note 9)--consisted in the belief that if the soul were immortal at all, the measure of its immortality was directly related to the number of true ideas acquired by the person in whom the soul (in particular for this problem the intellect) resided during his lifetime. For most medievals survival after death was non-individual, though Gersonides developed a doctrine of individual immortality. But in all cases, particularly in a determinist universe, one would achieve immortality ("reward") or extinction ("punishment") on the basis of (1) What one was determined to learn; and (2) What one felt that he must necessarily learn at the point at which he learned it. And in no case would one achieve immortality on moral

grounds, unless it be conceived that the process of cognition itself becomes in effect a moral grounding. I would suggest at this point, that, although Crescas mentions no names, the aforementioned "heretics" and "scoffers" might well refer to Gersonides in particular, and Jewish Aristotelians in general, who hold to the position mentioned briefly above, who therefore, from Crescas' position "uproot the Torah."

At this point in the text Crescas is preparing to show how cognition and will are mutually exclusive. The argument implicitly shall proceed according to the following syliogism:

1. Will is not related to belief (a point he will make presently employing three arguments);
2. Will is related to reward and punishment (a point which Crescas has already made implicitly, although problems remain to be solved);
3. Therefore, belief is not related to reward and punishment (and reward and punishment <u>is</u> somehow related to will).

With this conclusion Crescas shall (1) Reject the notion that immortality is achieved through the acquisition of true ideas; (2) More broadly, he will make the case that philosophic knowledge is and ought to be separate from Torah, and Torah, which is involved in matters of will and therefore reward and punishment (unlike philosophic knowledge) is the more existentially critical (and therefore greater) entity for Jews; (3) Aristotle, who Crescas erro-

neously credits with the theory of immortality with which he is taking issue, is discredited along with his theory.

[6]Crescas' first point is that these people (scoffers and heretics) do not hold to any belief having to do with will and choice. What this means at first is unclear, but becomes somewhat clearer through the issue addressed in this paragraph.

Crescas suggests that these people have no use for will because it has no reference to belief. It is absurd, he says, to claim that one believes what he believes through an act of will. Were such the case one could will at one moment to believe that Socrates drank hemlock and died, and at another moment one could will to believe that Socrates drank Coca-Cola and died a happy old man. This first claim is true, and the second obviously false, but if will were the determining factor in matters of what one believes then the means by which this belief is acquired entails the conclusion that neither belief, not even the true belief may be conceived as existing at the "level of truth". This is so because the belief has not been acquired in a way in which the believer can be certain of the veracity of his belief. Instead, he merely holds what he wishes to hold when he wishes to hold it.

[7]The thrust of this argument is as follows: I know that in 1983 Ronald Reagan is President of the United States. I know this from the evidence that comes to my attention. If I need corroborative evidence, it is available. If I

needed absolute proof that in 1983 Ronald Reagan was President, I could find it.

Suppose it was the year 2983 and I was not certain of this fact, and the available evidence indicated that either Reagan or Joe was President. Based on the evidence (and its lack of clarity) I would have to decide that either Joe or Reagan was President in 1983. The process of deciding would constitute a volitional act, and the resulting opinion would remain in doubt.

What Crescas is saying then is that when we hold to some truth with certainty we do not doubt that truth; if we doubt the truth we hold we then cannot hold that truth with certainty; in other words, knowing a truth cannot involve a volitional act. Further, when we hold a truth with certainty, we are compelled to hold that belief, which means that the will does not enter into the process at all, for holding truth is not a volitional act; when we doubt the truth we hold we must hold that truth as the result of some volitional act in which we had to decide between two or more possible options. It necessarily follows therefore that when the will enters into the process of belief, the one who holds the belief necessarily cannot hold it with certainty.

[8]This argument states with finality that true belief and the will have no commonality. One holds something as true because it corresponds to some reality outside of the mind (it is "something external to the soul as it is in the

soul"). That reality outside of the mind exists independently of the mind, and it is the function of the mind to discover the external reality, and analyze its nature. It is not the function of the will to mold a reality to suit the needs of the mind. This being so, will and belief have no dependence.

This refers to a correspondence theory of truth, that is, the epistemological notion that a belief is true if and only if it corresponds to an empirical fact. An appropriate statement of this theory comes from Issac Israeli, who said, "Truth is the adequation of things and the intellect."[1] The intellect judges truth on the basis of what is perceived external to itself via the senses; the extent to which it judges correctly it perceives truth; to the extent it judges incorrectly it perceives falsehood. To quote Aristotle, "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false; while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."[2]

With a theory of truth that relies on external evidence as its measure of what is true or false, the will as discussed here has no place in the scheme of things, since an act of will can neither determine external reality nor contradict it. Rather, the senses report external reality to the mind, which analyzes and makes judgments from the gathered data, making the human soul a passive receptacle for knowledge.

To review the three arguments: Crescas begins this section by telling us that the heretics and scoffers--whose identify remains unclear--do not include matters of will and choice in their theory of knowledge. He then lists three related reasons to explain why. Essentially these three are:

1) The will is not a factor in learning truth;

2) The person who makes a truth claim via some volitional act, must necessarily doubt the veracity of that claim;

3) Truth is determined through a corresponding theory of truth, which has no relation to the will.

[9]Suppose that I do not know the Pythagorean theorem, and Joe sets out to teach it to me. One way in which Joe could teach it to me might be to say, "This is the Pythagorean theory. Believe it, because it is true." On the basis of Joe's recommendation I may or may not believe that the Pythagorean theorem is true. But in neither judgment do I make a truthful judgment; rather I would have made a judgment of the will, and, as in the arguments discussed above, I would forever be in doubt as to the veracity of my belief.

Another way in which Joe could teach me the Pythagorean theorem would entail his instructing me in arithmetic, followed by a series of lessons in geometric theory. He would have to teach me about postulates, axioms, about how to derive theorems from postulates; he would have to teach me all about geometric forms, particularly about triangles,

particularly about right triangles. Once I have acquired all of the necessary preliminary skills and information, Joe then would do two things: (a) He would show me the Pythagorean theorem; (b) he would prove to me the validity of the theorem utilizing all of the mathematical information he has taught me. Once I accept the validity of the geometric science and ancillary method that preceded the presentation of the Pythagorean theorem (an acceptance that would have occurred along the way of Joe's instruction), and once I understand the procedure and proof regarding the theorem, I would be compelled to hold to the truth of it. Moreover, the more completely I understand geometry, the stronger would be my belief in the truth of the Pythagorean theorem.

Thus does Crescas say that the truth of a belief, particularly when that belief has been demonstrated, requires that the believer accept that truth necessarily and unequivocally.

This view of things, in which will is conceived as a mental capacity that has no connection with learning scientific truth sees a person as a passive receptacle waiting to receive knowledge which is "out there". This is wholly consistent with the Aristotelian view of man's mind as a blank slate waiting to receive writing.[3] The world is filled with truths which we possess passively, without any effort on our part. This I think comprises an important part of Crescas' critique, for, as we shall see momen-

tarily, the necessity of cognizing assumed in this view of cognition (which most certainly was in various forms the dominant model) helps denude it of its link to reward and punishment, even in the way described above. For, since we learn truths necessarily and not contingently, individuals in effect have no part in their acquisition, and since individuals have no part in their acquisition, it is improper to predicate of it any salvific effect, in whatever manner "salvific" is to be understood.

It is appropriate at this point to pause and present some background material which will prove important for understanding Crescas' argument. As is becoming clear, Crescas is making a claim that shall negate prior philosophic claims about the status of acquiring knowledge. Briefly what I mean is this: To facilitate a correspondence theory of knowledge, medieval philosophy had developed a set of ideas, by no means universally agreed upon, which taught generally that the acquisition and consequent retention of knowledge, i.e., concepts or universals, caused the transformation of the intellect from a state of potentiality to actuality, resulting in a perfected entity, which became more perfect the more the intellect acquired. This perfected entity was viewed as the only perfect portion of the soul, which, according to some, meant that this part was worthy of surviving the death of the body in generally a non-individual form, though with Gersonides, the doctrine includes individuality of a sort. As well as a controversy

over the existence of immortality, there existed a controversy as to whether the soul was a bodily predisposition or conjunction with the Active Intellect, whether corporeal or incorporeal. I propose to give a brief history of the idea, focusing on Gersonides' opinion and as well adduce evidence of Crescas' own opinion on the matter, which, as shall be clear is methodologically and doctrinally consistent with our chapter.

In a famous passage in De Anima (3:5), Aristotle presents a model for cognition whose meaning is not entirely clear, an unclarity which resulted in a great deal of controversy through the Middle Ages. Aristotle says that the potential mind is like a blank tablet waiting to receive writing. There are, in other words, facets to the process of intellection, one active and one passive. Further he says,

> When the mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more: this alone is immortal and eternal ... [4]

So it is we have a process of intellection involving activity, passivity, and the possibility of immortality. This latter is unclear, however, and the terminology governing this problem thus far is vague.

The first important commentator on the Aristotelian problem was Alexander of Aphrodisias, who clarified the terminology. He named the active power in intellection the Active Intellect, and the potential intellect he called the material intellect. As well, he clarified their func-

tions. The material intellect is a predisposition for knowledge.

> As such the material intellect is not to be hypostasized; it is not a substance, which, for Aristotle, would imply that it is a separately existing thing or capable of separate existence. Rather, the material intellect is a natural capacity, one among many, of the organism, through which it can engage in a specific kind of activity.[5]

The Active Intellect for Alexander--and for all subsequent medieval thought with some variation--is a separately existing, transcendent entity, identical in fact, with God. (It is this identity of the Active Intellect with God that will become controversial; Gersonides for one will deny that identity, claiming instead that the Active Intellect is the lowest of the spheres, related to but different from God.)

The potential intellect, in the process of cognition, will spy an object in the world, say a horse. From a horse the mind comes to know about the universal Horse, i.e., what is universally true about horses that binds them together into one category. In the process of moving from horse to Horse, the human mind comes in contact with the Active Intellect which knows only Horse, from which the human mind is able to move from the particular to the universal. The human mind is thus the only entity of all living things on earth that has the disposition for so receiving universals from the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect, meanwhile, eternally overflows with the spiritual sustenance necessary for life; each species receives from this overflow what is appropriate to its level.

When the potential intellect has acquired its first concept, it thus actualizes its potentiality for learning concepts, and becomes an acquired intellect, which resides in the material intellect, which is viewed as having a wider function. It now becomes the acquired intellect whose function now is to acquire more knowledge. The notion of the Active Intellect, aside from filling out the hints given in De Anima regarding human knowledge serves the necessary logical purpose of explaining how the mind is able to move from particular to universal. Thus, though this theory obviously lends itself to a certain religious doctrine, its initial intent was to satisfy problems in the nature of cognition.[5]

One other point deserves to be mentioned before moving on: The intellect is perceived as having two distinctive faculties, a theoretical and a practical.

> The function of the theoretical intellect is to know the truth, and that of the practical to deliberate about some end and to produce some action ... This is because the objects of the former are necessary, universal, immovable, and unchangeable. They admit only of contemplation, not of deliberation. On the other hand, the objects of the practical intelligence are contingent, particular, and liable to mutation and change.[6]

Now, with Crescas two important and critical reversals of this theory occur. (1) The objects of the practical intellect become necessary like the objects of the theoretical intellect; and (2) this new situation, as we shall demonstrate throughout the commentary, reverses the traditional philosophical doctrine as to which intellect merits reward

and punishment, though with consequences of some logical difficulty. Note for instance this paragraph from our chapter:

> Some of our sages have been deceived in accordance with what seems to be the implication of their words, (namely) that reward for beliefs does not fall under the category of justice, and injustice [i.e., ethics, or the realm of the practical intellect], since reward is natural and is necessarily associated with a concept. That is, when the mind of man settles on the truth of beliefs, they become (thereby) his concepts. When they are external to the mind, then the mind is substantiated by means of them and becomes eternal, which is the ultimate reward for man. It is thus clear that this view has no admissibility in relation to the Torah ...

To return to Alexander, it is not clear how he stands in the matter of immortality. If the intellect is only a predisposition of the body, then it ought to follow that when the body dies, the intellect should also pass away. But there are divergent interpretations of Alexander's view, leaving the question open.[7]

The next major opinion on this matter is that of Themistius, who differed with Alexander in two respects: (1) He claimed that the material intellect was not a natural predisposition at all, but "an incorporeal substance having separate and independent existence." (2) The Active Intellect "is primarily an imminent and inherent power of the human mind."[8]

Averroes tries to strike a middle ground between Alexander and Themistius. Like Alexander he claims that the intellect must have some relation to the body; but, says Averroes, it is incorrect to state that its relation

is solely with the body. Themistius is also correct, says Averroes, when he says that the intellect is incorporeal; but it is wrong that it is only incorporeal, i.e., the material intellect is in some way both corporeal and incorporeal. For Averroes the Active Intellect is a separate intellect; but somehow in the act of thinking the Active Intellect becomes related to the body. This relationship occurs as an individuated conjunction, a relationship which passes away with the body.

In the first book of the Wars of the Lord Gersonides carefully presents this debate as he has inherited it. In particular, he takes great pains to negate the Averroes-Themistius strain, primarily on the grounds of the logical difficulties that inhere in positing the conjunction between the body and the Active Intellect. This conjunction posited by Averroes, though it attempts to bridge the difficulties in both Alexander's and Themistius' positions, poses a difficulty of its own. It is unable to forge a true distinction between the Active Intellect and the Material Intellect as his view makes it actually only a particularized version of the Active Intellect conjoined with an individual human. That being the case, Gersonides carefully, logically, and devastatingly demonstrates how it cannot be that this conjunction both is and is not the Active Intellect, both is and is not individuated. Moreover, Averroes has it that this conjunction results in the conjunction returning to its source unimproved, which, from

Gersonides' view would make the striving for concepts a vain activity in that it makes no difference with regard to immortality.[9] For our purposes it need only be pointed out that Gersonides, while differing from Averroes-Themistius on certain grounds, does not differ substantially in his view of the acquisition of concepts and the value thereof.

Gersonides then develops his own position on the intellect, which is a version of the Alexandrian model. For Gersonides then, the material intellect will be a bodily predisposition which can be drawn from potentiality to activity. However, in Gersonides' view the universals as they exist in the acquired intellect are not identical with the universals in the Active Intellect since they have been derived from particular memory images via the imaginative faculty, which means that upon death it is absurd to suggest that they return to the Active Intellect. Rather, they are immortal in the mind which contains them; but remain separate from the Active Intellect, and therefore individually. Man's happiness after death is directly proportional to the number of true ideas a man learns during his life, since with his death he loses the capacities which enable him to learn.

With Crescas we have a thinker who is generally aware of the medieval debate, likely through Gersonides' presentation, for as we have seen in our introduction, Crescas does know The War of the Lord. But Crescas has his own agenda which differs radically from that of his predecessors.

His theory of the soul is found in Book Three, Abstract II of The Light of the Lord, and deserves some mention at this point. This Abstract is brief (two chapters); the first chapter shall be quoted in full (my translation), and the important portions of the second chapter will be either summarized or quoted.

> Chapter 1 (Book Three, Abstract I) On the Immortality of the Soul: Concerning the clarification of how it is fitting for it (the nature of the soul) to be understood according to what is decreed by Torah and speculation:
>
> I say that the soul which remains after death shall remain eternally (and) naturally (so); that it exists in its essence without changing (either) in species or individually, according to what Torah agrees and speculation agrees.
>
> Therefore we said "that which survives after death", because not all of the souls of men remain (after death) but some of them are lost at their hour (of death such as) some of the wicked, as will be brought forth in the Third Abstract (on Reward and Punishment), God willing.
>
> We said "it shall remain eternally (and) naturally (so)" in that it does not (contain) the causes for (its own) self-corruption. Thus (if it does not perish) from punishment, such as is brought in the Tradition, and as will come, God willing, it will remain eternally (and) naturally.
>
> Since we said "it exists individually" it is clear that by definition it is a substance and not a predisposition alone, as Averroes imagined.
>
> And we have said, "It does not change by species." This teaches the worthlessness of the opinion of he who imagined that that which remains of the souls shall unite with the Active Intellect in a manner that (might be said that) it would be just concerning it. (For if that were to occur) it (the soul) would change in species.
>
> And we said "and (the soul does not change) individually." (This claim) teaches the worthlessness of the opinion of the one for whom it seems that it would be impossible to (posit) multiplicity of souls after separation (from the body), but rather (this worthless view suggests that souls) become one in number. This opinion is most worthless according to the Tradition and speculation itself.[10]

We see in this opening chapter that Crescas firmly believes in an individual immortality after death. Thus far he is not differing radically in the debate with the substance of the theories, with the exception that he mentions that the souls of the wicked shall perish. But it is not as yet clear what he means by this. It should also be noted the evidently great emphasis he grants to the Torah and Tradition.

In the second chapter of this Abstract he continues to present his case according to his three important sources, Torah, Tradition and Speculation, noting that Speculation shall be in agreement with the first two. He brings a number of proof texts to support his claims. One interesting point that Crescas makes concerning the individuality/non-individuality problem is, were the soul to survive collectively, reward and punishment would become inapplicable. Note how Crescas takes Gersonides' argument against Averroes (were the intellect merely a conjunction, the acquisition of concepts would have no meaning) and uses it for his own purposes. Note too that reward and punishment are important categories for Crescas in this Abstract as in our own.

From the perspective of philosophy Crescas then presents without affirming three of the arguments from among those we have already seen concerning the nature of the material intellect and its relation to the Active Intellect, which he deems central to the argument.

> 1) That the human intellect is substantiated through its concepts and they call it the acquired intellect;

> 2) ... That everything that comes into being passes away, and everything that passes away comes into being.
>
> 3) ... If it be assumed possible that the human intellect can comprehend the Active Intellect, it (the human intellect) shall return to it eternally.[11]

Then he shows that concerning these propositions a great deal of controversy exists. After a brief discussion of the various divisions in this controversy, Crescas then says of these propositions

> ... And we say, however, (concerning the first proposition, which is the foundation of the entire structure, (that) its falsity has been indubitably demonstrated in Abstract VI in Book Two (chapter 1, p. 53a-b). Also the second proposition, with the words of Rabbi Levi (ben Gerson) has been struck on its head ... And as for the third proposition it is plainly clear that its falsity has been demonstrated when we demonstrated the falsity of the first (proposition), because the understanding of the Active Intellect by the human intellect will not result in the eternality of the human intellect unless we were to posit that the (human) intellect will become substantiated by its concepts, which is self-evident.[12]

In this way Crescas takes issue with the medieval debate as he has inherited it. What remains to be answered is Crescas' own doctrine of what causes the soul to remain eternally. This is given immediately after the above text:

> This is what it is fitting to say in affirmation of the survival (of the soul); After it has been posited that the definition of the soul is an intellectual substance whose cause of corruption is not in itself (such as we have seen in the first chapter of this Abstract) when it becomes perfected in connection with love by means of what it comprehends in the Torah and the wonders of God, may He be exalted, it is fitting that it should remain in its perfection ... [13]

A very great deal could be said about the preceding, but the full details of Crescas' theory of the soul must await further study. For our purposes, several observations

germane to the present text both with regard to content and methodology must suffice:

As we have seen and shall continue to see in our text Crescas is very much a philosopher, but with an emphasis unique in the history of medieval Jewish thought. He uses philosophy to contravene the authority of philosophy. He uses philosophical argument to assert the primacy of Torah, which one presumes is given a priori in his system anyway. Note how he overturns the traditional concept of the soul by marshalling philosophic arguments. The soul is an intellectual substance, yet one can be destroyed for wickedness, and perfected in love. Note too the end result, a soul that is an intellectual substance, which is not perfected intellectually, but in love through the Torah. This is a very radical departure indeed, but it remains nonetheless within a recognizable framework. The old process of substantiation is replaced with a new process of substantiation that is functionally identical to that which it seeks to replace.

The theme of love through Torah repeats itself in other places in The Light of the Lord[14] in various forms. Love, fear, and pleasure, connected to Torah understood as authoritatively superior to philosophy constitutes a dominant theme in Crescas' thought.

[10]I.e., now that it is clear that Crescas rejects the commonly held belief that intellectual excellence equals moral excellence, he is now going to present his own view of the matter.

[11]Crescas suggests here a causal chain. To unravel the threads of his argument, he is saying:

a) Divine justice necessitates good and perfection;

b) Good and perfection bring into being things which are causes that move people toward good effects;

c) These causes are divine commandments (Torah) and reward and punishment for them, by whose agency in the scheme of things people are moved to good effects.

d) Will and choice therefore operate in a nexus in which commandments, reward and punishment are known causal factors whose effects are good, which point ultimately to the good and perfection which inhere in the nature of divine justice, and therefore the world.

To look at it another way: Our problem is squaring the notion of divine justice with necessity. It might be suggested that if Joe's actions are determined, and if that fact has been demonstrated to him (such as would be the case if he read The Light of the Lord), if it were possible he might, so to speak, retire his will, and passively accept his determined fate in the causal chain. (This is functionally impossible since one employs one's will constantly.) He would then have the same attitude toward his actions as one would have about the acquisition of concepts. But we have seen that the totality of this causal necessity, while real and fully determining, is known in its fullness only to God. Further, all of the elements in the universe fit into that chain in a way known only to God.

In this position, according to Crescas, commandments (i.e., Torah), and reward and punishment (that are associated with obedience and disobedience to Torah) are necessary parts of the universe. More specifically, they are necessary components of the life of the Jews. They act on Jews in a way no other element in the universe can, moving us toward good and perfection if we obey commandments, away from good effects if we transgress them, i.e., they bring us toward moral excellence and thereby manifest divine justice on earth. If there were no commandments there would be no thing by whose agency we could be brought to do the good. But since that which exists exists necessarily, it would inconceivable that commandments would not exist. Since commandments exist necessarily, they necessarily act as cause to Jews whose effect would be reward or punishment, depending upon the action chosen in relation to a given commandment. But at this point it is as yet unclear how we can say reward and punishment are fitting categories in a causally determined universe, or what precisely the entailments of reward and punishment will be.

A further remark is required at this point. Crescas claims to bring "into agreement divine justice (with choice), just as reward and punishment (are associated) with necessity." It is still unclear what "choice" consists in in a universe where all things are, from the view of causation, determined, or, stated differently, how there can be such a thing as real choice if contingency is, from the view of

God, non-existent.

Also the reader should be warned. The paragraph under analysis begins with the phrase "here is the first", implying of course that there will be a seocnd, etc. This seems to be a textual error, however, since in the text, no further numbered arguments follow.

[12]Here Crescas restates and resolves what has until now been problematic. That is, the distinction between those things we do that seem to be compelled (such as the acceptance of Pythagorean theorem) and those things we do that do not seem compelled, i.e., that are voluntary (such as not murdering), is a real and not merely an apparent distinction. My choosing not to murder that miserable horn honker behind me at the newly changed light occurs through my desire to obey the Toraitic commandment not to murder, which, though causally determined, has not been determined from my narrower view of things. Indeed, my level of self-restraint may have been remarkable and commendable, given how obnoxious my neighbor in journeying through the streets has been. I really wanted to murder that man, and was verging on the commission of that dastardly crime, when I succeeded willfully in restraining my urge to kill. Even though from the view of causes and God's knowledge it was a forgone conclusion that I would go no further in the satiation of this desire than longingly ruminating about how nice it would be to turn this ball of obnoxious flesh into a corpse, since it appeared to me that I <u>chose</u> not to murder

the gentleman, from a view of things (mine) I made a choice of one of two possibilities. Because of this set of feelings about actions--in contradistinction to an opposite set of feelings about learning ideas--Crescas claims that it is rational to talk about choice in the human scheme of things. "Apparent" choice, through the strength of its apparent nature, a nature that for humans is and always will seem actual, is construed by Crescas as real for us.

We now see that this "feeling" of compulsion in actions or beliefs or lack thereof, is a critical factor in Crescas' analysis of choice. As we have seen, the feeling of compulsion we experience upon accepting a belief serves in his mind to overthrow the traditional philosophical notion of immortality of the intellect (reward) through the acquisition of true ideas.[15] For if what we learn we learn necessarily, and we know that we learn it necessarily (if we have had no choice in the matter), how then can we expect Divine Justice to reward us? On the other hand, acts which do not generate a feeling of compulsion <u>appear</u> contingent, but this appearance, in that it becomes a causal factor determining our actions, has a very real effect upon human acts. For this reason, though acts are ultimately determined, how one feels when acting becomes important in our daily actions.

An interesting problem poses itself. We have mentioned the distinction between types of "necessities". We have been making this distinction as the difference between

acquiring beliefs and doing acts, where the belief is understood as philosophic or scientific belief, not religious or dogmatic. The justification for this latter description shall become clear below, where as we shall see Crescas uses mathematical examples for his argument. It is therefore unclear whether religious dogma, for example Crescas' six Toraitic cornerstones of which this Abstract (Choice) comprises a section (the other five are God's Knowledge, Providence, God's Power, Prophecy, and Ends of the Torah), is to be part of belief. At least at the level that both are true or false, for Crescas they logically ought to be the same with regard to reward and punishment; the truth of mathematics ought to have the same consequences in reward and punishment as the truth of prophecy, and vice versa. If they are different it is not clear at this point how; if they are the same, it would have to follow that just as one receives no reward for knowing mathematics, so too one would receive no reward for knowing, for example, that God knows particulars as particulars, since as beliefs one would be consciously compelled to hold both types of belief. If we are to read Crescas consistently at this point, we would have to assume that he seems to hold that neither of these types of beliefs has anything at all to do with reward and punishment per se, but rather that reward and punishment are effects resulting from acts independent of matters of belief, i.e., of that type of necessity that does not include feelings of compulsion and force.

That Crescas is fully aware of this problem is unclear now. However, an interesting solution to this problem does emerge (see note 25), a solution which is wholly consistent with the thrust of Crescas' thought.

[13]In an interesting manner, reward and punishment are linked to the will via "acts of service and good deeds." This connection with the will satisfies the criterion for Crescas discussed earlier (see note 4), viz., that will must have some causal relation to reward and punishment. Here that causal relation is invoked for the first time: The will gains pleasure from performing the good. This brings us to a significant juncture in Crescas' argument.

The argument to this point may be outlined as follows:

1. All events are causally determined;

2. If so, reward and punishment then become problematic;

3. Commandments, reward and punishment are necessary elements of reality;

4. Will and choice must inform that which will lead to reward and punishment;

5. Some things are felt to be determined, others are not;

6. Those things which are felt to be determined have no relation to the will and therefore have no relation to reward and punishment;

7. Those things, which though determined, are not felt to be so (namely, good acts), and which therefore seem

from the human perspective to be contingent, are thereby distinctly different from those things included in #6. Their distinctiveness, i.e., that they appear to be willed and chosen activities because that is how we (necessarily) feel when we perform them, allows for the link between them and reward and punishment, which grants the reasonableness of feelings of pleasure (i.e., reward) when performed.

[14]In the system of Crescas' predecessors the seeking and acquisition of true ideas constitutes a mental act which initiates a connection with the Active Intellect in some way (depending upon which school a given thinker follows). Consistent with his rejection of that concept, Crescas has replaced the instantiation of the intellect and its subsequent immortality with a parallel concept of doing of Toraitically proper deeds and the subsequent reward, the love and pleasure one experiences for doing to good.

This idea is developed at some length in Abstract VI[16] (Human Ends), where Crescas speaks of love and fear of God as concepts which contravene the traditional idea of intellectual excellence. We have then a different dialectic, radical in both its location (acts) and its ultimate source, a substitution of Torah for philosophy. In Abstract VI Crescas makes it clear that his rationale for the commandments is much as we have described, namely as a guide for deeds, the reward for which is a love of God.

On the other hand, note the similarity of the language in the latter half of this paragraph with that which we

have seen elsewhere. According to Crescas' predecessors the Active Intellect, the lowest of the spheres according to Gersonides, constantly overflows with, among other things, knowledge with which man, and only species man, can connect in order first to instantiate his intellect, then acquire true ideas. In our text no mention at all is made of the Active Intellect; God Himself is said to be overflowing, and what overflows is not knowledge but love and pleasure that one can receive from doing the good, i.e., from performing commandments and good deeds.

I build a succah on Succot. In building this succah I am obeying the command of God which I have been taught from the Torah and the tradition. From my view, I need not have built the succah, but after considering all of the reasons for and against such a project, after consulting the Torah and the tradition, I willingly choose to build the succah, and thus fulfill the command. In no way did I feel compelled to build the succah.

Now, when I complete the succah (or at some point along the way--it is as yet not clear at precisely what moment), having done the good, I am filled with a feeling of love and pleasure for (and apparently from) God for having obeyed God's command. The love and pleasure I experience are in some way related to the absolute love and pleasure which emanate from God. How exactly this relationship occurs Crescas does not state. But it seems clear that in acquiring this feeling, I am connected with God.

If I choose to continue this connection, I may do so by "walking in his ways inasmuch as possible." Moreover, this delight and pleasure in my mind constitute what Crescas calls a "mental act" which is to say that it is an act located in the mind, related to God. For Crescas, then, the transformation is complete; a parallel structure substituting a mental act about deeds for thought, pleasure for ideas, is in place, and the intellectual model that had dominated the scene has from Crescas' view been toppled.

There remains in this paragraph the problem of the nature of reward and punishment. Here Crescas does not speak of reward and punishment in the sense of one's just desserts in the world to come (though he does mention this latter, Book Three, Abstract II, at least insofar as he affirms that not all souls survive death, and that the determining criterion is the measure of one's deeds). Rather this pleasurable mental sensation of which he speaks constitutes the reward for doing the good, and its absence--which would occur when one does not perform the good--constitutes punishment. God causes absolute love and pleasure to overflow, a share of which can be received by doing good. Put somewhat differently, my knowledge that I will experience pleasure and love when I do the good acts as a catalyst to bring me to the point of doing the good. Since I desire that pleasurable mental experience, I pursue the good. Thus there exists a necessary causal relationship between Torah and commandments, reward and punishment, and pursuing the good.

A further point suggests itself. As we have seen, this system of reward and punishment functions in a way parallel to the system it seeks to replace. As such the relationship between the Jew and God seems as distant here as it did in the other system. Where one received pleasure of a sort for learning ideas, here one received pleasure for doing commandments. The problem of affect, viz., bridging the gap between a transcendent God and His subjects, still remains. Instead of the Active Intellect overflowing ideas, here God overflows love and pleasure, which a Jew can receive in as indiscriminate a fashion as one receives true ideas. Indeed, Crescas' system likely increases the "distance" between man and God, in that in a determinist world, God's knowledge of things has virtually no relationship to the events here. In a traditionalist sense, a Jew, realizing his sin, can repent of it, and that repentence can result in a renewed relationship with a God who did not know with certainty that that act of repentence would occur. (This pietistic view leads to all of the logical problems regarding omniscience we saw in the introduction.) In Crescas' view of things, there is no mutuality in the Jew's relationship with God, for God knows all along what course of events a given Jew's life will follow.

It is useful at this point to pause for a moment for some observations which will serve to tie together what we have discussed thus far and as well clarify what goals

Crescas is pursuing in this Abstract as in other parts of his book.

We can ask: What is Crescas trying to accomplish by this argumentation? By making all things causally necessary, by substituting act for thought as the crucial factor in relation with God, what is he trying to do? Four inferences present themselves.

1) In this Abstract Crescas continues his critique of Aristotle. In Crescas' Critique of Aristotle, Harry A. Wolfson shows the extent to which Crescas forcefully opens gaping holes in the structure of Aristotelian physics.[17] In our Abstract as we have thus far seen, Crescas rejects the Aristotelian-Alexandrian-Themistius-Averroes line of thought that the soul--if immortal--achieves immortality through knowledge. (For some of Crescas' argumentation from Abstract VI, see note 24.)

2) In a world of necessity, where Torah (unconnected to Aristotelian philosophy) is the necessary factor leading the Jew to do the good, the conceptual, structural, and logical links between the Jew and Torah are inextricable; the entire structure holds tightly and neatly together. It is necessarily the case that Torah exists; it is necessarily the case that God's knowledge, Providence, Ability, Choice, and End (the six Toraitic cornerstones of which the second book of The Light of the Lord is an exposition) exist. It remains for some further study to examine carefully the other sections of the book in order to explicate

the full force of Crescas' thought, and the interrelationship between the six cornerstones.

3) True ideas are universal; they are not related to national boundaries, etc. True ideas are true for Muslims, Greeks, Christians, and Jews, as well as for any other group. They would be true for that matter if no human existed. This being the case, it would follow that the view that holds to the belief that immortality is achieved through acquiring true ideas constitutes, or can constitute, a universal religious view. Crescas' inversion of this idea serves functionally to particularize, let us say, nationalize, who becomes eligible to participate in the system. If this goal is not obvious here, it certainly becomes clear later in the Abstract where Crescas says, " ... And since the eyes of the Philosopher (Aristotle) were never opened in the light of the Torah ... " That is, as we shall see, Crescas argues ad hominem that Aristotle, who had no access to the Toraitic revelation, was driven to his position by the demands of reason alone. Without access to revelation, his thought is found wanting.

4) Related to 1, 2, and 3 above, it seems clear that Crescas is arguing for a separation of religion (Torah) from philosophy (Aristotle) for religion's sake. He is forging this break so that religious concepts that had been synthetically formulated so as to be consistent with what a given philosopher presumed to be the proper Aristotelian interpretation, may be explicated unencumbered

by Aristotelian baggage.

Moreover, as we have seen, it is likely that Crescas held that the Jewish philosophic enterprise had been too heavily weighed in favor of speculation at the expense of deeds. In his separation, Crescas places far greater weight on deeds than thought by making deeds the cause for reward and punishment, replacing an intellectual model with an anti-intellectual one.

[15]I.e., since the process we have explicated in notes 13 and 14 cannot apply to compelled activities, i.e., the acquisition of true ideas, reward and punishment cannot be said to apply to them.

[16]I.e., the difference between activities which appear to be compelled and those which do not; the difference has been settled in notes 13 and 14 above.

[17]This refers back to the three arguments explicated in notes 6, 7, and 8.

[18]This paragraph has already been quoted in full in note 9.

[19]See, i.e., Book Two, Abstract VI, Chapter 1, pp. 53a-b, where Crescas argues at great length against the concept that the intellect becomes instantiated through the acquisition of ideas. Also see Book Three, Abstract II, Chapter 2, where Crescas presents his theory of the soul, in which he lists three commonly agreed upon principles regarding the soul only to negate them. Among those three principles is the one in question. Specifically, he takes

issue with the notion that there exists in the material intellect some sort of incorporeal substance that becomes instantiated and remains eternally. This is argued largely on the grounds that the assumption of this substance would require something coming into being out of nothing, which is assumed to be impossible. (For the full range of arguments, see the referred passage above.) He concludes this presentation of arguments by saying:

> Tell me so I shall know how it (the intellect) shall be instantiated; rather all of these ideas are fabrications of the philosophers, such that the nature of the truth (as they see it) obligates them to believe in the immortality of the soul (through the acquisition of concepts), and they have conceived concepts and increased matters from an excess of emptiness. Some of the sages among our people have been misled (by these Gentile philosophers and nave followed) after them, and they did not feel, nor did it occur to them, how they are destroying the wall of the edifice of the Torah through this, and how they are demolishing its limits.[18]

In other words, in this passage Crescas states quite openly that which we have seen earlier, viz., that Greek philosophy in this matter is not merely wrong, but it is bad since it has misled some Jews, bringing them to philosophic paths that are destructive to the purposes of Torah. The true purpose of Torah to Crescas is in part as we have been explaining throughout this commentary, viz., that following Torah, not philosophy, merits reward. He states it again in Abstract VI:

> And when we looked into it (the purpose of Torah) we found a small portion in it whose quantity is small (but) whose quality is great, which does not have anything to do with absolute ideas or absolute activities (i.e., the ideas of the philosophers). And it (that

> small portion which we have found) is the love of God may He be blessed and the true fear of Him.[19]

We therefore can add onto what we have seen earlier in this Abstract: The final end of Torah, i.e., the ultimate goal of a life lived in following Torah, is love and fear of God achieved not in learning ideas, a notion which Crescas thoroughly rejects, but in doing deeds, i.e., following the commandments.

[20]Crescas admits that the Torah does not have much to say about philosophy. What he really states here is somewhat more fundamental. It is a claim which hearkens back to note 14,to the third of four inferences drawn from Crescas' arguments. The thrust at this point is somewhat different from that earlier observation, but, combined with what has been said elsewhere (e.g., note 19) we can draw a rather substantial picture of Crescas' intention.

In the first book of The Light of the Lord Crescas sought to construct a broad critique of Aristotle. "His main objects was to show that the Aristotelian explanation of the universe as outlined by Maimonides in his (25) propositions (in The Guide of the Perplexed) was false, and that the proofs of the existence of God which they were supposed to establish were groundless."[20] Crescas examines each of the 25 propositions and critiques each one. As the result of this critique certain Aristotelian notions which are central to Aristotle's cosmology and are therefore cornerstones to his thought (such as the notion of a finite uni-

verse because an actual infinite is impossible) become highly suspect if not completely impossible concepts.

Medieval philosophy was in part concerned with the problems posed by the co-existence of two apparently independent sources of truth, philosophy and revealed religion.

> Reason constituted the "word of man", that is to say, man's account of things based upon careful observation of the world and systematic reflection on his experience using his wits alone.... Revelation in turn constituted the word of God or God's account of things based upon His infinite wisdom and familiarity with them as their Creator ... Insofar as this word was disclosed to human beings, its primary sources were likewise sense experience and direct intellectual understanding.[21]

Most medieval Jewish philosophy sought the means by which these two sources might be conjoined. This was predicated on the assumption that truth was universal and ought to be proclaimed universally and compellingly. This belief established between these two sources a perhaps fragile unity. As we have stated, Crescas seeks to undo that unity in order to free Torah, which has little to say about philosophy after all, and does have something to say about love and fear of God, as well as a good deal to say about how a Jew should act, in order to free Torah from the shackles of philosophic speculation, which has in Crescas' eyes made a mockery of the Torah.

In the paragraph under analysis, the contrast between Torah and philosophy is clearly laid out for the reader. If it were the case, Crescas says, that men achieved immortality in the way we have described above, then the overwhelming bulk of what comprises Torah ("the multiplicity

of bifurcations from the commandments and their many ramifications ... ") would have no value with reference to immortality, reward and punishment, indeed, to the metaphysical structure of the universe.

One may draw out the inference which flows from this argument: Since we have seen that reward and punishment are connected with deeds, in particular deeds about which we learn from the Torah (i.e., the bifurcations of commandments from the Torah, etc., viz., the halacha; Crescas had planned a halachic work that would supplant the Mishneh Torah),[22] then it would follow that the salvific nature of philosophy is non-existent, and the salvific nature of the Torah qua Torah (not Torah interpreted philosophically) and hence the unfettered authority of Torah is restored. (One should note, however, Crescas cannot be satisfied only with outright denial of philosophy; rather, he must argue against the existence of the acquired intellect. He must use philosophy against philosophy in order to restore Torah's authority to an independent status.)

The contrast then is clear: Philosophy may have something to say about, let us say, triangles and squares and the relation of angles to each other and so forth, i.e., science. But, according to Crescas, to say that knowing about triangles and squares is, so to say, going to get you into heaven is absurd. This is so partly because the concept of the intellect itself is logically deficient, partly because it is inconceivable to talk about reward and punish-

ment for something that nothing to do with will, and partly because that part of knowledge which we receive passively cannot have the same authority as God's revelation.

A different view of Crescas' thesis may be expressed as follows: In the previous paragraph in the text he says, "Some of our sages have been deceived in accordance with what seems to be the implication of their words, (namely) that reward for beliefs does not fall under the category of justice and injustice, since reward is natural and necessarily associated with a concept." A very real issue here concerns conflicting judgment of value that inheres in the opposing conceptualizations under scrutiny. On the one hand the Aristotelian concept of intellectual excellence values scientific or theoretical thought over practical thought which leads to deeds of moral excellence. Crescas' view, on the other hand, is that we are rewarded or punished for acts related to will, values the life lived in the practical realm over the life of science. One realm does not deny the other; but in both cases there are claims made as to which aspect is of ultimate importance. Crescas expresses the judgment that the moral life is superior to the theoretical life, specifically, Torah observance leads the Jew to moral excellence, which pursuit is worthy of meriting reward for success and punishment for failure.

[21]I.e., the soul of the one doing geometry.

[22]I.e., if this were so, the soul of the one doing geometry would be more worthy of reward than the one who

follows the "multiplicity of the bifurcations from the commandments...."

[23]I.e., Crescas shows that it is absurd to say that one concept in the mind differs in some concrete way from another, or that the enstantiated intellect undergoes all of the assumed changes, or that the learned concept somehow remains in the mind eternally. In short he is laying the groundwork for a rejection of medieval epistemology, which, as noted, continues in the next Abstract. Note that the argument here has become ad hominem, without therefore a great deal of substance, as if Crescas claims that the position against which he is arguing is so absurd that to grace it with an argument would be undignified.

[24]Crescas now makes it manifest that he is aiming his sight ultimately toward Aristotle, the person Crescas believes originated the belief against which he is arguing.

[25]A new point is made here, which raises once again the question of types of belief. Before I offer my interpretation of this key paragraph, a point must be raised concerning the original Hebrew from which this text was translated. Like much of medieval philosophic Hebrew, Crescas overuses pronouns in a way that makes it difficult at times to determine what the antecedent is. Also, I have taken Seymour Feldman's translation of the word emunato (normaliy "His belief") as "belief in Him," for it seems to me that the paragraph will not make sense otherwise.[23]

Having said this I need to add that there seems to be two possible ways of interpreting this paragraph, neither of which is wholly satisfactory.

1. We receive reward for beliefs in a way, and that way is when we will and choose to do philosophy. In that moment of choice we merit reward or punishment contingent upon which choice we actually make.

The obvious problem with this interpretation is that it makes little sense to assume that, after railing against the philosophers, Crescas would simply re-locate the moment of reward for doing philosophy to the moment where one chooses to become a philosopher. Further, this interpretation violates the entire anti-philosophical spirit of the Abstract as we have seen thus far. To claim that Aristotle was forced to a fictitious explanation of matters which is now thoroughly rejected, then to re-establish a version of that explanation, does not make much sense.

2. The second interpretation of this paragraph requires that we accept that Crescas had two uses for the word "belief." The first use is scientific belief, e.g., "the Pythagorean theorem is true." For this kind of belief all that has been said previously applies. The second use of the word "belief" would entail what we would call religious belief, i.e., belief in the prime authority of the Torah, and all of the other dogmas of religious belief Crescas speaks of.

In the introduction to Book Two Crescas says:

> Of Toraitic cornerstones, that is, they are the foundations and pillars on which the House of God is properly (set). In their existence it can be conceived that the existence of the Torah has been ordered from Him, may He be blessed. And if one were to conceive the absence of one of them, the entire Torah would topple, God forbid.[24]

Also in the introduction to Book Three, Crescas enumerates types of beliefs and their respective value with reference to the believer:

> Book Three: Concerning true beliefs, in which we (assert) our belief in them, of we who believe in the Torah of God may He be blessed, and (in which we claim) that he who overturns one of them shall be called a heretic. When we looked into them we found among them two parts beside the six cornerstones which were collected in Book Two. The first part: Beliefs that do not depend upon particular commandments. And the second: Beliefs which depend upon particular commandments. In part one we found: (1) Creation of the world; (2) Immortality of the soul; (3) Reward and punishment; (4) Resurrection of the dead; (5) Eternality of the Torah; (6) The difference between the prophecy of Moses our Master, may he rest in peace, and the rest of the prophets; (7) That the high priest may perform oracular feats with the Urim and Tummim; (8) The coming of the Messiah.[25]

Since this discussion could enter into Crescas' view of dogma in a depth unnecessary for our purposes here, I would refer the interested reader to Menacham Marc Kellner's translation of Principles of Faith by Issac Abravanel, particularly his introduction.[26] For my purposes it is sufficient to demonstrate that Crescas has a great interest in beliefs that one could justifiably call "religious" or "Toraitic" which are somehow different from scientific beliefs. Add to this Warren Zev Harvey's claim[27] that the six cornerstones that comprise the second book follow analy-

tically from the notion that God revealed the Torah through an act of will, and we have a view of two different kinds of belief, scientific and religious, which parallels Crescas' view of the primacy of the authority of Torah over philosophy.

Having established this, the paragraph under analysis becomes clear. The sort of belief that Crescas is speaking of here is religious belief, belief in the Torah as a legal-moral given to Jews through an act of divine volition, belief in the six Toraitic cornerstones, belief in the true beliefs mentioned above. But, because of the problem of reward and punishment for belief of which we have spoken at great length throughout this analysis, it would not logically follow that reward could be granted for belief in these things at the point at which one holds the beliefs. Rather, reward in the form of joy and "diligence to establish truth" comes from the volitional act of choosing to accept these beliefs as Crescas would have his reader do. In that sense, much of the entirety of Books Two and Three is conceived of by their author as a blueprint for acceptance of this separation of religion from science, and is an extended argument for the acceptance of the primacy of Torah over philosophy.

[26]With this paragraph, Crescas extends his argument in an interesting and important way that is related to the previous paragraph and solves thereby a difficulty in his reasoning that has existed until this point, though in the

the end it raises some logical difficulties of its own.

Crescas' determinism proceeds on a causal analysis, where causation is understood as a physical process. I exist in a causal chain of physical bodies whose impact on me determines everything about me, my actions, etc. Physically I am who I am by virtue of my parents, the environment in which I live, etc.; in short those bodies which have in some manner touched my existence, according to Crescas, have determined everything about me. Given this view of reality, our problem seems yet to remain, namely, if things are determined how does one justify reward and punishment? It is true that in a way we have claimed to have solved the problem by the doctrine of doing deeds over thought and the concomitant reward and punishment of joy and pleasure or lack thereof. But until now a problem remains: Why do we get reward and punishment for that which we are causally determined to do? Or differently, in a necessitated universe, at what point--if any-- can it be said we merit reward or punishment, and why? If, for example, in the performance of a good act, my good intention becomes contravened by the will of another and was set to do so from the creation of the universe and my intention is therefore never fulfilled, do I merit reward even though I was never ever able to carry out my intention? Moreover, even unhindered, there remains the fact that once the process of implementation is begun, the act is causally determined to have happened from the creation of

the universe, once again raising the difficulty of the justice of reward and punishment.

Crescas' solution to this difficulty, which we have seen briefly in the previous note, has a faintly modern ring to it. Reward and punishment he says are matters applicable not to a given act itself, as it may have originally been supposed (e.g., our earlier example of building a succah), but to one's choice to perform that act, just as one experiences pleasure for choosing Toraitic beliefs, not for the beliefs themselves. (Incidentally, the acceptance of the commandments and the belief system underlying them entails a deed oriented life; as we have seen, the greater value in Crescas' thought is of deed over thought. It would certainly seem logical therefore to assume that the ethical choice is to be valued over the belief choice, though it is necessary to add that the belief choice must chronologically precede the ethical choice.) For example once I have decided to surrender my seat on the subway to an elderly woman, the act has already been determined, as have its future ramifications. The woman might refuse the offer; she might accept the offer and someone else might grab the seat before she can sit down; she might accept the offer and suffer some unforseen consequences as a result. But from Crescas' view these consequences are not the critical issue. Once I have made the decision to offer my seat, I have in effect actualize one of two possible opposite choices, to offer or

not offer the seat. It is for the choice itself that I am rewarded. This is what Crescas means when he says, "reward does not (belong to) the essence of primary effects, rather (it belongs to) the choice of the act when one makes it." Having made the choice itself, I set into motion a process which is apparently for Crescas incontrovertible, in which I actualize that which has only theretofore been potential. In its potential state, my choice was not yet inevitable in some way; I might have offered the woman the seat or not. In perceiving the situation, analyzing it, and choosing my course of action--to offer lady seat--I move in a manner that actualizes one of the two possible choices available to me ("a pair of equals opposite extremes"), but I have not yet moved the first muscle that will bring me up from my seat, or opened my mouth to make the offer. When I move that first muscle I actualize my choice, and "that which is actual is (no longer) potential or possible ... rather it is necessary and necessity necessarily follows for it ..."

Crescas justification for locating the point at which reward and punishment apply at the point of decision seems to be as follows: The actualized act, once manifested in the physical place, is subject to the laws of causation in the deterministic manner we have been discussing throughout this analysis. Choice, a mental not a physical volitional process, is apparently not subject to these laws, or at least not in such a way as to be obvious to the choosing subject.

But it certainly seems as though we have a problem. Until now Crescas has spoken generally of reward and punishment, distinguishing between those things for which we feel necessity (learning ideas) and those things for which we do not feel necessity (acts of will), claiming that although things are determined on both levels, since we do not feel necessity in acts, reward and punishment apply for the latter as if necessity did not exist. In this paragraph Crescas justifies locating the point at which reward and punishment apply in a mental volitional act on the grounds, apparently, that the actual physical action is a necessary action, for which reward and punishment are inapplicable.

Now if we are to assume Crescas is consistent, one solution may be as follows: At the moment of choice a willed decision has been consciously made as to a course of action (I give up my seat on the subway). Having eliminated the opposite possibility (not giving up my seat), my activity becomes not only necessary (as are all actions), but as well it enters the category of felt necessity, making the activity a fait accompli, which I recognize as such.

A somewhat simpler solution suggests itself from the following textual paragraph about punishment, namely that the choice to perform an act is more important than the act itself. The really difficult component of an act is the decision itself.

[27]Crescas begins proof texts for his argument by

bringing a Talmudic passage; here he speaks of sins and punishment. The passage clearly divides a sin into two parts, contemplation and act, and claims that the more difficult part of the sin is thought about the sin. Of course one can draw the obvious inference that the same judgment applies to the contemplation of a good deed.

Note Maimonides' use of this text in The Guide III:8:

> A man committing an act of disobedience does in only as I have made clear, because of the accidents consequent upon his matter; I mean to say that he commits an act of disobedience through his bestiality. But thought is one of the properties of a human being that are consequent upon his form. Consequently if he gives his thought a free scope in respect to disobedience, he commits an act of disobedience through the nobler of his two parts.[28]

[28]The inference Crescas draws from the Leviticus Rabbah text is that since a burnt offering will atone for the contemplation of the heart, i.e., thought about an act, it is the contemplation of the act and not the act itself that requires repentance, and therefore it must be that tradition, like Crescas, deems the thought about the act and not the act itself as the critical locus of the act.

[29]I.e., a person compelled to perform an act he ordinarily would not choose to commit, through whatever set of circumstances this compulsion arises, bears no responsibility for the act, since it was not an act he willed to perform. The great metaphor for this interpretation that Crescas brings tells us that God forgives the one who is compelled. This is also another way of saying that one is rewarded and punished for the choice of action.

Since Crescas quotes from the Jewish tradition it is not inappropriate to point out that the tradition takes critical exception to this understanding when it insists that one must give up one's life rather than be compelled to commit rape, murder, or idolatry. This exception, not noted by Crescas, implicitly asks an important question, What is the true volitional nature of choice? If I am compelled under pain of death to rob a bank, and I recognize that the Jewish tradition permits me to acquiesce to the demands of my oppressor, then at that point several things must happen:

1) The demand to rob is imposed on me.

2) I recall the legal/ethical tenet of the tradition.

3) I decide to abide by it.

4) I enter into the conspiracy to rob.

In short, I choose to rob the bank understanding that I bear no legal culpability for performing the act. In a situation where I am compelled under pain of death to commit one of the three acts mentioned above, steps 3 and 4 would be different, I would refuse, and my death would be the result. The point I am trying to draw out here is that under most circumstances one can imagine where one is compelled to perform an act, prior to the performance of that act, the actor undergoes a mental process culminating in a volitional act in which he chooses (or refuses) to perform the act he is being compelled to perform. It seems that this mental process and act are somehow similar to a choice

made where compulsion is not imposed. This is so particularly in Crescas' universe where are things are determined, i.e., compelled, anyway. Now one may easily point out the difference between felt and unfelt compulsion in Crescas' thought, and argue that this sort of felt compulsion results in a different manner of decision than where compulsion is not felt. But this is not Crescas' argument. He suggests that there is such a thing as action separate from choice of action, i.e., compelled action, and on reflection this is in most cases incorrect. Obviously I am not referring to situations where a person is forced to perform something under the influence of a drug or hypnosis or something like that, but rather I refer to a situation where one has some awareness of one's consciousness yet is still under compulsion, i.e., where one always has the choice either to do what is demanded of him or suffer the consequences. Under these circumstances choice of a sort in fact occurs, and the discussion of these compelled actions, in a discussion differentiating choice of action from action, where the choice is the critical component, should be centered on the choosing mechanism. Somehow, though it is not clear how, a compelled choice is not the same as an uncompelled choice. The perpetrator bears no responsibility for the former, while he does bear responsibility for the latter. Moreover, it is not clear that choices we make in Crescas' universe, are entirely uncompelled, at least from the view of how one feels when making choices.

This discussion raises two points on each side of the equation, so to speak. In question form they are: (1) Is there truly such a thing--under ordinary circumstances--as a fully compelled action, or does the one being compelled always have some measure of choice? (2) Is there such a thing as a truly uncompelled action? The second question is the most interesting of the two, particularly in view of the thought pattern under examination. This question emerges implicitly from the first as well as from the proof text in question (God forgives the person who is forced): if it is the case that God forgives the one who is forced to perform an act, it must mean that God does not forgive the one who is not forced to perform an act, which must mean that there is such a thing as an uncompelled action according to Crescas, the characteristics of which he is telling us.

However, in a broad sense, as we have been saying all along, this is a difficulty in a determined universe where contingency is not an operative category. In a narrower sense (and admittedly a sense which Crescas was likely unaware of), in a religious system where there exists an externally imposed moral law, the Kantian problem of heteronomous law obtains. If one derives one's morality from the dictates of a system out of love or fear of the ground of that system (whether that ground be a god or the state or Torah), then it follows necessarily that compulsion of a sort exists. This raises all sorts of problems for Crescas' thesis as to how to differentiate a compelled from an

uncompelled activity, leaving Crescas' notion open to the logical possibility that, since all activity might be formulated as being compelled, it is understood that all activity will be forgiven by God. That is, no one is to be held morally accountable for their actions. Since as we have seen Crescas holds that not every soul survives death, and the determining criterion for survival is (apparently) moral accountability during life, it would follow that this conclusion is not one he would care to have attributed to him. This problem is solved somewhat, yet compounded somewhat in the remaining text, as shall be seen in note 30.

[30]This paragraph opens the question of the extent to which Crescas had control over the text. As we have seen in the introduction, his death prevented him from re-working the book, apparently an important goal, which leaves open the possibility that he did not quite see the implications of these closing remarks.

After having given a proof text which indicates that one receives no punishment for compelled action, Crescas now gives us a hierarchy which contradicts the former claim. From lowest to highest, punishment--moral accountability is conceived in this order:

1) Act alone (presumably where one is compelled);
2) Thought alone;
3) Thought and act together.

Our immediate problem is this: Is one held morally accountable for compelled actions or not? With the proof

text from Avodah Zarah (above note 29), Crescas indicated one opinion. With the text in question, another opinion is indicated. There is no third opinion at hand to "break the tie," so the problem will remain unsolved.

If Crescas' true opinion is this new one, the implications are interesting, since now it would follow that one would be held morally accountable for what one was forced to do in any sense of the word "forced," and, conversely, it would follow that my good intention that was contravened by determined circumstances which forced me to act against that good intention would result in punishment. Truly, the bottom line in Crescas' system, as shall be seen in the conclusion, is that the determinist view he constructs ultimately cannot make room for the freedom he wishes to grant Jews.

Returning to our text, it is interesting to note further that one receives reward and punishment for contemplation of an act even if that act is not carried out, though Crescas makes it clear that the consequences, and thereby the degree of moral culpability, are nowhere near as great for mere contemplation as for act coupled with contemplation. Once an individual decided to act, he must content with the vicissitudes of the physical world, including other people, and the chain of causes that effects his acts. If, as in the previous paragraph, he plans to do good and is forced to sin, he is culpable. Here, if he plans evil and is forced to do good, or he plans evil which

is thwarted by circumstances, he is punished, though it is true that if he plans evil and is forced to do good, he will receive some reward for his act as well as punishment for his thought. But at this point we begin to enter the pilpul.

[31]This summary remark too is problematic. It is true that Crescas has dealt with the problem he claims here to have solved in this Abstract (see note 25). But it is also true (a) that that has not been the only problem dealt with, nor (b) is it really the problem he has spent the greatest amount of sheer space discussing. Two solutions to this problem suggest themselves: (1) Deny the importance of this closing remark since it is just that, and suggest that it might have been tossed off lightly in this "first draft" and would have been corrected in the "galleys" had there been such an opportunity. (2) Re-emphasize the evident duality of "belief" as Crescas understands it, suggesting that in this dual system an argument is emerging in which the authority of Torah is being raised high over that of philosophy. That being the case, it might well be that the ideational character of this last claim is more critical for Crescas' overall purpose, and thus deserves this final repetition to act as a reminder to his readers.

It is necessary to repeat what Crescas says will be the purpose of this chapter in the very first sentence. "And if (the difficulty to be solved in this chapter) is how to harmonize divine justice in reward and punishment with

necessity." As we have seen that solution has centered on matters of volition, i.e., intention and effort, but has spread over two matters, a certain notion of what constitutes a "belief" and acts. But, as we have also seen, the volitional acceptance of beliefs must precede acts of will, thus forming an indissoluble unity between the two both (beliefs and acts) in that one requires the other, and in that they both are mediated by the will. Looking at it from the perspective of the interrelatedness of the two facets of Crescas' solution, it now seems clear that the closing remark is not inappropriate, but emphatic, i.e., as in possibility #2 above, Crescas is delineating in this closing summary remark the core element of the solution he claims to have forged. This core element fits together with those other pieces we have brought forth in different parts of this analysis: his description of the Toraitic cornerstones, his description of true beliefs, and his concept of the soul, all of which add up to a revolutionary view of the relationship of Torah to philosophy in which philosophy is relegated to an inferior position.

* * *

Now that we have reached the end of our analysis, three critical points suggest themselves:

1. In the very beginning of the chapter Crescas makes a distinction between two types of necessity. One type is that which is experienced consciously, forcibly, as the mind as a passive blank slate receives concepts. The other

kind is the necessity in actions which he has proven to be the case, but which, because of the nature of things (things appear contingent from our view) we do not feel as necessary. His argument then runs that the former kind of necessity, in that it is a felt and passive experience ought not to be the determining factor in reward and punishment.

Two problems suggest themselves, one of which will be addressed in a broader sense in #3. Here it is sufficient to note that the alleged passivity of the process of conceptualizing, while true in one sense from the epistemological view in question, is hardly true from the common sense view of what is required to acquire a concept. That is, doing philosophy, learning true ideas, is by no means an easy task whose reward, the concept, is easily won. Rather, it is a process open to the few. The passivity relates to the ultimate functioning of the material intellect, of the relationship between the mind, the world, and the Active Intellect, but the training thereof is not assumed to be easy. (See, e.g., Maimonides on Prophecy in The Guide II:36:

> This is something that cannot by any means exist in every man. And it is not something that may be attained solely through perfection in the speculative sciences and through improvement of moral habits. ... There is still needed in addition the highest possible degree of perfection of the imaginative faculty.[29])

What Crescas has rather neatly done is in effect changed the rules of the game, i.e., changed the meanings of words in such a way that his problem quite naturally is not answered by the old solution, leaving space for his new solu-

tion to be installed in its place. For example, his version of necessity vis-a-vis a demonstrated truth as explained in note 9 creates a picture suggesting that no volitional effort is required to learn, e.g., a geometric truth. This stands in his world partly because he has stacked the deck accordingly when, earlier, he characterizes this difference, mentioned at the beginning of this section, between two types of necessities. It is well the case that once one comprehends a proof on the process of doing a proof there exists a sort of necessity that is consciously experienced, a certain force that takes one logically through all steps in a proof. But in order to arrive at that stage of comprehension, one must have first proceeded through a long educational process in which necessity as understood here does not play a crucial role (the student might have failed to progress for a number of reasons, etc.). It is only when one arrives at a high state of theoretical perfection that he is able to do the kind of work in question that necessity becomes an operative term. To discount the process of human perfection alluded to in the Maimonides passage above is in effect to change the rules of the game, and it seems somewhat artificially. Crescas has a different sort of perfection in mind, a different sort of emphasis, Torah, particularism, subversion of philosophy, and so forth, all of which has been discussed throughout the body of the commentary, all of which differ from the thought patterns of his predecessors. And

what he attempts to do is argue philosophically for his essentially non-philosophical agenda as we have seen.

2. At the end of the Abstract Crescas makes a fundamental distinction between action and thought about action. While it is clear by the end of the chapter his main concern is a completed act (where a completed act consists of the act and contemplation of the act) committed without any overt compulsion (assuming that to be possible), nonetheless the critical locus of his analysis is centered at the point of decision. Three problems emerge.

A. When was the decision made? If I offer a seat to an elderly woman on the subway, have I made the choice then and there, or did I make the decision sometime prior when I made the rule, "At the moment I see an elderly woman needing a seat on a crowded public conveyance, if I myself am seated and am in good health, I shall offer my seat to her." Or, did I make my choice even earlier when I said, "Let me think about all common situations in which I will be required to act," i.e., when I decided to decide. Or, more distant still, did I make the decision to offer that woman a seat when I thought about thinking about making moral decisions, i.e., when I decided to decide to decide. The infinite regress looms large, a problem Crescas fails to address.

B. This last criticism (2A) is problematic in and of itself--at what point do I get my reward--but in light of the first criticism (#1), it raises even another issue,

namely, it is conceivable that at the point at which I offer that lady that seat, I have done nothing volitional at all. The volitional act may have occurred some years prior to this actual deed. At the point at which I rise to offer the lady the seat, having already established the ground rules for just such a situation, it is conceivable that all I experience is a snese of moral necessity not unlike the feeling of necessity I experience when in the process of doing a mathematical proof.

C. Were we to locate arbitrarily the will and choice to act just sometime prior to the act, we would encounter another problem, viz., the distinction between choosing to act and acting is not as clear as one would like, and the separation of mental from physical activity, of will from execution of will, is similarly unclear.

In order for me to choose to offer my seat to an elderly lady in a concrete situation (leaving aside now the problem of part A), I must first see her; I must look about the subway car to make certain no seat exists; I must determine that she is old. That is, my sense of sight cooperates with my mind to determine that there exists a situation in the physical world which requires my attention and possible action. The boundary between the physical world and the process of moral intellection becomes blurred. Then I must rise from my seat; all the while in the act of carrying out my choice I am pondering the choice. Again, the mental act of choosing and the physical act of acting are

not clearly differentiated. At what point do I make the choice and begin to act? It is unclear.

3. Probably the largest problem is that implicit in William James' characterization of Crescas' type of thinking as a "soft determinism."[30] As we have seen Crescas posits two types of necessity, and couples that with a metaphysics in which all things are determined but individuals by virtue of their position in the universe are unable to see the full picture. This is already problematic: The claim Crescas makes is that there is a way of looking at things such that it is just to say that we receive reward and punishment for doing that which we were determined to do from the beginning of creation because (a) we do not know what we were determined to do; and (b) the category in which we are said to receive reward and punishment entails the exercise of effort, choice, and will. The situation becomes further complicated by the addition of Crescas' distinction between act and thought about act. Here Crescas employs the notion of bringing one possibility into actuality, which, once actualized, becomes necessary. But, unless Crescas is being inconsistent with the pattern of his thought, what was potential (e.g., to offer the lady the seat or not represents two possibilities) until I decide to offer her the seat) was only apparently potential, potential with respect to the individual, not the chain of causation. That is to say, no matter how the problem is stated, once it is said there

is no contingency in the universe, that all is set in a chain of causation and in God's mind, then there is no escaping the conclusion that everything that happens happens necessarily, and even if we do not know what will happen, there is no altering the course of events one way or the other. If I am set to offer the lady the seat, there is no altering the pattern of events in such a way that I would do anything but offer her my seat; if I am set to sit while she stands, nothing will persuade me to act otherwise. No matter how it is colored it is still determinism. In the end it is unclear that Crescas has succeeded in accomplishing what his stated goal is at the beginning of the chapter, viz., "to harmonize divine justice in matters of reward and punishment with ncessity," for we are left with the conclusion that the two cannot in any logical sense be harmonized.

The reason Crescas places himself in such a logical fix is at first confusing. His moral doctrine need not be linked to his metaphysical doctrine; his metaphysical doctrine of course must be linked to his moral doctrine and thus we have our central difficulty. His theory, however, required both because of the demands placed on him by another problem, one we saw in the introduction, viz., the problem of God's knowledge. We saw that Crescas posited Maimonides' doctrine of God's knowledge of particulars while taking account of Gersonides' objections, and solved those objections by positing a determined universe, thus

eliminating the problem of future contingents in God's mind (see introduction).

Crescas is thus in a bind. That God knows particulars necessitates a determined world in light of Gersonides' critique, and a shaky moral doctrine follows: a contingent universe narrows the problems of Crescas' moral doctrine, but it necessitates a God who does not know particulars as particulars. That he thinks he has solved the problem is clear from Chapter 5; that he really has is questionable.

Notes to Commentary

[1]A.N. Prior, "Correspondence Theory of Truth," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 2, New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1967, p. 224.

[2]Ibid., p. 224.

[3]Aristotle, De Anima 3:5, The Works of Aristotle, W.D. Ross, ed., Vol. II, London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Seymour Feldman, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Connection with the Agent Intellect," AJS Review, Vol. 3, Association for Jewish Studies, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, p. 101.

[5a]It should be noted in passing that this discussion has been perhaps too brief to be complete, in that it only describes the bare essentials of the theory. For a more complete discussion the reader is referred to the Feldman afticle quoted herein.

[6]F. Rahman, Avicenna's Psychology, London: Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 84.

[7]Feldman, op. cit., p. 103, note 15.

[8]Ibid., p. 102.

[9]For a full discussion of this topic the reader is referred to The Wars of the Lord, Levi ben Gerson, Leipzig, 1866, Part 1.

[10]Hasdai Crescas, The Light of the Lord, Vienna, 1860, pp. 60b-61a.

[11]Ibid., p. 61b.

[12]Ibid., p. 61b.

[13]Ibid., p. 61b.

[14]E.g., see our own text, notes 13 and 14, and in Part 2, Abstract VI, Chapter 1, p. 53b.

[15]See notes 5-9.

[16]Crescas, op. cit., p. 53b ff.

[17]See Harry A. Wolfson, Crescas' Critique of Aristotle, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929.

[18]Crescas, op. cit., p. 53b.

[19]Ibid., p. 53b.

[20]Wolfson, op. cit., p. 3.

[21]Barry Kogan, "Reason, Revelation, and Authority in Judaism: A Reconstruction," Studies in Jewish Philosophy II: Reason and Revelation as Authority in Judaism, Philadelphia: The Academy for Jewish Philosophy, 1983, p. 35.

[22]Warren Z. Harvey, "Hasdai Crescas," Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 5, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972, p. 1081.

[23]Hasdai Crescas, Or Ha-Shem (The Light of the Lord), Book II, Part 5, trs. by Seymour Feldman in With Perfect Faith, ed., J. David Bleich, New York: Ktav, 1983, p. 487.

[24]Crescas, op. cit., p. 27a.

[25]Ibid., p. 71a.

[26]Menacham Marc Kellener, Principles of Faith by Isaac Abravanel, East Brunswick, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982.

[27]Harvey, op. cit., p. 1081.

[28]Quoted from Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed, Shlomo Pines, trs., Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Richard Taylor, "Determinism," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 2, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1967, p. 368.

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