



## LIBRARY COPYRIGHT NOTICE

[www.huc.edu/libraries](http://www.huc.edu/libraries)

### Regulated Warning

See Code of Federal Regulations, Title 37, Volume 1, Section 201.14:

The copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

CREATION IN POST-MAIKONIDEAN PHILOSOPHY.

A Study in Gersonides and Crescas.

by

Shmuel ben Meir

(Steven S. Schwarzschild)

Prize Essay submitted in competition for the  
Adolph and Marilla Guttman Prize in Jewish  
Philosophy to the faculty of the Hebrew Union  
College.

1948

ref. 5 atlas

mic. 7/15/74

TABLE OF CONTENT:

Preface .....	p. 1
Introduction .....	p/ 5
Aristotelianism .....	p.14
Maimonides .....	p.23
Gersonides .....	p.30
Crescas .....	p.61
Bibliography .....	p.76

Gersonides' discussion of the problem of Creation constitutes by far the longest single part of the Milchamoth HaShem. To the author's knowledge it also represents Hebrew scholasticism in literary style as well as mode of thought and argument at its most extreme: its sentences are ponderously long and involved, its distinctions frequently so subtle and pedantically Aristotelian that they almost completely escape the modern reader, and its arguments explicitly based on school traditions which cross-refer to one another in a most bewildering manner. No wonder, therefore, that no reliable or even merely thorough study exists of Gersonides' discussion of Creation. The few theses and articles which are extant on the subject content themselves with stating the over-all conclusions at which Gersonides arrives without delving into their foundation in his philosophical system and without following his minute consideration of all previous opinions in typical scholastic fashion. No wonder, either, that no translation of the Milchamoth HaShem exists, except for Ben Zion Kellermann's unsatisfactory rendition into German of part of the first book, - with which this essay is not directly concerned.

Thus an exhaustive and accurate re-statement of Gersonides' entire discussion of the problem of Creation becomes an exceedingly difficult task, since no preparatory work has been done for it by anyone. The following procedure will be followed in this essay: Gersonides' successor, opponent and disciple Chasdai Crescas, in the course of his discussion of the problem of Creation in the Or Adonai, also proceeds in good scholastic order: he first states the case of the Aristotelians for the eternity of the world by

summarizing their arguments succinctly and yet without detriment to the force and number of their proofs; next he expounds in a similar manner the refutation of Aristotelianism on this point which Maimonides proffered; then he goes on to present a brief but full précis of Gersonides' refutation of Maimonides and of his modification of orthodox Aristotelianism; finally he bases his own belief in this matter on an extraction of what he considers true in the arguments of all his various philosophic predecessors. In order, now, completely to understand Crescas' teachings concerning Creation and not merely to be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of his conclusions, it would have been necessary in any case to consider his personal re-statement of and attitude to the opinions of his philosophic predecessors, i.e. the Aristotelians, Maimonides and Gersonides. In addition, however, it happens that his summary of Gersonides' discussion of the problem of Creation is a most admirably accomplished piece of work; it is immensely shorter, yet it does not, as read by this author, seem to sacrifice one single important argument or thought; it is still written not only according to the scholastic method but also with scholastic terminology and in scholastic style, yet its mode of expression is much less torturous and involved and, therefore, much easier to comprehend. Thus, without in any way abandoning the spirit of mediaeval Aristotelianism, Crescas yet somehow seems to breathe the freer air of the Renaissance which is also substantively noticeable in his views on infinity and on the identity of the nature of all matter.

(1) Cf. Wolfson, "Crescas' Critique ...", pp. 118, 126) In this respect he may, therefore, be compared to his approximate contemporary Nicolaus of Autrecourt of whom a recent writer has written:

"The time and circumstances in which 'Nicolaus' critique was written assures us that its author had the benefit of a more complete understanding of mediaeval Aristotelianism than any modern thinker could have.....Hence, it is of importance for us to realize that a successful refutation of Aristotle occurred in the Scholastic period itself." (2) Weinberg, "Nicolaus of Autrecourt", p.1.)

This writer, now, does not believe that anyone can easily improve upon Crescas' statement of Gersonides' views on Creation, certainly not he. For this reason he will not so much report on Gersonides as rather on Crescas on Gersonides. It is hoped that the attempt to locate Gersonides' arguments as reported by Crescas in Gersonides' own *Milchamoth HaShem* may contribute a little to the easier understanding of both classics of Jewish philosophy, since it was not the custom for the scholastic writers to give exact references when they quoted from or summarized the writings of others. (The same attempt will be made with reference to Crescas' report on Maimonides). Only where there are obvious and significant lacunae in Crescas' re-statement of Gersonides these will be filled out by direct analyses of the original text of the *Milchamoth HaShem*. The format of this essay unfortunately does not allow of the pursuit of the most interesting and important problem of the reasons which caused Crescas to omit or to change certain of Gersonides' arguments or phrases either consciously or unintentionally in what otherwise are often verbatim extracts. (It is likely that Wolfson will go far toward answering this question in the volume or volumes of "Crescas' Critique of Aristotle" which he announced would follow shortly upon the first in 1929, which have unfortunately not appeared yet, however.) (3)

Cf. cit., p. X.) This essay will thus (continued page 4)

differ from all previous studies of Crescas, in that it will follow Crescas in his consideration of the views of his predecessors, whereas they invariably refer the reader back to the original discussions for supplementation of Crescas' arguments.

((4) Cf. Joel, "Crescas Religionsphilosophische Lehren...", p.66, n.1; Husik, "History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy", p.402.)

It must finally be added that both works, the Or Adonai as well as the Milchamoth HaShem, are textually in extremely bad shape. The author, in order to guard against as many textual mistakes as possible, has made use of both extant editions. Yet, even with this precaution, he has found that Joel's statement is possibly an understatement: "Sein Hauptwerk "Das Gotteslicht" (Or Adonai) wimmelt in der neuen so gut wie in der alten Ausgabe von so vielen Fehlern, dass man schon daraus allein die geringe Aufmerksamkeit abnehmen kann, die ihm zugewendet wurde." ((5) op.cit., p.1.) It has, therefore, been necessary for the writer to make his own textual emendations as best he could. (It is likely, incidentally, that Joel's reference to two editions is made with regard to the first Ferrara edition and the Vienna edition of 1861, not the Johannesburg text which has been used in this study in the main.)

The author, finally, desires to acknowledge and express his gratitude to his teacher, Dr. Samuel Atlas, for the great and indispensable help which he was given by him.

I n t r o d u c t i o n .

The Or Adonai is the last great classic of mediaeval Jewish philosophy. Like its epigon, the Ikkarim by Crescas' disciple Joseph Albo, it is written in form of a disputation with Maimonides' famous Thirteen Principles in which the attempt has been made to state concisely all the doctrines of Judaism which its adherents must believe. In itself it seems a mere question of academic interest whether the number of such doctrines is thirteen, as Maimonides claimed, or whether it is seven or eight, as in the opinion of Crescas, or even fewer, as Albo was to proclaim; it would seem to be an exercise in ingenuity and intellectual capacity very much like the Talmudic discussion as to in how many commandments the obligations devolving upon the faithful Jew can be adequately summarized. (6) cf. Makkoth 23b f.) Such is not the case, however. Already Guttman (7) "Die Philosophie des Judentums", p. 202f.) correctly noted that Maimonides meant his Thirteen Principles to be of what Strauss (8) "Philosophie und Gesetz, Beiträge zum Verständniss Maimuni und Seiner Vorgänger", called a "heilsnotwendig" character, i. e. since personal salvation depended upon the acquisition of true beliefs through which the conjunction with the Active Intellect took place, this conjunction constituting immortality in the system of the Aristotelians, it was of supreme importance to every individual that it believe at least the minimum of doctrines necessary for this purpose. By formulating them in short, solid credo-form the philosophers thus hoped to afford immortality even to those simple people who had not had the opportunity or the ability to engage in independent, personal speculations by which they might have arrived at the necessary beliefs. It is for this reason for example, that Crescas, who conceived of immortality in the same

Aristotelian terms in which his predecessors Maimonides and Ger-sonides and his successor Albo did, has to concern himself at the end of his book with the question which may seem slightly absurd to us moderns but which had crucial practical and theoretical importance for the mediæval scholastic "whether the soul of a young boy is immortal who, when he died, had not yet been under the obligation to keep the commandments" and who, therefore, cannot be thought to have attained to the necessary beliefs. (9) Cf. Or Adonai Part IV, problem Eight.) In the light of this circumstance it becomes clear why it was of actual practical significance to the late scholastics how many specific doctrines were required of the believing Jew, so that he might reach immortality: if <sup>more</sup> Maimonides had enumerated, the individual who would rest satisfied with his credo would lose his soul's eternal bliss because of a philosopher's mistake, - if less, the education of the average Jew would not have to set itself such high goals.

In his criticism of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles which is based upon these considerations, Crescas now distinguishes two types of doctrines, those which constitute the absolute minimum for the believing Jew and which are indispensable for salvation on the one hand and those which, though also obligatory upon the Jew to the extent that "one who denies one of them is called a heretic" (10) Third Part, Introduction, p.44d; quotations are according to the Johannesburg edition. All translations from the Or Adonai as well as the Milchamoth HaShem are by the author, since, unfortunately, there is no translation of either of these two works. Cf. Preface p.1.) go beyond this absolute minimum and in the absence of which the individual may yet find salvation. The criterion by which he

distinguishes the second type from the first is simply that "it is not a foundation and cornerstone without which the reality of the Torah cannot be conceived." ((11) <sup>66</sup>Third Part, First Principle, Introduction, p.45c.)

Equipped with this methodology Crescas can now reproach Maimonides for having included either too many doctrines in his Thirteen Principles or too few, - too many if he had in mind only those of the first category, too few if the second: " I am amazed by the fact that "the rabbi of the Moreh" , in his Commentary to the Chapter Chelek, enumerated thirteen principles which he considered as basic to the faith, for if he meant the principles of the true beliefs whose denial constitutes heresy he has not included all of them, and if he meant the foundations and cornerstones of the faith without which it cannot be conceived; then there are no more than either seven or eight." ((12) Third Part, Introduction, p.45a.)

, By the implications of his initial argument the meaning of his formulation of the criterion of distinction can be crystallized further. It seems to amount to this that those doctrines which are the differentiae of Judaism from all philosophic schools are the "foundations without which the reality of the Torah cannot be conceived", for in answer to the question why he does not include the belief in the Creation of the World among the indispensable doctrines he has this to say:

It is admitted by all that the world exists for a purpose, either a purpose unto itself or one which is transcendent to it, for were this not so the world would either have been created by God in a frivolous spirit ((13) (P'7 582, cf. Guide of the Perplexed ch.25, part III))

or, in the view of those Aristotelians who do not believe in Creation but who do hold that all reality is of a teleologically purposeful nature, it would exist meaninglessly, <sup>both</sup> of which alternatives are impossible. Thus it is already proved that not only Jews but even those who, because of their philosophic, i.e. Aristotelian convictions believe in the eternity of the world must grant the purposeful, meaningful character of the world. (14 ~~leb.~~) Crescas then points out correctly that the chief theological reason which induced Maimonides to stipulate Creation as an indispensable doctrine of Judaism (15) cf. First of Thirteen Principles: "...that the Creator, whose name be praised, is the Creator..." was the belief that were God not the Creator of the World also the belief in the possibility of Revelation and in God's omnipotence which manifests itself in other miracles would become impossible. (16) Cf. Guide of the Perplexed, part II, ch.25: "Only by accepting <sup>both</sup> the doctrine of Creation we find that miracles are possible, that Revelation is possible and that every difficulty in this question is removed.) Since it has been shown in the previous argument, however, that also the believers in the eternity of the world can and do hold that God is omnipotent and that the universe is subject to His providence, Creation no longer can be considered as indispensable to the peculiar Jewish faith.

Crescas has a personal stake in this train of thought: we shall see at the final conclusion of all his considerations of the problem of Creation that, (though he stipulates Creation as such as a very definite religious doctrine, he by no means excludes the possibility of an "eternal Creation", and even seems to tend toward this latter belief, were it not for the fact that in the end his religious predispositions overcome his philosophical leanings.

(17) cf. Crescas p. 46f.) For reasons of the same personal interest, Gersonides, who, unlike Crescas, even goes so far as to proclaim Creation from a primaeval matter, the "hyle", makes sure to state that miracles are possible even in a world which came about <sup>in</sup> the manner, which he describes and that it is, therefore, not necessary from the point of view of religion to believe in creatio ex nihilo: "It is not necessary to believe in creatio ex nihilo in order that there be the possibility of miracles, as "the rabbi of the Moreh" explained that this was the reason which impelled him to believe in the Creation of the World." (18) Milchamoth HaShem, Book Six, part II, ch. 1, p. 419; quotations are according to the Leipzig 1866 edition.) It will be noted in the course of the present study, however, (19) cf. Gersonides p. 53; that the omnipotence of God which manifests itself in His providential guidance of all creatures (20) cf. First Principle of Maimonides' Thirteen: "..... that God, praised be His Name, is the Creator and the providential Guide of all creatures....") is not compatible with Creation as Gersonides conceived of it. These, then, miracles including Revelation and Providence, are the chief two theological stakes in the problem of Creation.

What then is the purpose of the world to which all agree? Here again Crescas must take issue with Maimonides who had come to the conclusion that there was no purpose except the arbitrary will of God who wanted to create it. (21) "245 p. 30 R. S.", Guide of the Perplexed, part III, ch. 13.) His argument in support of his position had run like this: if Creation has a purpose, it would surely seem to be the highest and loftiest product which it can bring about, to wit man. What, however, can be the purpose of man? It can only be that "the purpose of man is to worship God." (22) 1b.)

At this conclusion the philosopher must balk, however, because he fears that it implies God's need of man, whereas it is impossible to ascribe any need whatsoever to God. It can also not be answered that the worship of God is not commanded to man for the sake of God but rather for the sake of his own perfection, because in that case the question still remains: what is the purpose of this perfection of man? Crescas, however, refutes this argument of Maimonides' in the following manner: firstly, he quotes Maimonides himself to the effect that no act can be done without a purpose, ((23) quoted from Guide of the Perplexed, part III, ch.13, p.17; quotations from the Guide are according to the Warsaw 1872 edition - in Or Adonai, part III, Introduction, p.45a,) and very reasonably applies this statement also to the creative act of God; then he proceeds to give what he himself calls a somewhat "far-fetched interpretation" ((24) cf. ib. p.45b) of Maimonides' position on this matter so as to bring it into accord with his own: he again quotes Maimonides ((25) cf. loc. cit.) to the effect that the discovery of the purpose of any existent is difficult, a fortiori the purpose of the entire universe: this he understands to mean that there is such a purpose but that it is so difficult to discover that it remains unknown to us: "There is no purpose (to the whole world) known to us except the arbitrary will of God." ((26) ib. p.45b.) (It is very doubtful that this interpretation of Maimonides by Crescas corresponds to Maimonides' intended meaning, but that in other cases Maimonides frequently drew such a distinction between non-existence and unknown existence is beyond doubt; cf. e.g. his phrase concerning the reasons of laws which are "not known to us to this day" ((27) Guide of the Perplexed, part III, ch.45.)

Even with this Crescas does not rest content, however. In addition to the fact that there is a purpose to the entire universe above and beyond the arbitrary will of God, he also believes that this additional purpose can be known. In the course of his discussion of the nature of God he has come to the conclusion that, the school of negative theologians like Maimonides notwithstanding, positive attributes can be ascribed to Him, above all the attribute of divine eudæmony which Aristotle had associated with the divine self-thinking ((28) cf. Politics, X end,) but which he associates not so much with thinking as rather with the will, for "displeasure results from opposition to the will, whereas pleasure results from the execution of the will." ((29) Part I, Principle III, ch.5, p.19b) God's will, now, which is part of His essence, is to let His goodness and grace stream forth upon things outside of Himself, i.e. to create, because "goodness and grace are essential parts of the absolutely perfect and good ( i.e. God)." It is in this activity which is part of the very essence of God that He takes divine pleasure. Thus, the purpose of the creation of the world is to give scope, as it were, to the natural active essence of God. It is only this specific definition of the purpose of the world which the Aristotelians cannot accept, since it is a purpose extrinsic to the world while they must find an intrinsic purpose, the so-called entelechy. For Crescas this Platonizing definition of the over-all purpose of the world serves on the one hand to solve a difficult scholastic problem, though, on the other, it also poses an almost insoluble one.

The traditional school-problem which this definition solves is the question how it is possible that the absolute one should

produce the compound and the manifold; it is the age-old problem of "the one and the many". By means of his definition of the purpose of Creation as inhering in the very essence of God, Crescas can now answer this problem: "Reality as a whole is "one man" (i.e. an unified macrocosm) which is as perfectly good as is possible for the recipient of forms. Now it is of the nature of the good to emanate goodness by virtue of grace (i.e. the goodness which, as it were, flows over the brim of the good to pour upon others), for this characteristic of emanating goodness constitutes the perfection of the good. (This sentence refers to God. The following again refers to the world.) The good, insofar as it is good, is simple and one. Thus, though the world is compounded of parts insofar as it is manifold, goodness and perfection reside in it not inasmuch as it is manifold but rather inasmuch as it is one. (30) Third part, First Principle, ch.5, p.52bc.) In other words, the One has created the world insofar as the world is one, and it is one to the extent that it can be called a macrocosm. (31) Joel, op. cit. p.73.) The manifoldness which resides in it is a consequence of the fact that it is, after all, only the recipient.- It may, of course, be asked whether in this latter proviso a vestige of the concept of pre-maeval matter does not creep in again; this would not be too surprising in an argument which runs strictly along neo-Platonic lines.

The difficulty which arises out of this definition of the purpose of the world for Crescas, on the other hand, is indicated in the sentence which almost immediately follows upon the preceding arguments: (32) 1b.) "According to what has already been explained it also follows that the (divine, creative) will (i.e. Creation) must be eternal." The tension which exists in Crescas' position

on Creation between temporal creation, as conceived by his traditional religion, and eternal creation as consistent with his systematic views will become more obvious as this study proceeds; it is a tension which he never actually overcomes. Guttman's statement of the situation characterizes the entire resulting position which Crescas must maintain very well; "Die Emanationslehre der Aristoteliker wird so ins Voluntaristische umgebildet." ((33) op.cit.p.245) It is a voluntaristic theory insofar as it derives reality from the will of God, it is Aristotelian in the scholastic, neo-Platonized sense of the world insofar as it must consistently arrive at eternal creation.

"Since the belief in Creation, now, is obligatory according to the Torah and according to tradition, it is necessary that we investigate in the proper manner exactly how it should be believed and what we can know of it." ((34) loc. cit., p.45b) By "the proper manner" Crescas undoubtedly refers to the scholastic manner in which he proposes to deal with this problem, in the same way in which it is also applied to all other problems of philosophy in the Middle Ages; that is to say, first the opinions and arguments of all the serious schools are stated, then their respective merits are considered and finally, on the basis of such preparatory spade-work, the personal opinions and proofs of the philosophic writer himself are offered. In the case of Crescas and with reference to the problem of Creation, that means that first the views of the Aristotelians, then those of Maimonides, those of Gersonides and finally his own will be expounded. This, too, is the sequence in which this study will follow in Crescas footsteps, except for the deviations which may become necessary in the case of Gersonides according to the methodology laid down in the Preface. ((35) cf. p. 34.)

A r i s t o t e l i a n i s m .

Orthodox Aristotelianism maintains that the world is eternal on the basis of chiefly five considerations: because of A. the nature of time, B. the nature of motion, C. the nature of the heavenly bodies, D. the nature of matter and E. the nature of the divine agent. ((36) All of the following is a running paraphrase of Crescas' exposition of the Aristotelian views on this matter, except where otherwise noted. Cf. op. cit., Part III, Principle One, Chapter I, pp. 45c - 47a. Page 46 is curiously left out of the pagination of this edition.)

A. Three arguments from the nature of time persuade the Aristotelians that the world is uncreated: 1. Time is either created or eternal. If it were created, it would have been non-existent before it was existent. But "before" is a temporal term, implying the existence of time. Therefore, if time were created, it would have existed and not-existed at the same time, - which is absurd. Therefore time must be eternal. But time is an accident of motion, and there is no motion without a moving object. Therefore, there must be an eternal moving object in the past. - The same argument will prove that there will always have to be a moving object, since otherwise there would have to be time "after" there would be no more time, - which is also absurd. Thus, existence having to have always existed in the past and always in the future, the world is eternal.

2. The "moment", i.e. the atomic time element, divides a previous moment from a subsequent moment. If the world were created, the first moment would have had no previous moment to divide from the next moment, - which defies the definition of the moment.

3. If the world were created, before it existed in actuality it

would have had to exist in potentiality , since an object cannot exist in potentiality and in actuality at the same time. Therefore again as in the first proof, the existence of time before the world ever existed and all the consequences of this deduction would follow,- which proves that the original hypothesis is untenable. ((37) cf. Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, Part II, ch.14, First Method.)

E. From the nature of motion chiefly two arguments were derived which would show that the world is eternal: 1. "Locomotion in the sense which Aristotle ascribes to this term((38) Physics, Book Five Ch.2.) i.e. "motion with respect to place", is the first kind of motion. ("first" in this argument is apparently understood chronologically, not so much logically.) Locomotion now cannot take place if there is no moving object. If the world were created, there would, therefore, have had to be a moving object "on whose motion God would have had to ground Creation", ((39) loc.cit.p.45d) or rather on which He would have had to ground the motions connected with Creation. This is obviously absurd. And if it should be argued that this first moving object in turn was created, then also to this Creation the previous argument would be applicable. Since this argument could thus be continued ad infinitum and because a regress ad infinitum is impossible, the hypotheses of Creation is shown to be impossible.

2. If motion were created, the moving object the accident of whose accident it <sup>is</sup> would be either created or uncreated . If it were created, then the motion by which it was created would have preceded the motion which was originally assumed to be first. Now also this motion cannot be the first for two reasons; a. because its Creator would have had to change from being the non-creator

to being the creator at the time at which he created it, and thus the motion of this change in the creating agent would be the first. If it should now be argued that this motion is the first, it must be answered that before there can be actual creativity in the Creator there must be the potentiality of creativity, and this potentiality in turn requires a previous change. b. The self-same argument can be deduced that so far as the first moving object is concerned an infinite regress of motions would be necessary. Therefore, there can be no first motion. Therefore, motion is eternal. ((40) This is exactly the first argument for the eternity of the world from the nature of motion which also Gersonides reports in the name of the Aristotelians, cf. op. cit. Book VI, part I, ch. 3, p. 299; cf. also Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, Part II, ch. 14, "First Method".)

C. From the nature of the heavenly bodies chiefly two arguments are adduced in favor of the eternity of the world: 1. Everything that is created is created from that which is the contradictory of creation and perishes again into the contradictory of creation. That, now, which has no contradictory can neither be created nor perish again. From Aristotle's "Physics", however, we learn that the heavenly bodies have no contradictory; therefore they can neither be created nor perish. Thus, they must be eternal. ((41) cf. Maimonides, ib. "Third Method".)

2. Everything that has been created must perish again. But since it is already known that the heavenly bodies cannot perish ((42) cf. the previous argument,) they can also not have been created. For the premise of this argument, viz. that everything that has been created must perish again, essentially two proofs are offered:

a. If there are opposing powers in an object, these powers must be of a limited strength and must act at limited times, because it is impossible that two opposing powers, for example, should be unlimited and resident in one and the same object. If they were, one of three possibilities would have to be the case: either their combined activities would have to result in one mediating activity, as an object which is being pulled into two opposite directions at the same time, for example, actually moves in the direction which is defined by half the sum of the opposing powers, - which is impossible in the case of the powers of existence and non-existence, however, since there is no mediating power between them, i.e. an object either exists or it does not exist - tertium non datur; or both powers must be active at the same time, but it is obviously impossible that two infinite powers toward existence and non-existence should determine one object at the same time, since this would be comparable to the proverbial case of an immovable object being impelled by an irresistible power; or finally, one of the powers would have to be active at one time and the other at another time. But also this last possibility is impossible in the case of the heavenly bodies, because if, for example, the infinite power toward existence should be active at one time and the infinite power toward non-existence inactive, of this power toward non-existence three possibilities could be stipulated: it is either necessary or possible; it can be neither necessary, for in that case it could not be inactive at any time, nor can it be impossible, for in that case it could never be active. Therefore it must be possible. It can also not be possible, because as such, if it were never to become actual it would never

have been possible to begin with, and if it ever should become actual it would then be active at the same time at which also its opposing power toward existence would be active, - which has already been shown to be impossible. Summa summarum, there can, therefore be no object with two infinite and opposing powers. Therefore, the heavenly bodies which have existed infinitely in the past cannot possess the potentiality of non-existence. ((43) This argument is to be found in Milchamoth HaShem, Book Six, part I, ch. 27, p.404.)

b. Also, the world having existed infinitely in the past, it will never perish, for if it were to perish at one time once and for all, the infinite time of its existence would have to be simultaneous with the infinite time of its non-existence, since these two infinities cannot be subsequent to one another, two infinities not being able to be parts of one another. (Infinity minus infinity is still infinity.) ((44) cf. Milchamoth HaShem, loc.cit. p.405f.)

c. In addition, since any object cannot exist infinitely and be non-existent infinitely, it must be something which is neither of these two. Any object must, therefore, neither exist infinitely nor not-exist infinitely, which is to say it must have had a beginning and therefore also an end. ((45) cf. ib., p. 408f.)

d. The fourth argument in support of the thesis that only an object which has been created can perish again (Or Adonai, loc.cit., p. 47b) is set forth somewhat more understandably in its counterpart in Gersonides' Milchamoth HaShem, and we shall present it from that text therefore: ((46) cf. loc. cit., p. 412) an object which has not been created and cannot perish must have these characteristics from its "nature", not by accident nor because of itself. If it should perish, then, it would have to be assumed that it has changed its innermost nature of not perishing, - which is impossible. (Thus far only Crescas.) If it should then be argued, Gersonides continues,

that the characteristic of existence refers to the past and that of perishing to the future, it must be answered that a possibility refers to the future and not to the past to which only actuality is applicable. Gersonides calls this fourth argument "the strongest argument of all those which Aristotle brought forth on this matter."  
(47) ib.)

e. Finally, an argument is adduced by common observation which, methodologically, corresponds to the argument from consensus gentium in other cases ((48) cf. e.g. p. 20) in nature it is constantly observed that everything that has a beginning has an end and vice versa. (49) Milchamoth HaShem, loc. cit.)

In conclusion it must be noted that all these arguments to establish that that which has no beginning can have no end are based upon one of two <sup>not</sup> necessarily cogent considerations, either that that which has a beginning also has an end, from which the contrary cannot necessarily be deduced, or that an object which has the characteristic of not having a beginning cannot also have the characteristic of having an end. Of this weakness Gersonides is going to take definite advantage.

D. From the nature of matter chiefly two arguments are derived in favor of the eternity of the world: 1. The first matter must have existed in potentia before it could have existed in actu. Everything that is the bearer of the potentiality of something else is actual in itself. Therefore the matter which bore the potentiality of the "first matter" must have itself been actual. Since no matter, now, can exist without form, the world must exist eternally. (50) cf. Maimonides, ib. "Fourth Method".)

2. The first matter cannot have been created by a form alone, since

like will produce only like. If it should then be argued that that matter which produced all later matters was itself created, it must be assumed that it was created out of nothing, - creatio ex nihilo -, which is a blatant impossibility. (51) cf. Maimonides, ib. "Second Method". )

E. Lastly, from the nature of the divine agent four arguments are brought forth by the Aristotelians to prove that the world must be eternal and uncreated: 1. If God created the world at one point, before He did so he was not a creator; therefore, from being a non-creator, He must have changed to being the Creator. Since, however, it cannot be said of God <sup>that</sup> He is in any way subject to change because of His perfection, the world cannot have been created. (52) cf. Maimonides, ib. "Fifth Method". )

2. After He would have created the world, God would have had to suffer the additional change of entering into a relationship which He had previously not entertained, to wit the relationship with the world with which, obviously, before it existed He could not have stood in relation.

3. Before He would have created the existent things He would have had to have them in mind, so that from this conception of them He could have actually put them into reality. A conception, now, which has no externally existing counterpart to which it would correspond is a false conception. Thus, had He created the world, before He created it, God would have had such a false conception of things which did not yet exist. It is, however, impossible to ascribe to God false knowledge.

4. The last argument is partly based on the afore-mentioned method of consensus gentium (53) cf. Arést... , p. 13:) the ancients identified God with or placed Him in the Heavens. They did so to show that the heavens are as eternal as God Himself. (This corresponds

to the argument of Gersonides (54) loc. cit., p.412,) to which the portentous words are added by way of anticipated refutation: "This last argument shows how weak Aristotle considered all his other arguments in favor of the eternity of the world to be, for which reasons he resorted to the agreement of the ancients to his proposition, because if it could be satisfactorily explained by reason alone he would not have needed this agreement." Of course, none of the scholastics ever thought that concensus gentium was a decisive argument; they merely quoted it in support of theses which had already otherwise been established. (55) cf. Maimonides ib., "Fifth Method".)

From all these various arguments and consideration, then, the Aristotelians believed to have shown conclusively that the world must be believed to be eternal and uncreated.

Maimonides.

When two masters of summarization meet, when one works with the other, an interesting result can be forecast. This, now, is exactly what happens when Crescas reports on Maimonides' discussion of the problem of Creation. He adequately presents his great predecessor's views and argument in one short chapter ((56) op. cit., p. 47cd) and even adds a little that cannot be found in the Guide of the Perplexed, though it is surely in its spirit. Maimonides himself had admirably summarized the views of Platonism, Aristotelianism and those of his own in thirteen chapters ((57) Guide of the Perplexed, Part II, chs. 13-26.) Crescas, however, can justifiably omit Maimonides' presentation of Aristotelianism, since he himself has just given it, ((58) cf. the preceding chapter and the references to the corresponding sections in Maimonides) and restrict himself to the personal views and arguments of the great philosopher. In accordance, therefore, with the structure of Maimonides' presentation, leaving out his statement of the Aristotelian case, Crescas divides this part of his summarization into two sections, first the Maimonidean refutation of the Aristotelian arguments in favor of the eternity of the world, and secondly the establishment of the case ~~in favor of Creation~~ in favor of Creation.

At this point already it must be pointed out, however, that with regard to this latter section of Crescas' presentation of Maimonides' view, the Or Adonai does not do full justice to the Guide of the Perplexed. At the end of his summary of Maimonides Crescas claims that Maimonides believed to have established that Creation had been proved by him: ((59) loc. cit., p. 47d) "Therefore, (he says presumably in the

name of Maimonides) the world as a whole and its part have been created from complete nothingness, and even time belongs to the class of created things. This is also the position of the true tradition which it is proper and obligatory for us to accept; it is an inheritance unto us from the fathers of the world, Abraham and Moses, Peace be with them. This is the purport of the words of "the rabbi" (par excellence, i.e. Maimonides) in his refutations and arguments." He fails to mention, as it needs to be, the intimate connection which existed in Maimonides' mind between his philosophical arguments and his reference to Jewish tradition. These two considerations, one philosophical, the other traditional, far from running parallel to one another and saying the same thing from different points of view, as the situation was usually conceived by the mediaeval scholastics and as Crescas makes them out to be also in the case of Maimonides, are supplementary to one another in Maimonides' view and say different things. (60) Cf. Guide of the Perplexed, part II, ch.16.) He at no point claims that the arguments which he proffers in favor of Creation are finally convincing or conclusive but, on the contrary, repeatedly assures the reader that they only establish a possibility, at most a probability for Creation, and that, where a greater probability for Creation than for non-creation has been established, the teachings of religion as traditionally understood constitute the last, decisive factor to be considered. I.e. Maimonides states that philosophy makes Creation probable, religion makes it certain. Of all this not one word in Crescas. This is the more surprising since, in addition to one other important difference, the one view which distinguishes

his own philosophy from that of Maimonides in point of the problem of Creation will be seen ((61) cf. Crescas; p. 78) to be the one that philosophy cannot only make Creation probable but can even prove it. If in no other respect, it is on this point that Gersonides and Crescas agree, that philosophy cannot only make Creation possible but can also prove it. "Ebenso wie Maimonides lehnt er auch die Lehre von der Weltewigkeit ab und geht ueber Maimonides insofern noch hinaus, als er sie streng widerlegen zu koennen glaubt" ((62) Guttman, "Die Philosophie des Judentums", p. 223.)

Maimonides' refutation of the Aristotelian arguments, now, Crescas correctly reports, addresses itself firstly to those four types which are based upon the nature of the world, viz. the nature of time, of motion, of the heavenly bodies and of matter ((63) Cf. Arist., pp. 14-20) All these arguments are perfectly correct, except that they are all based upon the nature of the world once it exists and upon the nature of coming-into-being as it manifests itself in the individual parts of the universe which men observe. Partial coming -into-being cannot be compared with coming-into-being of the whole. Therefore, they all fail to prove the impossibility of Creation. ((64) Cf. Guide of the Perplexed, ch. 17.) In other words, Maimonides reproaches the Aristotelians for having raised an empirical law into a logical law. ((65) We shall note later (cf. Gersonides, ff. ~~Crescas~~ p. 109) that Gersonides considerably modifies this striking argument of Maimonides and refutes its universal validity. We shall also note that it is perhaps the most important lacunae in Crescas' report on Gersonides that he nowhere mentions this "refutation of a refutation" and the consequences which ensue from this cir-

cumstance.)

As to Maimonides' refutation of the Aristotelian arguments in favor of the eternity of the world based upon the nature of the divine agent, Crescas proceeds in a somewhat anachronous manner. He apparently desires that Maimonides refute all the arguments of that type which he himself has enumerated ( cf. Arist. ...., p. 20f.) It happens, however, that the Aristotelian arguments of this type which Maimonides reported and, therefore, felt called upon within the structure of his book to refute do not completely co-incide with those which Crescas reported. ((66) This can be easily noted from a comparison of the Aristotelian arguments <sup>with the references</sup> to the Guide of the Perplexed appended to them.) As a result Crescas makes Maimonides say a number of things which he actually does not say, though, it is true, they are perfectly in the spirit of the man <sup>into</sup> whose mouth they are put.

Actually only the first refutation which Crescas quotes in the name of Maimonides is Maimonidean, to wit that transition from non-action to action implies change only in corporeal substances but not in incorporeal substances as God or, for that matter, the Active Intellect. ((67) Cf. Maimonide, loc. cit. ch. 18.) Strangely enough, this one genuinely Maimonidean argument which he quotes is the one which he will later ((68) cf. Crescas, p. 62) most energetically dispute. At any rate, however, this argument satisfactorily refutes the first argument for the eternity of the world from the nature of God ((69) cf. Arist., p. 20)

The second such argument in the report by Crescas ((70) cf. Arist. p. 20) has no direct counterpart in Maimonides' report and, therefore,

also its refutation cannot actually be found in Maimonides. This refutation states that in the same way in which change from potentiality into actuality in an incorporeal being does not constitute change, as expounded in the previous refutation, so also the acquisition of a new relationship does not constitute a change in such a substance.

Also the third such argument found in Crescas' summary (70) cf. Arist., p. 30<sup>is not</sup> found in Maimonides and consequently also not its refutation, though Crescas certainly gives the impression as if it did. It states that the concept of a thing which does not actually exist is only false in the mind of a being which must by its nature derive all its concepts from previously and externally existing objects. In the case of God, however, who does not derive His concepts from things but rather <sup>by conceiving them first causes them to exist, such a</sup> ~~is called~~ a false concept. <sup>concept cannot be</sup>

(71) The possibility arises that, though this argument is certainly not found in Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed, Crescas may have confused the two chief sources of Jewish philosophy from which he drew, namely the Guide of the Perplexed and the Milchanoth HaShem, and attributed an argument which he actually found in the latter to the former. In fact, we find exactly this argument in Gersonides, Part VI, Book I, ch. 4, p. 303f. where he argues against the strict Aristotelian orthodoxy, though the argument is slightly modified; "thus we also say that from the assumption of God as the law (<sup>"nomos"</sup>) of all existent things it does not necessarily follow that all existent things have always (i.e. without creation) existed alongside of Him, because God did not get to know this law (<sup>"nomos"</sup>), (here in the sense of natural law as a generalization from observed phenomena) from (observing) the existent things, as is the case

in human knowledge, but rather the existent things acquired their law ( i.e. the law by which they exist) from Him." )

The fifth Aristotelian argument ((72) cf. Arist..., p.24) Crescas in his partial disguise as Maimonides does not even seem to find worthy of his refutation at this point. Gersonides, in the quotation given above ((73) ib.) no doubt had adequately taken care of it.

Thus, while adding two arguments to Maimonides' refutation of the Aristotelians which Maimonides had actually not formulated, Crescas leaves out two ((74) cf. Guide of the Perplexed, loc.cit., ch.18, "Second and Third Methods) which he had, obviously because they refer to Aristotelian arguments which in this form Maimonides had brought and Gersonides had not!

After this somewhat confused situation where identities seem to blur into one another, as it were, in the section devoted to Maimonides' two arguments in favor of Creation Crescas comes back to the strict text of the Guide of the Perplexed: 1. It is granted that the heavenly bodies are all of one matter. How, then, it is to be explained that some of them are of a compound nature? In addition, how are some of the irregularities of the stars noticed by the mediaeval astronomers to be explained, since they do not fit into the Ptolemaic world-picture of which they were possessed? Both of these observations, since they do not harmonize with the necessary laws stipulated of the heavenly bodies, cannot be explained on the basis of an Aristotelian, necessary world. A free, divine will, however, could have created the heavens in such a manner! ((75) cf. Maimonides, op.cit., ch.19)

Husik ((76) op.cit., p.276) calls this argument "Obscurantism". On first thought, indeed, it might appear that it closely resembles the shallow modern arguments which pretend to "prove" the existence

of God because we cannot explain all the phenomena of nature. These are really obscurantist arguments, because they are argumenta de ignorantia, and, like the sniffing dog who follows the footsteps of his master, they follow the natural sciences to peek for gaps in scientific knowledge, so that God is proved each day by what science may not yet know today but may discover tomorrow. This characterization cannot be applied to Maimonides, however, because it must not be forgotten that he, unlike us, still lived in the closed Aristotelian cosmos in which it was believed that everything that can be known is known and that, therefore, no essential new knowledge can be discovered in the future. (77) For the first Renaissance-spirited break with this belief, cf. later for Gersonides statement that "the course of time will eventually bring about the discovery of all of the truth", Milchamoth HaShem, Introduction, p. 4.) For Maimonides, therefore, ignorance about a natural phenomenon was not only historical ignorance but humanly essential ignorance, and if human reason essentially could not exhaustively explain nature, then indeed recourse would have to be taken to another principle of explanation! In Maimonides' scholastic system the ingrained belief in a limited universe thus serves the same - unconscious - function which assumption of an Infinite Mind later on was to serve in the system of a Salomon Maimon, namely to fill out the gaps in knowledge which the human intellect must inevitably sustain. If Husik had kept in mind the spirit of the philosophical era in which Maimonides lived he could not have labeled this argument "obscurantism". What may in all fairness to the philosopher be said, however, is that the assumption of a limited cosmos which often seems to be a form of human humility in front of the infinity of God is in a way also a human arrogance and pretension, for it implies that all the knowledge of which human beings are

capable has already been attained and that nothing is left for the future.

Maimonides' second argument in favor of the createdness of the world is a consideration of the old problem of "the one and the many" ((78) Cf. Intro. p. 12.) How, he asks, can it be explained that out of the Perfect One which is God the manifoldness of the world could have come forth by logical necessity? On the contrary, logic would consider such a process impossible. No necessity, only a free, divine will can explain it ((79) Cf. Maimonides, loc. cit., ch. 22. The difference between this answer to the problem of "the one and the many" and Crescas' answer (cf. Intro., p. 12) is obvious.)

Adding that in this way Maimonides proved the Creation of the world and refuted the contrary arguments of the Aristotelians, (cf. this chapter, p. 1f.), Crescas concludes his report on Maimonides.

G e r s o n i d e s .

After thus having considered the philosophic predecessors in discussion and disputation with whom both Gersonides and Crescas developed their own systems of thought, <sup>we can now proceed to the heart of our task,</sup> of Creation in <sup>the problem</sup> post-Maimonidean Jewish philosophy. <sup>itself</sup> The difficulties connected with the study and analysis of Gersonides' treatment of this problem have been mentioned before. ((80) cf. Introd., p.1f.) Gersonides originally wrote his treatise on Creation which now constitutes the sixth book of the Milchemoth HaShem as an independent work around the year 1317, i. e. about 150 years after Maimonides ((81) Cf. Joel, op.cit., p.14) and it was later incorporated in the whole work. The differences in style and mode of thought continue to be very noticeable between the part written independently at first and the rest. What Weil says about the sixth book of the Milchemoth HaShem can only be underlined: ((82) La Philosophie Religieuse de Levi ben Gerson", p.210f) "... mais ici la verbosité et la minutie sont poussées par lui à un tel degré, qu'il faut vraiment une certaine dose de courage et de patience pour pouvoir le suivre à travers les circuits de paroles et de raisonnements dans lesquels il se plaît à promener sa pensée." ((82) Cf. also Joel, op.cit., p.71.) Nevertheless, by the use of the method outlined in the Preface, the comparison of Crescas' report on Gersonides and Gersonides' statements in the original, <sup>it is quite possible to attempt a full understanding of the position</sup> which he maintained. Chasdai Crescas, as will be seen later, differed with Gersonides fundamentally, but as his disciple and opponent he still regarded him as an important thinker whose arguments had to be seriously studied and, if possible, refuted before another position could legitimately be taken. Therefore it is not surprising that of all Crescas' philosophic predecessors, ~~the~~

the Aristotelians, Maimonides and Gersonides, he devotes by far the longest part of his scholastic survey of previous philosophic history to Gersonides and obviously attempts to present his master's theories as exhaustively and fairly as possible. ((83) Crescas' restatement of Gersonides is to be found consecutively in Or Adonai, loc. cit., pp. 47d - 50a. )

For the student, too, it may be wise to follow Crescas in first stating briefly what Gersonides' theory of Creation amounts to, and only then to consider the arguments by which he arrives at this conclusion, because in the absence of such an initial statement Gersonides' philosophical peregrinations may easily have a very bewildering effect upon his reader. Gersonides' over-all conclusion will be that "that the world and all its parts, including time, are created, but not from a complete nothingness but rather from a primaeval matter which is bare of all form and which is inchoate."

((84) "לפיכך נראה שכל המין". Or Adonai, loc. cit., p. 47d)) From this hypothetical formulation Crescas immediately enters into the summary of Gersonides' proofs of Creation as such, be it without or with a primaeval matter, leaving aside Gersonides' lengthy introductory summary of the Platonic and Aristotelian positions. Here again Crescas feels very reasonably, as in the case of his restatement of Maimonides ((85) cf. Maim., p. 1.) that, having himself presented a fair précis of Aristotelianism, there is no need to do the same once more in the name of Gersonides, and that he can restrict himself to the presentation of the views which are peculiar to Gersonides. He also omits the various aspects of the subject under discussion which Gersonides mentions as constituting the difficulties inhering in it. Because they have an innate interest, it is worthwhile to rephrase

them at least from Gersonides' text;

Already in the Introduction to the Milchemoth HaShem as a whole, Gersonides comes to talk about the problem of Creation. Why "on this much disputed question depend the religious principles which direct man in some degree to his intellectual and social salvation" ((86) Introd., p.2) has already been stated. ((87) Cf. Introd., p. 1f.) But at this early point he also justifies the method which he will use in the analysis of the problem of Creation: as Maimonides had shown in his dichotomy of the Aristotelian arguments concerning Creation ((88) cf. Maim., p.22, f.) it is possible to approach it either from the point of view of the created things or from the point of view of Him who created them. The human philosopher will do best, however, to choose the first approach, because in order to choose the latter he would have to know much more about the nature of God and His activities than is possible for mere humans. ((89) loc. cit., p.2f; again Part Six, Book I, ch.1, p.293, p.307.) Finally, it might be thought an impertinence on the part of Gersonides to dare an answer to the baffling problem of Creation, since only a prophet might be regarded as authorized to speak definitely on it, and especially since "the ancients of our faith who were perfect, among them the crown of the sages, the crown of glory of the masters of the Torah, our master, the rabbi Moses ben Maimon, May his soul rest in Paradise, did not engage in this discussion as we shall do it." "But this is after all, a very weak argument, because it is not necessary that what was hidden from the ancients must also remain hidden from those who follow after them, for the course of time suffices to bring out the whole truth." ((90) ib., p.4.) But even if we chose the other alternative of approaching the problem of Creation, not from the

aspect of the Creator but from that of the created things, even then one must be aware of the great difficulties which arise, since it is necessary to know all that science can teach about the nature of the world before it may be possible to discuss with knowledge its origin. (91) loc.cit., ch.1, p.293.) And finally, in the words of Maimonides, since Aristotle, the philosopher par excellence, had divergent views on this question, it is very difficult for someone to dare disagree with him. (92)ib., p.294.)

To enter in mediam res, however, the best way of discovering whether the world is created or not is to ask for a definition of the term and concept "creation" and then to ask whether the actual world satisfies these criteria of creation or not. There are, in answer, three characteristics of Creation: 1. A created thing can have a purpose, because to say a non-created, necessarily existing thing, such as a geometric figure, should have a purpose is obviously self-contradictory; it exists necessarily, whether it may have a purpose or not! (93)Or Adonai, loc.cit., p.47d; cf. Gersonides, loc.cit., ch.6, p.308)Gersonides himself is a little more careful about this partial definition of Creation than Crescas can be, due to the nature of his brief summary. Gersonides adds ((94)ib., p.309) that a created thing, or rather an object that had a beginning in time may, like a necessary existent, be bare of a purpose if it was not created by a will but came about by accident. For this reason, all that it is possible to say on the basis of this criterion is that that nothing that can be shown to be purposive can be uncreated, but it is not possible to say that everything that is not purposive is therefore uncreated. Also, a created thing which is purposive must necessarily have a beginning in time, because it is perfectly conceivable, as

will later be the thesis of Crescas himself (95) cf. Crescas p. 64) ~~is~~ that an eternal existent which is, however, the product of an eternal will have a purpose (96) loc. cit. p. 30E)

2. An uncreated object cannot possess unnecessary and superfluous adjuncts, whereas a created thing can, because unnecessary adjuncts are in the nature of accidents, but accidents are transient, whereas nothing in a necessary and therefore eternal existent can be transient. (97) ib.) 3. Lastly, a created object can have a purpose beyond itself, whereas this is unthinkable in the case of a necessary object. (98) ib., cf. loc. cit., p. 310.)

The next step is to see whether the world satisfies these criteria of Creation or not. Also at this point, Crescas omits the statement of method with which Gersonides prefaces this step: he will not simply look at any part of the world at all for verification of these criteria but will direct his gaze at those things which the Aristotelians have always proclaimed to be the most eminently eternal, continuous and necessary parts, such as the heavenly bodies, time, motion etc., because if it can be shown that even these parts are created, a fortiori the rest of the world! (99) loc. cit., ch. 5, p. 306f.) <sup>have for their purpose the perfection of the things which are</sup> It is clear, now, that "the heavenly bodies <sup>on earth, because</sup> if only a little of the order of the spheres were to perish, such as, for example, the distance of the heavenly bodies from the earth, or the distance from one part of the spheres to the other, or the size of the stars, their order or their places in the spheres, their breadth or the strength of the light etc., then the things which exist on earth would also perish." (100) Crescas, p. 47d.) Having a purpose, the heavenly bodies must, therefore, in accordance with the first criterion of createdness, be created. (101) cf. Gersonides, loc. cit., pp. 310-312.) Equally, the heavenly bodies are seen ~~to~~

to possess adjuncts which are unnecessary, i.e. which do not follow from their nature, such as the quantitative change in some of them with regard to light, speed and motion; therefore, by reason of the second criterion of createdness, they must be created. ((102) ib., p.48a.) Thirdly, the purposiveness of the heavenly bodies which satisfied the first criterion of createdness also satisfies the third, since that purposiveness, being directed toward the things of earth, transcends the heavenly bodies themselves. ((103)ib.) In conclusion, since the heavenly bodies, upon which the basic argument for the eternity of the world has usually been made to depend, have been shown to be created, it follows that the world as a whole must be created.

It might now be objected that from the conclusion that the heavenly bodies have an essentially created character it does not follow necessarily that they were created in time, but rather it might be thought that they are an eternal emanation from God, contingent upon His nature but co-existent with Him. ((104) Or Adonai, ib.; Gersonides, loc.cit., pp.312-314.) From such an assumption, however, any number of absurd consequences follow; 1. existence would come out of nothing and perish into nothing, 2. time would consist of atomic moments, 3. motion would not be continuous, and 4. the heavenly bodies would not exist in actu but only in potentia. The rationale of these "absurd consequences" is that the assumption of an eternal emanation of all existing things depends upon the Kalaam version of atomistic occasionalism which Maimonides had so capably summarized and refuted ((105) cf. Guide of the Perplexed, part I, chs.45ff) and which declares that a chair, for example, does not exist as a continuous substance but depends at each moment of its existence upon the crea-

tive emanation of God which alone grants it reality. Following Maimonides' classic answer to this point of view, Gersonides shows however, that on the basis of such an assumption time, motion and, for that matter, all reality whatever would come-to-be and perish at the same moment, because if it should be claimed that they come-to-be at one moment, exist in the second moment and perish again in the third, there would be no transition from the first moment to the second and from the second to the third, because any stipulated transition would in turn have to submit to this tripartite process from nothingness<sup>h</sup> to nothingness.

In this systematic activity of pulling out the props from beneath the arguments of the Aristotelians in favor of the eternity of the world, Gersonides next proceeds to analyse the nature of time (106) For the respective Aristotelian arguments, always refer to the exposition of their views, following the same scheme, in the chapter on Aristotelianism!) The refutation of the Aristotelian arguments for the eternity of the world from the nature of time depend upon four premises which themselves are taken from Aristotle's physics: (107) Or Adonai, p.48b) 1. time is a continuous quantity which can adhere to any bearer of accidents; 2. when the motion of an object is said to have a "before" and a "later" stage, these stages must be measured by means of time; 3. time is partly potential and partly actual; it is actual insofar as it is in the past, i.e. when it has actually been, and it is potential insofar as it is in the future, when it has not yet actually been; and 4. the term "time" includes all the time that has ever been or that ever will be, and it is therefore impossible to say that time will be added to time, since

the time to be added has already been included and anticipated in the first time. The first proof, now, that time must be created states simply that time is a quantity, ((108) cf. the first Aristotelian premise above,) and all quantities, such as a body, a surface, a line or a place, are limited. Time being limited, the world must therefore be created ((109) ib., cf. Gersonides, loc. cit., p. 332.)

It might now be objected that to any limited quantity it is possible to add other quantities unlimitedly until the original quantity has reached unlimited size. The reply to this objection is that in the described case it is not the quantity which is or ever can be unlimited but rather the act of addition which is unlimited. ((110) ib., cf. p. 333.) Secondly it might be objected that before the limited period of time ~~might~~ there might have been an unlimited number of similar periods of limited time, so that again the end-result would be an unlimited time. This assumption contradicts the definition of time in the fourth Aristotelian premise, however, that the term "time" anticipates and includes all actual and possibly conceivable times. ((111) ib., cf. p. 335.) Finally it might be objected that time being in potentia in its futuristic aspect and the infinite always being potential, time, too, must be unlimited. The refutation of this objection resides in the fact that, firstly, in all other infinities the infinite is a term which describes the activity which is affected upon them, whereas in the case of time quantity not only refers to the process of the coming-to-be of time but the nature of time itself is quantity, and, though an activity can be conceived as infinite, a quantity itself cannot be infinite; secondly, time is potential only insofar as it lies in the future, but in the past it is actual ((112) ib., p. 48b; cf. Gersonides, loc. cit., p. 336.)

The second proof that time is created states that every body and all its categorial determinants are limited. Since time, now, is one of these categorial determinants appertaining to motion and since motion cannot exist without a moving body, time must be limited and, therefore, created. ((113) Or Adonai, ib., p.48c; cf. Gersonides, loc.cit., p.337) And Crescas adds: "And Gersonides elaborated on the explanation of the thesis that every body and all its categorial determinants are essentially limited, but we do not have to concern ourselves with this...." He refers to the fact that Gersonides does, indeed, go into a lengthy statement to the effect that each of the Aristotelian categories must be limited, ((114) ib., pp. 33-34) which it is not necessary to repeat at this point. Because of its inherent interest and because a spark of humor rare in the dry lands of scholasticism occurs in it, however, one side-light from this statement deserves mention: even as the categorial determinants of all existents must be limited, "because it is impossible, by my life I, to assume so also all the traits of living things, in particular of man, must be limited that a man could possess an unlimited number of perfections, - which ought to be very clear to anyone who reads this book." (1) ((115) ib., p.338.)

Time also cannot be unlimited, because if it were, then the motion of all the spheres which is measured by it would have to be identical, since there are no quantitative differences between one infinity and another; but that each sphere and each star should move exactly as quickly or as slowly as every other "is obviously absurd, for sensual experience testifies that there are spheres which move more quickly than others." ((116) ib. p.342; cf. Or Adonai, ib.)

The existence in actuality of time is a corollary of motion, so that the more motion the more actual time. If time were infinite, however, and all infinities being identical, new motion could not

bring into actuality new time - which is contradicted by the definition ((117) ib.; Gersonides, ib., p.343.)

These and other subsidiary arguments ((118) cf. Milchamoth HaShem loc cit., ch.11) all establish the createdness of time and consequently the createdness of the world. "And what has been explained to be the nature of time can also be applied to the nature of motion by equivalent proofs." ((119) Or Adonai, ib., p.48d.)

The fourth type of demonstration that the world must have been created which Crescas reports in the name of Gersonides is derived from an analysis of the part of the earth which protrudes from the waters and upon which, as a consequence, the human race, for example, conducts its affairs. ((120) p.48d, ch. Milchamoth HaShem, ib., ch.13.) It is argued simply that this part of the earth obviously exists so that living creatures may populate it, and as it has been shown previously that it is a characteristic only of created things to exist for a purpose beyond themselves, this part of the earth at least, but actually the entire earth, since all its parts are intimately interconnected, must have been created. Neither can it be objected that either the water or the heavenly bodies may be responsible for the existence of life upon earth; the latter is impossible because "anyone who has the slightest familiarity with the sciences and, in particular, with astronomy" knows that they are incapable of producing such an effect, while the former is impossible because, on the contrary, it would be the natural tendencies of the water to flood the earth, since it is located on a lower plane than it. Hence, the only possible conclusion is that a will is the cause of the protrusion of part of the earth for the purpose of making it possible for life to arise. Hence also all the species of life which do exist on earth

must be created, since they are dependent on something that itself is created.

In a rather cryptic manner Crescas excepts from this conclusion "the species of species". This statement refers to the following very interesting argument in the original which bears in its train a significant ramification: ((121) cf. ib., p.352.) "When all this has been established, a powerful objection may be raised": if all the species are created, then it must be believed that the sub-species which we usually consider products of their super-species ~~and~~ are directly resultant from the same kind of creation which also brought forth the super-species. This, however, completely contradicts all that the natural sciences have observed.

The easy refutation of this objection consists merely of an implied reference to Maimonides' powerful distinction between partial coming-into-being and the coming-into-being of the whole. ((122) cf. Maimonides, p.1f.) The coming-into-being of the sub-species can continue to be regarded as an activity of the super-species without thereby implying that also the latter must have come-into-being in a similar manner from another even higher, perhaps all-embracing species, because the former are an illustration of partial, the latter of complete coming-into-being.

Because of the impression which may be received from this reliance on the part of Gersonides upon the Maimonidean distinction between partial coming-into-being and complete coming-into-being, at this point it must be pointed out that with reference to this reliance which will recur in Gersonides' arguments Crescas is guilty of perhaps the most important omission in his summarization of Gersonides. In fact, Gersonides accepts this distinction only with very definite

and very perspicacious modifications, though they are nowhere mentioned by Crescas! In connection with his strictures on the Aristotelian arguments for the eternity of the world, and after having refuted some of them by other means, Gersonides also employs this distinction. ((122) Cf. ch. 4, p. 304f.) Then, however, he adds the following very significant paragraph: ((123) *ib.*, p. 306) "Also "the rabbi of the Moreh" employs the principle which we have here used (i. e. the distinction between partial coming-into-being and complete coming-into-being) in his refutation of Aristotle's arguments, but he employed it on a much more sweeping <sup>scale</sup> ~~manner~~ than do we. We use it only to the extent that true thought can find a difference between the nature of partial coming-into-being and the nature of complete coming-into-being, whereas "the rabbi of the Moreh" employed it universally, in such a manner as to imply that complete coming-into-being and partial coming-into-being have not one single characteristic in common. This implication is not necessarily altogether correct, however, because it is perfectly possible that partial coming-into-being and complete coming-into-being may have some things in common. Note well the difference between our use of this principle, therefore, and its use by "the rabbi of the Moreh"!...." Thus, to the striking thought which, to the writer's knowledge, Maimonides originated, that complete coming-into-being and partial coming-into-being are incommensurable and that, therefore, no analogies can be drawn from one to the other, Gersonides adds the equally striking modification that this thought holds true only to the extent to which it can be shown that complete coming-



2.

into-being and partial coming-into-being are indeed different in character. Those characteristic which partial coming-into-being possesses not because it is partial but because it is coming-into-being are shared also by complete coming-into-being, and to this extent, therefore, the two do permit of mutual comparison.

This writer has no explanation for the fact that in his précis of Gersonides which is otherwise so thorough and reliable Crescas fails to mention this important criticism of Maimonides. Any number of explanations are possible, of course, but it can be proved rather conclusively that, whatever the reason, it was not a mere oversight on the part of Crescas but must have been intentional and conscious. The fact that this is so can be established in the following manner: after having stated his own positive views on the problem of Creation, Gersonides goes through the rostrum of Aristotelian arguments which might be brought to bear against them. One of the objections, now, that might be raised against the hypothesis of the existence of a primaeval matter would state that no coming-into-being is accidental but must rather be according to law: what law, however, could explain that from the one, undifferentiated primaeval matter the many various forms of matter which exist on earth came forth? ((123) Or Adonai, ib., p.49b; cf. Milchamoth HaShem, ib., ch.18 objection 7, p.370f.) To this objection Gersonides gives one answer which he illustrates by means of two examples: the answer as such states that the objection is based upon an analogy between partial coming-into-being where <sup>indeed</sup> it is impossible to answer the problem of "the one and the many" unless a manifold <sup>is presumed to exist prior to the existence of any other manifold</sup> and complete coming-into-being. ((124) Crescas, loc.cit., p.49c.) This is a re-statement of the

answer as given by Gersonides himself in exactly the same words (125) cf. Milchamoth HaShem , loc.cit., p.375f) with the omission of the pregnant words: "It has already been explained that complete coming-into-being cannot be compared to partial coming-into-being inasmuch as it is partial." These last five words are meaningless unless one knows of Gersonides' previous stricture on this argument as originally propounded by Maimonides; since he omitted the latter he must also omit the former , - and so he does ! This, it seems, establishes it quite clearly that Crescas left out this entire point systematically and with forethought.

After the proof of the createdness of the world which is based upon considerations of the nature of the "revealed part of the earth" and which has been shown to contain some interesting ramifications but which still remains completely within the realm of scholastic thinking, Gersonides proceeds to another approach to the same thesis, an approach which seems to be original with him but which, in any case, comes very close to transcending the limits of his school-traditions. This fifth proof seems to anticipate more modern thinking both because it is not so much concerned with the external realities of the world as the reality of the human mind itself and because it harks back to the incipient feeling for the systematic value of history which has already been discovered in Gersonides in connection with his statement in the Preface to the Milchamoth HaShem that "the course of time suffices for the discovery of the whole truth." (126) <sup>P. 12</sup> It argues in the following manner:

The Thirst for knowledge is innate to human being. Therefore, as long as human being have existed and whenever they have lived, they must have striven after it. If, however, the human race had lived since all eternity, the sciences would since then have to be much more perfected than they actually are. The relatively primitive stage of the sciences, thus, proves the past short-livedness of man! Further, even the particular advance of each specific science can be justified: the first science to be appropriately developed was geometry, the next, philosophy, which reached its zenith with Aristotle, medicine even later with Galen, whereas astronomy (Gersonides' own scientific discipline) still lacks perfection to this day. It will be observed that in this manner the sciences are arranged chronologically according to their chronology of accomplishment and that this sequence coincides with their relative abstractness, the most abstract perfected first and the least abstract last. Gersonides concludes that the sciences which require sensual experience for their perfection are most difficult to be perfected, while those which are abstract and, therefore, depend only upon the exercise of human reason which is equally perfect at all times can be developed most easily. (127) Or Adonai, loc. cit., p.48d; cf. Milchamoth Ha-Shem, loc. cit., ch. 15, p.356.) Here, then, Gersonides finds incidental proof for his belief that "the course of time suffices to bring out the whole truth."

Similarly with regard to the laws by which men live: until God gave the Torah to Israel, all laws were most defective. But it is impossible to believe that the human race should have lived for infinite periods of time under defective laws. It is, after all, only now that "the divine Torah" is spreading among all the nations. (128)

The same conclusion must be arrived at when the nature of language is investigated. Language is not natural to man "as neighing is to the horse or as the braying of the mule" but it is a convention, for if it were not, it would have to follow that mankind is divided into different species in accordance with each language or that language is a product of the climate in which the respective peoples live. These two consequences are impossible, however, since experience proves firstly that men can learn foreign languages regardless of the people to which they originally belong and secondly that under any climate the same language can be spoken. Language must, therefore, be a human convention. Those who make the convention, now, i.e. human beings, must exist, before the convention. "It is clear that the human race requires language in order that its species and its individuals may live as long as possible, humanity being naturally social, because without it the many kinds of work could not be done. Thus the men of any given country require language so that they may be able to ask from one another what they need for the perpetuation of the body and so that they may attain to human perfection insofar as that is possible." As a consequence it is <sup>im-</sup>possible that the human race could have existed indefinitely without languages. Therefore, it must have had a very definite beginning in time. Nor could it be argued that perhaps men spoke different languages before the ones with which they are now current. The reason which Gersonides cites for the impossibility of believing in such an alternative again testifies to his consciousness of the historicity and continuity of human culture: "This is impossible because of the mortal peril to which

such a nation would otherwise be subject, for in each generation wise men make compositions and write books in the sciences and in law by which to perfect the defective creatures and to lead them to success; men will, therefore, never consent to changing their language, "because by doing so they would deprive their posterity of the benefits which the books written in the original language would bring them." (129) Or Adonai, ib.; Gersonides, ib., pp.356-358; Gruell, "Die Lehre vom Kosmos bei Maimuni und Gersonides", p.36, says with some justification: "Von besonderer Bedeutung ist der Beweis, den Gersonides aus der Betrachtung des Wesens der Sprache gewinnt, und von welchem wir nicht begreifen können, dass ihn Joel unerwähnt lässt.")

, Thus Gersonides has proven on the basis of the nature of the heavenly bodies, of time, motion, the dry part of the earth, and the sciences and language that the world must be created, i.e. have a beginning in time. The problem now arises as to how it was created, whether ex nihilo or from a primaevial matter as was the belief of Plato. That it cannot be a creation from a Platonic primaevial matter, however, is clear, since there simply is no matter without form, and formed matter would constitute an existing world before the world existed. (130) Or Adonai, ib.) Since Plato stipulated further that this primaevial matter was in motion, the motion would have to be either straight or circular. But the conditions for straight or circular motions, i.e. the elements and the heavenly bodies, are not given by hypothesis. (131) Gersonides, loc.cit., ch.17, p.362.) Also it is impossible to assume that the elements did, after all, exist, because in that case they would have had to exist prior to Creation without

erving their function of constituting the existing things on earth ( 565 ). The same argument holds for the heavenly bodies. Thus Creation from primaeval matter is inconceivable.

( (132) ib., p.363f. )

But also creatio ex nihilo is impossible, the arguments against it being taken from the bag of Aristotelian thoughts: 1. The Supreme Form, i.e. God, could create forms; but how can a form be thought to produce something so unlike itself as matter ? ( (133) Cf. Arist., p.29; Crescas, ib.; Gersonides, loc. cit. p.364 ) 2. If the world has been created from nothing, prior to its existence there would have had to be a vacuum; but the existence of a vacuum is impossible according to Aristotelian physics ( (134) ib. ) 3. But even granting that there could have existed a vacuum, it must be noted that all parts of the vacuum are alike and therefore equally recipient of Creation. Thus, when God created the universe, He would have had to create it infinite. ( (135) ib. Gersonides, p.365 ) 4. Before the world was created, it was either necessary, in which case it could never have failed to exist, or impossible, in which case it would not exist even now, or finally possible. Potentiality, however, requires a bearer. Therefore again the world could not have been created from nothing. ( (136) Crescas, p.49a; Gersonides, ib. ) 5. Two things that stand in relation to one another cannot be found apart. God and the world are related; therefore, the world cannot have been created from nothing. ( (137) ib. )

At this point, Gersonides intersperses an important theologico-philosophical remark. It will be remembered ( (138) ) (cf. Introd., p.2b ) that it seemed to be only the necessity for preserving the possibility of miracles which induced Maimonides and Gersonides to

erect the doctrine of Creation and, further, that for this possibility only the functioning and intervening divine will had to be shown as manifesting itself in Creation, not necessarily a Creation in time. Therefore, Gersonides reminds the student, as long as the divine will has been shown to be the agent of the coming-to-be of the world, no religious difficulty arises. Creatio ex nihilo is not necessary for this demonstration, however. Maimonides, after all, rejected the Platonic theory of Creation only because he feared the refutation by Aristotle, <sup>but if another</sup> ~~but if another~~ form of creation could be proved to be true, then the Bible would have to be re-interpreted accordingly. From the foregoing, now, Gersonides adds, "it is clear that if the Torah taught Creation from nothing, it would not be right. The Torah in fact does teach Creation, but not Creation from nothing. Rather, by my life, from the words of the Bible it can be seen that it teaches Creation from something, excepts as regards the intelligible world. To the latter refers the sentence, for example, "Let there be light," (I.e. this is the form of light.)" (139) Gersonides, ib., p. 366; cf. Philo of Alexandria, "De Opificio Mundi", 7, 29; 44, 129f.; cf. Wolfson, "Philo", I, p.306) Without further dwelling on the religious, doctrinal aspect of the subject at hand, to which he will return at the end of the entire discussion (140) cf. p. <sup>56 ff</sup> ~~29~~) Gersonides then considers it as established that the world was neither created from nothing nor from primaeval matter. "Now that it is explained that the world can neither have been created from ~~nothing~~ <sup>nor from something</sup>, it must follow that it was created in some sense <sup>from</sup> nothing <sup>nothing</sup> and in another sense from something. It was created from something inasmuch as at its origin lies a matter, and it was created from nothing inasmuch as it was created from a matter

which is absolutely bare of all form. In this way all objections are prevented, because the objections against creation from a primaeva matter were based on the consideration that it was in motion; but now that it is bare of all form, it is also not in motion. And the objections against creation from nothing in turn were based upon the thought that there was no brearer of the possibility of the world, but now that there is a brearer, also these objections must pass away. Therefore it is decided that the world was created from a matter bare of all forms and inchoate."((141) Crescas , 1b))

"It was because of this circumstance, Gersonides adds, that some of the ancients believed in two gods."((142) Gersonides, p.367f. )

In this way Gersonides has established this thesis with which Crescase prefaced his entire treatment of his predecessor.((143) cf.p.1b.) The last obligation to which he is now subject is to relieve all doubts which might arise concerning his doctrine, both from internal reasons and on the basis of the Aristotelian school traditions. First he deals with the former:

1. When the world was created, either nothing was left over from the primaeva matter or something was left over. If something was left over, then it existed for no good reason ( 85625) - which is impossible. If nothing was left over , then the primaeva matter must have been spherical in order to coincide with the later form of the world, or God must taken its content and distributed it so that it would fit the later spherical form. It cannot have been spherical by itself, however, since <sup>by</sup> ~~the~~ hypothesis it possessed no form. Nor can it have been spherical by accident , since the form and size of all parts of the world are obviously intentionally calculated so as to make possible the various species of life

which exist on earth. Finally, it is also impossible, it might be thought, that God could have taken the "substance" of the *primaeva* matter and distributed it evenly into the spherical form which He imposed upon His Creation, since, were that so, it would again be a cause of tremendous amazement that its substance should have so exactly coincided with the size of the world that there was nothing left over of it afterwards. (144) Crescas, *ib.*; Gersonides, *loc. cit.* ch. 18, p. 368f.) Gersonides' answer to this possible objection is that there may, <sup>indeed</sup> ~~indeed~~, have been something left over of the *primaeva* matter after the world was created, but that this contingency does not cause any difficulties, since only of existents which are the product of a will and an intelligence it is impossible to believe that they should exist for no good reason, but of something that merely existed, uncreated, unwilled and uncalculated, it is perfectly possible to believe it. (145) Crescas, *ib.*, p. 49b; Gersonides, *loc. cit.*, p. 372.)

2. If, before the Creation of the world, there were two eternal existents, God and *primaeva* matter, the blasphemous consequence must be drawn to which Gersonides had already referred (146) *cf. p. 39*) that there are two gods. (147) Crescas, p. 49b; Gersonides, p. 370.) Gersonides replies that God is not God because He is eternal but because upon Him all reality is contingent and because He is perfect goodness, that is to say perfect order. *Primaeva* matter, however, is no reality at all, and it certainly is neither orderly nor good. (148) Crescas, *ib.*) The following conclusion which Gersonides deduces from his reply in typical neo-Platonic fashion was probably left out in Crescas' summary because Crescas must have been aware of its

anti-normative Jewish character: "All existents derive their goodness from God, and their evil they receive from this material origin which is natural and <sup>in</sup> its essence complete lack." And then, apparently in order further to sanction this religiously dubious position, he adds: "To this our teachers, may their memory be for a blessing, agreed, namely that the origin of the good is different from the origin of the bad, when they said: "Nothing evil descends from on high." (149) Gersonides, loc.cit., p.373.)

3. This primaevael matter must have been either at rest or in motion. Neither of these is possible, however, without there being the causes of rest or motion, i.e. the elements and form. (150) Crescas, ib; Gersonides, loc.cit., p.370.) This objection is easily refuted on the ground that to be either at rest or in motion is a necessity for all matter as we know it, i.e. when formed, but of the primaevael matter which is inchoate this exclusive alternative cannot be true. (151) Crescas, ib.) Of primaevael matter it can be no more said that it is either at rest or in motion than it can be said of a wall that it is blind because it cannot see (152) Gersonides, loc. cit., p.374.) The analogy of the wall which cannot see is an obvious allusion to Maimonides who used it in his discussion of the negative attributes, cf. Guide of the Perplexed, part I, ch.56; it is therefore the more cause for wonderment that Crescas in his re-statement of this part of Gersonides' argument eliminates this historical allusion by speaking of the "stone which can neither see nor is blind" (ib) rather than of the wall.)

4. In general it is known that no matter exists without form; how much less can it exist without form for an infinite period of time! (153) Crescas, ib.; Gersonides, loc. cit., p.370.) However, there must, as a matter of fact, be some matter without form, since

there are matters with form and also forms without matter as in the intelligibles, and the distribution of various forms of existents would be incomplete without also matter without form. ((154) *ib.*; Gersonides, *loc. cit.*, p.374.)

5. Any object must exist longer in its relatively perfected form than in its defective form; therefore, it is inconceivable that primordial matter should have existed infinitely before it became formed. ((155) *ib.*) Before Creation, Gersonides, replies, there was no time, and it is, therefore, false to say that primordial matter existed infinitely. ((156) Crescas, p.49c; Gersonides, p.374f.)

After having stated and disposed of the objection which we have considered at a previous point ((157) *cf. p. 49f.*), Gersonides finally states a general principle which will invalidate all possible objections against the assumption of a primordial matter. ((158) *loc. cit.*, p.371f.) It is a principle of tremendous significance to the whole structure of Gersonides' philosophy! He begins with the somewhat pedestrian observation that before talking about a subject one must know it so far as that is possible. This, of course, holds true of the *primaeva* matter as of everything else. But "we have no way of reaching any knowledge of the *primaeva* matter, because it is uncreated, ... for that which is uncreated cannot be discovered to have a teleological cause." In modern philosophical terminology: the human reason can only know or understand those things which have something in common with it, reason, will, purpose. Uncreated, unwilled, non-purposive *primordea* matter, however, has none of the qualifications which are necessary before it could become the subject of human knowledge. Therefore, in the last analysis, no real questions can be asked nor can any real answers be given concerning it !

This<sup>is</sup> only the human aspect of a conclusion which Gersonides also draws very consistently with regard to God. Also God, even like man, can only know that which He has created and with which He has, therefore, something in common ((158) cf. *Introd.*, p. 12.) Primaeval matter, however, is not of this type. Even God Himself, therefore, has no real knowledge or control with regard to it. Since this matter, now, is the neo-Platonic "principle of individuation", whereas God's forms are the principle of universals, it follows that God does not and cannot know individuals but only the generals. It is for this reason that Gersonides denies individual Providence! "Da aus Gott nur die ihrem Wesen nach allgemeine Formgesetzlichkeit der Dinge hervorgeht, kann auch Sein Wissen nur die allgemeine Formordnung umfassen; die erst durch die Verbindung der Form mit der Materie bewirkte Mannigfachigkeit des Einzelnen muss ausserhalb des goettlichen Wissens bleiben. Das folgt ebenso notwendig aus der Schoepfungslehre des Gersonides, wie sich aus der von Maimonides ~~gelehrten~~ gelehrten Schoepfung aus dem Nichts ergeben hatte, dass Gott als der Schoepfer des Alls alle seine Einzelheiten kenn." ((159) Guttman, "Die Philosophie des Judentums", p. 226.) And, it might be added, it is also for this reason that, as we have seen ((160) cf. *Introd.* p. 12.) Crescas who believes in Creation from nothing can again believe in individual providence.

Having thus refuted all objections which seem to inhere his theory of Creation, Gersonides can now turn in conclusion to the school arguments of the Aristotelians which might be leveled against him. As Crescas states correctly ((161) cf. p. 49a.) for this purpose he turns back to the summary of Aristotelianism, examines each individual argument and then refutes it. After he will have ac-

complished this, Gersonides' task will be essentially finished.

(162) The following refutations are to be found consecutively in Crescas, loc.cit., p.49c - 50a.)

A. From the nature of time: 1. Of primeval matter it cannot be said that it existed "before" the Creation of the world, since there was no time pertaining to it. (163) Cf. Arist. p.14)

2. It is not necessary that each moment must divide a "former" from a "later" ((164) cf. ib.) in which case the first moment of Creation could contradict the definition, since it would have had no "former", because, although it may be difficult to imagine, yet, "not everything that the human mind cannot grasp not necessarily being a lie", the moment also has another function. This function is to delimit periods within time. This definition would not contradict Gersonides' theory of Creation.

3. Partial coming-into-being does, indeed, require potentiality before actuality ((165) cf. ib.); this, however, is not the case in complete coming-into-being.

B. From the nature of motion; ((166) cf. ib., p. 15) 1.) in complete coming-into-being, unlike partial coming into-being, the motion which educes something out of potentiality into actuality does not have to precede the first motion.

2. Secondly, no change from potentiality into actuality occurs in the Creator when He "starts" creating, because the motion by which He creates is not a motion to which He is subject but one which He initiates. ( 1710 - 112011A )

And also with regard to the matter of Creation no motion which would educe it from potentiality into actuality is necessary, since Creation is not brought about by existing forces but rather by a Will.

C. From the nature of the heavenly bodies ((167) cf. ib., p. 16-ff):

1. Against the argument of the philosophers that the world must be eternal because the heavenly bodies which are the direct cause of the existence of the netherworld have no contrary substances that might cause them to perish and with them the world, Gersonides answers that there is no necessity to apply this logic which is true of partial coming-into-being also to complete coming-into-being, especially since the cause of this coming-into-being is not, as usual, nature but rather a will. ((168) cf. Milchamoth HaShem, loc. cit., ch. 26, p. 402.)
2. The second Aristotelian argument against the createdness of the world took the following course: a substance cannot contain two opposite powers, one toward existence, for example, and the other toward non-existence. But if the world were created, then the bearer of the possibility of its existence from which it was fated to gain its existence would also have had to contain the power toward non-existence during the infinite time preceding its actual coming-into-being. However, Gersonides declares, it is <sup>not</sup> true that in the case of Creation two opposite powers actually did exist side-by-side but rather they existed in the bearer of the possibility one after the other, - which is perfectly possible. The objection which had been raised against this answer stated that this would imply that at one time, at least, one of the two powers was not present, - which would contradict the original assumption. However, there is no reason for saying that a power is non-existent merely because it is non-active; it is simply a possible power, which may or may not be active at any one time, and not a necessary power which would have to function at all times. For this entire refutation Gersonides uses a very effective metaphor: "When Ruben is standing it is possible

that he will sit down, because it is only<sup>im-</sup>possible that he should be sitting even while he is standing, for two opposites cannot reside side-by-side in one bearer, but it is perfectly possible to sit down when the reality of standing which is opposed to that of sitting is denied.... If that be a lie, it is a possible lie." (169) Loc.cit., ch.27, p. 407.) Furthermore, it is added, this entire strain of thoughts is inapplicable to Creation by will and not coming-into-being due to natural laws in the first place. And finally Gersonides adds the interpretation of the Aristotelian text to which already Maimonides had devoted an entire chapter that the great philosopher himself was not so sure that what he taught about the eternity of the world was actually the truth. (170) *ib.*, p.408; cf. *Guide of the Perplexed*, part II, ch.16)

In this way and by applying the same method of treatment to the few minor Aristotelian arguments which have already been discussed, Gersonides closes his philosophic treatment of the problem of Creation. To use Crescas' descriptive words once more, the conclusion at which he arrived is this: "The world as a whole and all its parts, including time, is created, though not from complete nothingness as rather from a pre-existent matter which is bare of all forms and inchoate."

The second Part of Gersonides' lengthy discussion of this problem sets itself the task of showing exegetically the compatibility of this theory with Biblical teaching. It has already been indicated in the course of the philosophical discussion that the main theological point at stake was the possibility of miracles which must be established, also in the opinion of Gersonides, in order to adhere to the doctrines of the Bible; it has further been shown

that this possibility of miracles was not interfered with by Gersonides' theory of Creation. That it led to the denial of individual Providence, on the other hand, did not bother him, presumably because he did not believe that it represented normative Jewish belief or possibly even because "the Bible cannot teach anything that is not true." (171) cf. the following.)

That all the miracles which are recorded in the Bible are "creations of something new from something old" was already indicated. (172) cf. Gersonides, part II, p. 366.) From this the philosopher can now conclude that the miracle of Creation, too, must have been conceived by the Bible as Creation from something. (173) Part II, ch. 1, p. 418f.) But it would not even be necessary to go into detail to prove this, since "the Torah is not a law which forces men to believe things which are not true or to do things in which there is no benefit, as the general mob may think, but it is rather a perfectly perfect law ..... and it is, thus, clear that there is nothing in the Torah which would cause one to believe in a falsehood". (174) 1b. p. 419.) From here Gersonides proceeds to discuss in six chapters the words which are used in the Genesis story of Creation to demonstrate that they vindicate his point of view, so that, for example, the words Tohu Vavohu, this eternal enigma of Biblical interpreters, come to stand for *primaeva* matter. (175) cf. 1b. ch. 4.) Finally he interprets the canonical story of Creation consecutively through the glasses of his own theory. It is not necessary for us to follow him through all the vagaries of his philosophical interpretations of the details of the Biblical tale; we shall note only a number of details which may be particularly striking or which are of special interest.

1.) "God's will created all at one and the same time" and since it is impossible to understand "how the first, the second and the third days were measured as the celestial lights were not created until the fourth day", it is necessary to believe that the division into separate days of the Creation story does not refer to actual chronological sequences but rather to the logical order in which the individual parts of the universe came to be, the basic substances first and the subsidiary ones afterwards. (176) loc.cit., ch. 8, p.428.)

2. All those things which could come to be as a result of natural laws were not created by the direct will of God but only those things which are incapable of being produced by nature but which are the necessary conditions of the former. (177) ib.)

3. The light and the darkness of which it is spoken on the first day refer respectively to the principle of form, which is reality and thus light, and the principle of the material heavenly spheres, which are of a lesser reality and thus darkness. When it is, therefore stated that "There was evening and there was morning, one day", the truth is expressed that these two differing entities "were united so that one law for the lower world could emanate". (178) ib., p.429.) The same interpretation must be applied to the equivalent verse of the second day, where the important truth is brought out in this manner "that the matter of the lower world is united in one cosmological system with the heavenly spheres, for if there were no such unification, it would be necessary to believe that there are two divinities, one which guides the matter of the heavenly spheres, the other the matter of the lower world. It is from this fallacious

view that some believed in the existence of two gods." (179) ib., p. 430.) I.e. the belief in the one world is premised on the belief in the one God.

4. The principle of animation which resides in plants and animals is derived by natural law from the constitution of the elements and, therefore, needed no direct intervention on the part of God. For that reason their creation is expressed in the words: "Let the earth bring forth..." But the rational soul of human beings is, in some way, transcendent to nature and, therefore, needs of divine intervention. With regard to ~~xxxxxxx~~ to it the phrase is therefore employed; "Let us make,..." (190) ib., p. 432.)

5. The following difficulty Gersonides calls "very grave" ((181) ib., p. 435,) and for the reader, too, the principle <sup>of</sup> his solution is of far-reaching significance. The difficulty itself is merely that according to Gersonides' cosmology the creation of the heavenly lights and of the stars should have been told prior to the creation of the elements which are dependent upon them, whereas in truth the sequence is reversed in the Bible. The solution of this puzzle is worth full quoting: "It is the purpose of the perfect Torah to... place words before man which he should stop to consider. This is comparable to a man who walks by the way and is so sure that there is no stumbling-block upon it that he pays no attention; as a result he may on occasion go astray, so that it would have been better if he had stayed where he was originally, rather than go far afield from the place to which he intended to go. But if there is a stumbling-block known to be in the way, he will pay attention to the road and will endeavor to remove the obstruction or circumvent it, so that he

may reach his destination. Similarly with the Torah: if there were nothing in it that would cause the reader to stop in amazement (because it seems to be wrong), he would not stop to think about it, and in this manner he would not receive its benefits." ((181) 1b. p.435.) This explanation of a Biblical difficulty is the Jewish equivalent of the "scandal and stumbling block" of the New Testament which is normatively taken to be the "absoluteness of faith" of Kierkegaard's "thousand miles of waters above which the believer is suspended". But for Gersonides this stumbling block can be "removed"; it is only a seeming absurdity, not a real and enduring scandal to the reason. It is no more than what Buber and Rosenzweig intended to accomplish with their occasionally scandalous translation of the Bible: to make men stop and think, to cause him to let the words of the Bible strike him a fresh and unconventionally rather than as complacent literature. The Bible is truth, but it must always be fresh truth !

C r e s c a s .

. The structure of this study of the concept of Creation in Gersonides and Crescas is rather complicated, for it continues itself to erect an additional story on the many-floored building of their philosophical house; Crescas first established the case of the Aristotelians, he then summarizes the position of Maimonides who himself had established and consequently refuted the case of the Aristotelians; in the next step he reports what the views of Gersonides were on this matter who himself had restated and analyzed the views of Maimonides and the Aristotelians; but now that all this has been done, Crescas can finally proceed in his own name to consider once again the arguments of the Aristotelians, of Maimonides and Gersonides and then to formulate what he himself believes. This is also exactly the method he employs: "We shall now explain what is true and what is untrue, as far as we are capable of doing that...." (182) Or Adonai, Part 3, ch.4, p.50a.) His first subject of consideration will, therefore, be Maimonides; from him he will transfer his attention to Gersonides, eventually to state his personal philosophic views in this matter.

Of Maimonides' refutation of the Aristotelian arguments in favor of the eternity of the world based upon considerations of the nature of the constituents of the world (183) cf. *Maim. p. 14 f.* Crescas says in full approval: It is correct and reveals the truth sufficiently to confound the Aristotelian arguments, <sup>except</sup> ~~except~~ that it is itself somewhat weak." (184) loc.cit.) He takes strong objection, however, to Maimonides' refutation of the same Aristotelian proofs based upon the nature of the divine agent.

It will be remembered ((184) cf. loc. cit., p. 23) that Maimonides endeavored to demonstrate that God could have created the world at one time and not at another without thereby falling subject to change. This demonstration was necessary in order to make it possible that God could be conceived as having created the world not eternally but at one given point, whatever that point may be. Crescas now sets out to refute this Maimonidean position. The net-result of his refutation will be that it is philosophically not credible that God created the world at one point but rather that it must be believed that He created the universe in eternity and at all times. This conclusion will in fact constitute the over-all philosophical view which Crescas will maintain ((185) cf. p. 31) though with some half-hearted religious qualifications. How does he answer this point of Maimonides however?

"The statement that the change from potentiality to actuality in an incorporeal entity does not represent a real change must be argued against and must arouse strong objections." ((186) ib.) Such a change from the potentiality of being-a-Creator to its actuality can have been caused either by an external factor or internally; it cannot, however, have been an external factor to God, since prior to the Creation of the world there was no existent outside of God. Therefore, it must have been caused by an internal change in God. Internal or not, change is change. Therefore, Crescas implicitly concludes at this early point in his discussion, on the assumption of an instantaneous Creation a change would have had to take place in God, - which is clearly an absurd and untenable proposition.

((187) ib. p. 50ab.)

Secondly, ((188) ib., p. 50b) the entire idea that an incor-

poreal substance could have been in the state of potentiality at any time "is self-contradictory", because in such an entity which is not possessed of matter the very principle of potentiality is missing, and it must, therefore, be believed to be completely actual at all time.

Finally, an agent who is always actual and who never lacks that which could be the recipient of his activity must be believed to act at all times, because the only circumstance which might prevent his actuality from functioning would be the absence of a recipient. But by the very assumption of an eternally existing primaeval matter which is destined to be the recipient of his form-giving activity it is stated that the agent never did lack a recipient. Therefore, again, it is senseless to say that God created the world at one time. ((188) ib.)

The question as to why God should have created the world at one time rather than at another assumes that when He created it He conceived of a definite purpose for which He would create it. Maimonides answered ((189) cf. Guide of the Perplexed, part III, ch. 13) that no such purpose could be stipulated for God, but rather that it was merely His arbitrary will which determined to cause it to come into being. This, Crescas adds ((190) ib.) is essentially correct, inasmuch as it merely states that no external consideration could have been the cause of God's Creation of the world, no externality existing outside of God before Creation, and that Creation must have been the result of God's own essence. He would only add that more is known of God's nature than Maimonides believed, since positive attributes can be ascribed to him ((191) cf. Or Adonai part I), and that the essential divine nature from which Creation

arose was God's goodness and grace. (192) cf. Or Adonai, part III, Introd., p. 45b; cf. Introd. p. 11.) Whether it be His will or His goodness and grace, however, in neither case is there any reason why it should be believed that He did not act in conformity with His innermost nature at all times. Therefore again, the world must have been created and must continue to be created in eternity ((193) ib.)

The second type of objection which Crescas <sup>raises</sup> ~~raises~~ against Maimonides was forecast in the phrase quoted in the foregoing that though his arguments are correct they are also "somewhat weak". ((194) cf. p. 61) They are weak, in the opinion of Crescas, because "they do not prove that there was Creation after complete nothingness rather than Creation from a pre-existent matter, as was the opinion of Plato and as was taught by some (sic) statements of Gersonides." ((195) loc. cit.) In the following criticism of Maimonides Crescas thus anticipates what he will object against Gersonides, namely that though Creation may have been in eternity, it must have been Creation ex nihilo at any rate. In this formulation we have, therefore, already an insight into what will turn out to be the final position on this matter on the part of Crescas. But how is it that Maimonides' arguments in favor of the createdness of the world do not actually prove what they set out to prove ?

Before we begin to consider this thought of Crescas, it should be remembered that perhaps Maimonides was not actually so intent upon proving creatio ex nihilo. He was, after all, merely interested in preserving the possibility of miracles which he believed to <sup>be able to</sup> retain only through a belief in the functioning of God's will in the coming-into being of the world. He furthermore thought that this criterion was perfectly satisfied also in Plato's view on Creation which he rejected only because he saw no way of defending

it against the onslaught of Aristotle's criticisms. Had he, however, been capable of resisting the Aristotelian criticism, he stated that "it would have been possible to interpret the Bible in the sense of Plato", (196) cf. Guide of the Perplexed, ch.25.) Thus the same reason which induced Crescas to stipulate eternal Creation induced Maimonides to stipulate instantaneous Creation, to wit the necessity for demonstrating the will of God as active in the coming-into-being of the world so that the possibility of miracles should not be impaired. (197) cf. Isidore Epstein, "Das Problem des Goettlichen Willens . . . .", p.336.) And even Gersonides himself believed that his theory of the hyle did not impair this theological necessity. That God's will was active in the coming-into-being of the world and that miracles are, therefore, in principle possible, is the one position on which all these three greatest Jewish philosophers of the scholastic period agreed without exception. Each differed with the others only insofar as he believed that these two desiderata were fulfilled by a different theory of Creation.- At any rate, Crescas will later on show why he believes that the assumption of a pre-existent matter is incompatible with these desiderata. Therefore, it is necessary for him to guard against the openings in this direction which he perceives in Maimonides' arguments in favor of the eternity of the world.

Maimonides has argued (198) cf. Maim. .p.26) that the existence of different forms of matter all derive from the one form of the matter of the heavenly bodies can be explained only on the basis of the activity of the will of God. Crescas replies that this actually does not prove anything, for it could be argued "by our opponents" (199) loc.cit., p.50c. It must be noted again that the

pagination of the Johannesburg edition is very confusing at this point: also what ought to be page 51 is called page 50; for our purpose we shall, therefore, refer to the second page 50 in this edition as page 51) that this divergence of forms of matter is caused by the purposiveness of the heavenly bodies which exist for the sake of the existence of things in the lower world." In that case the heavenly bodies would represent a pre-existent matter and no agent beyond them would need to be believed to exist.

also Maimonides' second argument in favor of the Creation of the world at one point ((200) cf. Maim. p. 28) does not prove its thesis. It may be true that it could not be explained how out of the simple one the manifold of the world could have come forth except by the assumption of a will. But it is equally inexplicable how out of the simple and unitary will of God the manifold of the world could have been produced. This difficulty can be overcome only by means of the argument for the essential unity of the world insofar as it is good to which reference has already been made. ((201) cf. Introd., p. 12.) But in that case an instantaneous Creation of the world again is not shown to be necessary. ((202) ib., p. 50b.) How much more (is this case with regard to the problem of time <sup>which</sup> has been explained "in the first part of this book ((203) cf. Proposition XI, Wolfson, "Crescas' Critique....", p. 291) not to have been created by an agent."

Thus in conclusion, the full bearing of Crescas' criticism of Maimonides states that the world may, after all, be the result of an eternal Creation.

If Crescas' thesis is that the world was created out of nothing in eternity and if he had to defend this thesis against Maimonides

with respect to the eternity of Creation, then his defense against Gersonides must be that it was created out of nothing. This is obviously a more basic disagreement than the one which existed between him and Maimonides. Crescas thus minces no words when he comes to speak of this strain in Gersonides' thinking: "In none of Gersonides' arguments, as he presents them, in not one single of them, is the truth concerning this matter offered. But perhaps, or rather not perhaps (1), it can be shown that everything that he says regarding the problem of Creation is a lie." ((204) loc. cit. p. 50c.) Crescas will show it by dividing Gersonides' arguments into two parts, even as Maimonides had classified the arguments of the Aristotelians in two categories, those which are based upon his conception of coming-into being and those which are derived from his view on infinity.

A. Arguments for primeaval matter from Gersonides' conception of coming-into-being: It is true that Crescas must defend himself <sup>in</sup> the first place against Gersonides' assumption of a pre-existent matter. Nonetheless, also Gersonides, as Maimonides, proclaimed that the world was created at one time, though from the primeaval hyle. It is incumbent upon Crescas in the second place, therefore, to refute also Gersonides' arguments in favor of the instantaneous Creation of the world. The criteria of instantaneous Creation which Gersonides established and which he believed to see fulfilled in the reality of the world ((205) cf. Gers. p. 32f.) are also perfectly compatible with eternal Creation in the view of Crescas, therefore. Also an eternal creature can have a purpose if it is eternally created by a rational cause; it may also have parts which are not absolutely

necessary to its existence, as they may be the products of the overflowing grace and goodness of the eternal Creator. These facts do not seem to have been recognized "by the eyes of the great sage, despite the strength of his sight, because he thought that he had to prove the instantaneous Creation of the world in order to avoid the absurdities which follow from the assumption of an (atomistic) theory of eternal emanation." (206) cf. Gerson., p. 35, loc. cit. p. 50d )

The consequence which would follow that all things came to be out of nothing and will have to perish again into nothing is not embarrassing at all, for this is, at least in the first part of the formulation, exactly the view which Crescas proposes. And as to the perishing of the world into nothing, Crescas answers that since the giver of forms is eternal and since his giving of forms must, therefore, <sup>be</sup> eternal, there is no need to assume that the world will again perish into nothing, as the recipients of this eternal activity of form-giving, the existents, will continuously be perpetuated by this activity. (207) ib.) Equally also all the other "absurd" consequences which Gersonides fears in connection with a theory of <sup>are not at all necessary, since it is perfectly possible to believe</sup> eternal emanation, that the eternal Creator who creates not in atomistic spurts, as it were, so that each atom of time and of motion would be unctiguous with the previous and the next but who, <sup>contra</sup>wise, creates continuously will also grant reality to all existents continuously and not in accordance with the "occasionalist" theories of the Kalam. In other words, Crescas maintains the perfectly logically thesis that eternal emanation is not necessarily synonymous with Kalam atomism. (208) ib. p. 50d-51a.)

B. The arguments in favor of instantaneous Creation based upon Gersonides' views on infinity: (209) for the following, comp.

Wolfson, "Crescas' Critique...Introd., chapt. on "Infinity, Space and Time.") 1. The statement that every quantity must be limited is simply axiomatically not accepted by one who says that time, for example, is unlimited, because he obviously "employs the word "Quantity" in such a sense as not to make it necessary to conclude from its definition ~~that~~ that it must have had a beginning." (1b).

2. The conclusion which Gersonides draws from the hypothesis that time should be eternal, to wit that in that case ~~three~~ spheres which are experienced to move more quickly than others must be said to move equally fast, since there can be no distinction between different infinities, is simply inaccurate, because the words "fast" and "slow", "large" and "small" by definition do not apply to infinity which is inaccessible to determination by them. Therefore, to be amazed because an infinity cannot be qualified by these terms is like being amazed at the fact that the proverbial wall cannot see.

Having thus proved to his satisfaction that Gersonides' demand for an instantaneous Creation is both religiously unnecessary and philosophically untenable, Crescas can now proceed to destroy the hypothesis of the primaeval matter, ((210) 1b., p. 51d) "that Creation as Gersonides stipulated it is pure fantasy and invention": if, as Gersonides claims, pre-existent matter existed in infinity along side of God in the past, then, like every infinitely existing object which never passed from existence nor failed to exist, its existence must have been necessary in itself or it must have been necessary because of its cause. It cannot, however, have been ne-

cessary because of its cause, because the only existent before the Creation of the world outside of the pre-existent matter itself was God, and God could not have been the cause of its existence, since it cannot be believed that the Infinitely Perfect should be the cause of the Infinitely Chaotic and Unformed. On the other hand, it could also not be necessary because of itself, because in that case it would be its own first cause and the world would, therefore, consist of two first causes, because if it were its own necessary cause it would be in no sense subservient or even cognate to the divine first cause and, therefore, inaccessible to His creative activity and, because primeval matter, being defined as chaotic and not capable of preserving itself in any form, it would lose its necessary character even if it had ever possessed it. Secondly, the assumption of a pre-existent matter is recognized by Crescas (211) ib., p.51d-52a) to imply a denial of God's knowledge of particular (212) cf. Gers. p. 24) which cannot be religiously admitted.

Crescas finally simply eliminates the necessity for an assumption of the existence of a pre-existent matter by falling back upon Maimonides distinction between partial coming-into-being and complete coming-into-being, and stating that the necessity of believing in the pre-existent matter is only the result of Gersonides' neglect of this distinction. At this crucial point, Crescas' omission of the consideration which Gersonides did pay to the Maimonidean distinction referred to and the qualification which he stipulated concerning it, an omission which has already been noted (213) cf. Gers. p. 41) finds its proper systematic

place and, perhaps, its real explanation : if Crescas had accepted or perhaps even only acknowledged Gersonides qualification, he might not have been able to eliminate the necessity for the belief in a ~~in a~~ <sup>in</sup> primaeval matter which is so necessary in his view in order to insure the possibility of miracles. (214) loc.cit. p.52a)

Crescas can now, uninhibited by any further philosophical objections from either the Aristotelians or Gersonides, proceed to define what he means by creatio ex nihilo: it means merely that all experienced reality is of a contingent nature and that, in accordance with Maimonides' fourth neo-Platonic proof of the existence of God (215] cf. Guide of the Perplexed, Part II ch.2) all this contingent reality could not exist without being founded upon the necessary reality of God. (216) cf. Guttman op.cit.p.222.) This definition of the nature of God as the necessary reality upon whose foundation the contingent world is established to the exclusion of the other definitions, such as the First Cause and the Unmoved Mover, which result from the Aristotelian maxim of the impossibility of an infinite regress, has become encumbent upon the philosopher, because he had (217) cf. Pt. I) maintained the possibility of the existence of an infinite in Space and time, and ~~she~~ could therefore, no longer depend ~~upon~~ upon the other Aristotelian definition. At the same time, the dependence of the contingent upon the necessary, even in eternity, constitutes Crescas' definition of the term creatio ex nihilo. This Creation thus embraces contingent matter as well and, therefore excludes the possibility of the primaeval matter. (218) *ibid.*, p.52a).

The question, now, as to whether this creation had a temporal beginning or whether it is the necessary and eternal corollary of the existence of God as His nature is defined (219) *ibid.* p. 52a -52b; This is undoubtedly the meaning of the problem which Crescas next raises, though the text is partly beyond repair, so that Joel, op.cit.p.67 says: "... sind mir nicht deutlich, namentlich nicht die Abreviatur (219) d.v.

Wahrscheinlich ist hier eine Textkorruptel, die ich indess zu emendieren nicht im Stande bin. Der Sinn des Ganzen aber ist durch aus klar....") resolves itself to the following alternatives: the latter alternative is premised on the infinite activity of God and on the at all-times unchanging relationship which must exist between the Creator and the created, whereas the former stipulates the limited activity of God and a beginning to the relationship between the Creator and the created. It is clear that the latter alternative is thus to be preferred in its own terms, and that nonetheless, despite the necessary character of the relationship between God and the world which is a relationship of Creation, as this term is defined by Crescas, the will of God is involved for two reasons:

1. The activity of will is defined as the conception of a desideratum and its execution. This correctly defines the activity of God in creating the world in that he conceived of the law of existence and then, in accordance with it, caused existents to come to being ((219) <sup>ibid.</sup> p. 62b.)

2. As we have already discovered at the very outset of this investigation, ((220) *Introd.*, p. 12) only by the assumption of a will active in the process of creation can the derivations of the manifold from the simple one be explained ((221) *ibid.* p. 52c.).

"And now, so that the truth may testify unto itself, and may agree with itself in every respect" ((222) cf. Aristotle, *Analytica priora*, I, 32, 47a; cf. Wolfson, *op. cit.* p. 456, p. 198,) supporting evidence for the theory of the necessary creation of the world out of God's will is to be derived from the miracles and signs of the Prophets that have become known." ((223) *ibid.*) All

these miracles were effected upon particular matters and thus presupposed a will which controls the principle of individuation.

(224) Here Crescas, in effect, argues cogently the opposite view of Gersonides'; as has been seen, (cf. Gers. p. 394) from Gersonides assumption of the eternal pre-existence of unformed matter followed consistently the necessity for negating God's knowledge of individuals which depend upon the principle of matter; for Crescas, however, who maintained the createdness of matter as well as form which are thus both derivatives of God and, therefore, subject to his knowledge and control, God can and must know the individuals.)

It can be neither man with his insufficient separation from matter who could be the cause of these miracles, since otherwise it would have to be conceded that the form of the object upon which the miracle is wrought would be subject to a material agent, whereas the opposite holds true. Neither can it be the heavenly bodies, since they are the principle of the orderliness of the world and not of the special exception from its order. Gersonides notwithstanding, it could also not be the Active Intellect, since, by definition, the Active Intellect has reference only to the universals and not to the individuals which alone are the objects of miraculous happenings. ((225) *ibid.*, p. 52d.) Therefore only God can be the direct cause of miracles and must therefore be endowed with an active will which worked upon individual matters.

It now remains for Crescas to refute the objections that might be leveled against his theory. Only one of them is of interest both as regards the objections themselves and the replies which

Crescas makes, as most are mere repetitions of the thoughts which we have already encountered among the Aristotelians and Gersonides.

If the world was indeed created out of nothing though in infinity, then prior to its Creation there must have been a vacuum which was destined to become later the place of the world. ((226) Cf. Gersonides, p. 364.) Among others, Crescas in answer refers to the first part of his philosophical treatise where the possibility of a vacuum, despite all of Aristotelian and scholastic physics, is maintained as a result of his premises concerning infinity and space. ((227) loc. cit., p. 52d f; cf. Wolfson, op. cit., chapter on "Infinity, Space, Time" in Intro.)

Having thus gone through the whole elaborate scholastic ritual of summarizing and refuting his predecessors, of presenting his own position and then refuting all possible objections to them, Crescas can now finally state his final answer and append the ever necessary religious apostrophe: "Thus we believe in the necessary existence of the world as created by God through His goodness. - And yet the whole truth concerning this matter is given by tradition to the effect that God created and brought forth the world at one given moment" ((228) ib. p. 53a.) Having in this manner, with the last clause, made his ceremonial bow to religious orthodoxy of his time, Crescas once more proceeds to repeat the philosophical reason which induces him to disbelieve in an instantaneous Creation and to demonstrate that also this theory does not necessarily conflict with religious views; whatever the position may be, whether in infinity or at a given point, the only important consideration is that the world must

have been created ex nihilo, so that even the view which believes that many worlds preceded the existence of the present one, as long as they too came forth out of nothing, has legitimate religious standing. Even Crescas' great teacher, Rabbenu Nissim, and the philosopher of the Kusari ((229) cf. part I, ch. 67<sup>1</sup> end) confirmed the admissibility of this philosophical view. ((230) ib. p. 53c.)

Bibliography: Gersonides and Crescas

---

1. Levi Ben Gerson, "Milchamoth HaShem", Leipzig 1866
2. Chasdai Crescas, "Or Adonai", Johannesburg 1861
3. Chasdai Crescas, "Or Adonai", Vienna 1860
4. Moses Ben Maimon, "Moreh Nevuchim", Warsaw 1872
5. Yehudah HaLevy, "HaKusari", Vilna 1904
6. Benzion Kellermann, "Die Kämpfe Gottes", translated and annotated from the revised manuscript, 2 vols. Berlin 1914
7. "The Basic Works of Aristotle", edited and with an introduction by Richard McKeon, N.Y. 1941
8. Harry A. Wolfson, "Crescas' Critique of Aristotle", Cambridge 1929
9. Isidore Epstein, "Das Problem der göttlichen Willens in der Schöpfung nach Maimonides, Crescas und Averroides", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Jahrgang 75, pp. 335-347
10. Benjamin Gruell, "Die Lehre vom Kosmos bei Maimuni und Gersonides" Lemberg 1901
11. Manuel Joel, "Lewi Ben Gerson, als Religionsphilosoph", Breslau 1862
12. Manuel Joel, "Don Chasdai Crescas' Religionsphilosophische Lehren in ihrem geschichtlichen Einfluss", Breslau 1866
13. Isidore Weil, "Philosophie Religieuse de Lévi-ben-Gerson", Paris 1868
14. Nina Adlerblum, "The Philosophy of Gersonides", New York 197
15. Harry A. Wolfson, "Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Cambridge 1947, 2 vols.
16. Julius Rudolph Weinberg, "Nicolaus of Autrecourt, A Study in 14th Century Thought, Princeton 1948
17. Leo Strauss, "Philosophie und Gesetz, Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimuni und Seiner Vorgänger", Berlin 1935
18. Julius Guttman, "Die Philosophie des Judentums", Munich 1933

19. Isaac Husik, "A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy",  
New York 1930.
20. Salomon Munk, "Mélange de Philosophie Juive et Arabe",  
Paris 1857
21. Jacob Klatzkin "Thesaurus Philosophicus Linguae Hebraicae",  
4 vols. Berlin 1930
22. Abraham Heschel, "A Concise Dictionary of Hebrew Philosophical  
Terms", mimeographed, Cincinnati 1941

.....