SOURCES, METHOD, OPPOSITION AND INFLUENCE

THE power of generalization which is so remarkably displayed by Maimonides in all his writings, whether philosophic or Talmudic, is nowhere employed by him to greater advantage than in his introduction to the second part of the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Within the limited range of twenty-five propositions he contrived to summarize in compact and pithy form the main doctrines of Aristotle, which, supplemented by some from Avicenna, form the premises upon which are built his proofs for the existence, unity and incorporeality of God. Of these propositions Maimonides says that "some may be verified by means of a little reflection," while "others require many arguments and propositions, all of which, however, have been established by conclusive proofs in the *Physics* and its commentaries and partly in the *Metaphysics* and its commentaries."¹ But Maimonides himself did not consider it as part of his task to reproduce those proofs, for, as he again and again declares, "in this work it is not my intention to copy the books of the philosophers."² To the students of the *Guide*, however, the explanation and proofs of these propositions offered a wide field of research, and among the numerous commentaries which in the course of time have clustered around the *Guide* quite a few dealt exclusively with the propositions. Four commentaries of this latter kind were written during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, by Altabrizi, Hillel of Verona,

¹ *Moreh Nebukim* II, Introduction, Prop. XXV: מהם מה שהוא מבורר במעט: התבוננות ... ומהם מה שיצטרך למפותים והקדמות רבות, אלא שכבר התבארו כולם במופת אין ספק בו, קצתם בספר השמע ופירושי וקצתם בספר מה שאחר הטבע ופירושי

שאין כונת המאמר הזה להעתיק ספרי הפיל סופים בו. ² Ibid.

Zeraḥia Gracian, and Jedaiah Bedersi.³ It is to this class of literature that Crescas' treatment of the twenty-five propositions in his *Or Adonai*, completed in the early years of the fifteenth century, should be assigned.

There is, however, a difference between Crescas and his predecessors. None of his predecessors has acted upon Maimonides' suggestion of going directly to the works of Aristotle and his commentators for the proofs of the propositions. What the nature of Bedersi's commentary was there is no way of determining, as the work is no longer extant. Zeraḥiah Gracian admits that for a complete explanation of the propositions one would have to resort to the sources out of which they sprang, but evidently awed by the enormity of the labor that such a task would involve he decided to restrict himself to brief explanatory notes in which, he says, he would especially endeavor to explain the order and sequence of the propositions.⁴ Hillel of Verona, too, realized the need of a complete and comprehensive commentary upon the propositions and expressed the hope that some day either he himself or some one else would undertake to write it, but for the present, he said, he would give only a brief discussion of certain general topics.⁵ Nor does the commentary of Altabrizi do more justice to the subject. Though

³ Friedländer, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Vol. III, Preface, pp. xix-xxiii; Steinschneider, "Die hebräischen Commentare zum 'Führer' des Maimonides" in *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage A. Berliner's*, pp. 345-363.

⁴ MS. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cod. Heb. 985: אמר המפרש, אחי בן אוני, בעלות על רעיוני עיני אלו ההקדמות, כי הן צריכות בידיעות מופתיות אל חכמות רבות נשבות ורמות, היו בעיני כל מעיין בהם והאנצלמות, לפי שצריך לכל משכיל לדעת המקומות, אשר לקחו מהם, ובאזיה ספר מן החכמות הן רשומות ... על כן אני נותני לבאר אלו ההקדמות, לא באריכות אך בקצרה ... ואולי אחרש בהם דבר להודיע להם זו קדמה לחברתה, אחת מן ההקדמות לזולתה אחריה.

⁵ Introduction to Hillel of Verona's commentary on the Twenty-five Propositions: ודע, אחי, כי צריך לך ולכל מבין בביאור אלו ההקדמות שני עניינים. האחד, פירוש כל ההקדמה בעצמה, ר"ל פירוש נוסחת ההקדמה, והשני, כונת כל הקדמה, ר"ל על איזה תכלית כיוון בה הרב ז"ל והעיון המבוקש הנוכח ממנה. וחלק הביאור אפשר לך בקצרה ... ולכן שמעתי בקולך וכחבתי אליך בפירושם מה שיכלתי ובקצרה ... ואולי לימים עוד אושר אליך, או אני או חכם אחר גדול ממני, שיעמידך על תכלית אמתתם ותגל נפשך מאד.

his discussions of the propositions are full and elaborate, they reflect only faintly the original works of Aristotle; his material is drawn mainly from the works of Arabic authors. In the first proposition, for instance, Altabrizi cites none of the arguments given by Aristotle; the three arguments he advances are taken from later sources. The statement made by Narboni in connection with the propositions may be quoted here as expressing the general attitude of all those who undertook to comment upon them. "My object has been to discuss the meaning of the Master's propositions and not to give you the proofs by which they may be demonstrated. Their proofs are to be found in the works from which the propositions are taken, and were I to reproduce them the result of my effort would be a book instead of a commentary."⁶ It was left for Crescas to undertake the task from which his predecessors had steered clear and to compile a commentary on the propositions, or rather a book, as Narboni would call it, along the lines indicated by Maimonides himself.

Crescas, however, did not start out to write a mere commentary. He was primarily a critic of philosophy. His main object was to show that the Aristotelian explanation of the universe as outlined by Maimonides in his propositions was false and that the proofs of the existence of God which they were supposed to establish were groundless. But not wishing to appear as if he were arguing in the absence of his opponent, he felt it was necessary for him to present Aristotle's case before trying to demolish it. He therefore divides his treatment of the propositions into two parts, the proofs and his criticism of the proofs. In the proofs, as he himself avers, he intended to do nothing but to collect the arguments he had found in various sources and to present them in orderly and logical form according to a scheme of his own design. No such statement is made by him

⁶ Narboni on Prop. XXV: ואני אמנם כונתי להביך מאמרי הרב לא לאמתתם במוחלט, ולא ידעו זה פירוש כי אם חבור והמה מאומתים במקומותם, ולא ידעו זה פירוש כי אם חבור.

with regard to his criticism. But we shall see that his criticism is likewise made up of material drawn from other sources, its originality—and there is a considerable amount of originality in it—consisting merely in the use made of this material and in the particular purpose it was made to serve, for Crescas uses his sources as the poet uses his words and the artist his paints. In fact, the history of the criticism of Aristotle is inseparable from the history of the interpretation of his works. His commentators were not mere expositors. They were investigators, constantly looking for new problems, discovering difficulties, raising objections, setting up alternative hypotheses and solutions, testing them; and pitting them against each other. What was therefore meant by them primarily to be an interpretation inevitably became a criticism, albeit a friendly criticism, carried on by indulgent disciples in the spirit of a search for the true understanding of the Master who had to be justified at all costs. It was only necessary for one like Crescas to free himself from the bondage of discipleship in order to convert these special pleadings into hostile criticisms.

Nowhere, however, does Crescas give a complete account of his sources. In his prefatory statement to the first book, to be sure, he speaks of "Aristotle in his works the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*; then his commentators, such as Themistius and Alexander, and the later commentators, such as Alfarabi and Averroes; then the authors after Aristotle, such as Avicenna, Algazali and Abraham ibn Daud."⁷ But this list was not intended by Crescas as a catalogue of his own sources. It is rather a statement of the main authorities who prior to Maimonides had applied philosophical reasoning to the problem of the existence of God. Within the body of the commentary itself Crescas mentions the "Ancients"⁸ (i. e., the pre-Aristotelian philoso-

⁷ See below p. 131.

⁸ הקדמונים Prop. X, Part I; Prop. XV, Part I.

phers), Aristotle,⁹ Alexander,¹⁰ Themistius,¹¹ Avicenna,¹² Algazali,¹³ Avempace,¹⁴ Averroes,¹⁵ Altabrizi,¹⁶ and Narboni.¹⁷ Vague references are also made by him to "authors other than Aristotle,"¹⁸ "commentators of [Aristotle],"¹⁹ "the multitude of philosophisers,"²⁰ "they,"²¹ "one of the later,"²² "one of the commentators [of the *Guide*],"²³ and "followers [of Avicenna and Algazali]."²⁴ He names also several books by their titles: *Physics*,²⁵ *Metaphysics*,²⁶ *De Caelo et Mundo*,²⁷ Averroes' commentary on the *Physics*,²⁸ and the *Conic Sections* [of Apollonius].²⁹ All these names and titles, however, give us neither a complete nor an accurate idea as to the sources actually used by Crescas in the composition of his study of the twenty-five propositions. On the one hand, the extent of Crescas' indebtedness to other authors, named or unnamed by him, is much larger than one

⁹ והנה ההקדמה הוזה חקר עליה ארסטו Prop. I, Part I (p. 134) et passim.

¹⁰ Prop. VII, Part I.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Prop. II, Part II; Prop. III, Part I; Prop. X, Part II.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ אבובכר, i. e., Abu Bekr Mohammed ibn Yahya ibn al-Saig ibn Badja: Prop. I, Part II, (p. 184); Prop. VII, Parts I and II.

¹⁵ Prop. I, Parts I (p. 144) and II (p. 184); Prop. II, Part II; Prop. III, Part I; Prop. VII, Part II; Prop. X, Part II; Prop. XII, Part II.

¹⁶ Prop. I, Parts I (p. 148) and II (p. 188); Prop. III, Part II; Prop. IV; Prop. VII, Part II; Prop. VIII, Part II. Prop. XXIII.

¹⁷ Prop. VIII, Part II; Prop. XXIII.

¹⁸ חולו מהמחברים Prop. I, Part I (p. 176).

¹⁹ ומפרשי ספריו *ibid.*; Prop. X, Part I; המפרשים Prop. VII, Part I.

²⁰ המון המחפלים Prop. V.

²¹ השיבו . . . הקשו Prop. IX, Part I; זכרו Prop. IX, Part II.

²² מהאחרונים Prop. I, Part I (p. 170) and Part II (p. 184).

²³ קצת המפרשים Prop. III, Part II.

²⁴ הנמשכים אחריהם Prop. X, Part II.

²⁵ Prop. I, Part I (p. 134); Prop. III, Part II; Prop. VIII, Part I; Prop. XII, Part I.

²⁶ Prop. I, Part I (p. 134); Prop. III, Part II.

²⁷ Prop. I, Part I (p. 134); Prop. XII, Part II.

²⁸ אכן רשד בבאורו לספר השטע Prop. II, Part II.

²⁹ ספר החרוטים Prop. I, Part II (p. 206).

would be led to believe from his own acknowledgments and, on the other hand, many of the names and titles he mentions do not at all indicate sources which he had directly consulted; they are rather names quoted by him from other works.

The failure on the part of Crescas to mention his sources, which is to be observed also in other places of his work, has been noted by one of his critics.³⁰ Still there is no question of bad faith involved in it, for in omitting to give more specific information as to his immediate sources, Crescas was simply following the accepted literary practice of his time—a practice especially in vogue in philosophic writings. The scope and contents of philosophic writings at the time of Crescas, especially those which revolved around the works of Aristotle, were limited to certain sets of problems which by constant repetition became philosophic commonplaces and a sort of stock-in-trade. The existence of a large number of philosophic treatises of compendious and encyclopedic nature in which each author tried to present a complete catalogue of opinions on any given question and all the pros and cons of any given argument resulted in stripping philosophic discussions of their individual authorship and to invest them with a kind of anonymity. Crescas no more felt the need of mentioning authorities than do we when we deal with generally accepted views found in school text-books.

The information which we fail to find in Crescas himself we have been able to obtain by a close comparison of his work with the entire field of philosophic literature which was available to Crescas and with which we have reason to believe he was acquainted. By means of such a comparison we have been able to identify the immediate sources used by Crescas and to trace the history of almost every argument employed by him. His sources, on the whole, fall within his own classification of the philosophic literature prior to Maimonides, namely, Aristotle,

³⁰ *Neveh Shalom* VIII, 9, p. 144b: ואם שזה החכם לא הזכיר הרברים בשם אומרם.

his various commentators, and those who expounded Aristotle in independent works.

Aristotle was unknown to Crescas in the original Greek. He was also unknown to him in the Arabic translations. He was known to him only through the Hebrew translations which were made from the Arabic. It would be, however, rash to conclude on the basis of this fact that his knowledge of Aristotle was hazy and vague and inaccurate, for, contrary to the prevalent opinion among students of the history of philosophy, the translations of Aristotle both in Arabic and in Hebrew have preserved to a remarkable degree not only clear-cut analyses of the text of Aristotle's works but also the exact meaning of his terminology and forms of expression. The literalness and faithfulness with which the successive translators from one language into another performed their task, coupled with a living tradition of Aristotelian scholarship, which can be shown to have continued uninterruptedly from the days of the Lyceum through the Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew schools of philosophy, enabled Crescas to obtain a pretty accurate knowledge of Aristotle's writings. That knowledge, to be sure, was traditional and one-sided, but the tradition upon which it was based, like the various traditional interpretations of the Bible text before the rise of independent critical scholarship, was clear and definite and suffered comparatively little corruption. In the present work we have shown how often terms and expressions used even in indirect paraphrases of Aristotle reflect the original Greek.³¹ We have also shown how commentators, who knew no Greek, speculated as to what was the original statement in Aristotle—and often guessed right.³² In one place we have shown, how the Hebrew word for "limit" has preserved the different shades of meaning it had acquired through its being indirectly a translation of several

³¹ Cf. n. 16 (p. 337) on Prop. I, Part I; n. 3 (p. 398) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 8 (p. 700) on Prop. XXV.

³² Cf. n. 54 (p. 410) on Prop. I, Part II.

different Greek words.³³ Crescas' knowledge of Aristotle, furthermore, was extensive. He seems to have had the works of Aristotle on the tip of his tongue, and was always ready to use them at a moment's notice. He knew his Aristotle as he knew his Bible and Talmud. With an apparent ease and freedom he draws upon him whenever he is in need of some apt expression or statement for the purpose of illustrating a point or clinching an argument.³⁴ He never had to hunt Diogenes-like after a needed quotation nor had he ever to pray for a windfall.

The immediate source of Crescas' knowledge of Aristotle was the series of works by Averroes known as the Intermediate Commentaries as distinguished from his Long Commentaries and Epitomes. In these commentaries, the text of Aristotle, sometimes translated and sometimes paraphrased, was interspersed with Averroes' own comments and discussion. To a reader unacquainted with the text of Aristotle's own works it would often be difficult to distinguish within those Intermediate Commentaries between Aristotle's original statements and Averroes' elaborations. Crescas, however, seems to have been able to distinguish between them. In one place, for instance, he reproduces what is supposed to be Aristotle's argument against the existence of an infinite number. The argument, however, though given in the Intermediate Commentary on the *Physics*, is not to be found in Aristotle's *Physics*. Subsequently, when Crescas takes up that argument for criticism, he significantly remarks that the argument "has indeed been advanced by Averroes in his commentary on the *Physics*."³⁵ This is the only time that he directly refers to the "commentary" of Averroes as the source from which he has reproduced Aristotle's arguments and it would have been entirely uncalled for unless he meant to indicate thereby that

³³ Cf. n. 84 (p. 358) on Prop. I, Part I.

³⁴ Cf. notes 3 (p. 398), 79 (p. 456), 96, (p. 462) 104 (p. 464) and 126 (p. 472) on Prop. I, Part II.

³⁵ Prop. II, Part II, and n. 5 (p. 477).

the particular argument under discussion was not found in the original work of Aristotle. We have therefore reason to conclude that Crescas had another source of knowledge of Aristotle's writings. As there were no independent Hebrew translations of Aristotle's *Physics*, it must have been Averroes' Long Commentary which furnished him with a direct knowledge of the genuine text of Aristotle, for in that commentary the text of Aristotle was reproduced in such a way as to be distinguishable from the commentator's explanatory remarks. The same conclusion is to be drawn also from other instances where Crescas makes use of certain phrases and expressions which are to be found only in the Long Commentary.³⁶ In a few instances direct borrowing from the Long Commentary on the *Physics* can be discovered, though it is possible that the borrowing was made through some intermediary source.³⁷ As for the *Epitome*, which is a free and independent paraphrase of the problems dealt with in Aristotle's works, there is no positive evidence that Crescas has made use of it.³⁸

Two Hebrew translations of the *Intermediate Physics* are known, one made by Zerahiah Gracian and the other by Kalonymus ben Kalonymus. Of these, Crescas seems to have used the latter.

Though Crescas frequently refers to Alexander, Themistius and Avempace in connection with the interpretation of certain passages in the *Physics*,³⁹ there is no evidence that he had a direct knowledge of their commentaries on the *Physics* which, as far as known, were never translated into Hebrew. His references to them are all taken from Averroes. On the other hand, extensive use was made by him of Gersonides' supercommentary on Averroes' Intermediate Commentary on the *Physics*, and

³⁶ Cf. notes 5, 7 and 8 (p. 541) on Prop. VII.

³⁷ Cf. n. 54 (p. 437) on Prop. I, Part II.

³⁸ Cf. list of quotations from the *Epitome of the Physics* in the "Index of Passages".

³⁹ Cf. above p. 5, notes 10, 11, 14.

perhaps also of his supercommentary on *De Caelo*, though no reference is ever made to either of them. In many places, in fact, both Aristotle and Averroes are reproduced through Gersonides. For this there is abundant evidence of a literary nature.⁴⁰ On the basis of many similarities, though not on direct literary evidence, it may also be inferred that Crescas has made use of Narboni's supercommentary on the *Intermediate Physics*.⁴¹ This work, too, is never mentioned by Crescas.

As for the original works of Arabic authors he mentions, there is no evidence that he made use of Avicenna's writings. All the references to Avicenna can be traced to intermediary sources. Of Averroes' original works, Crescas may have used the Hebrew text of the *Sermo De Substantia Orbis*, for an important point in his criticism of Aristotle is based upon a distinction made by Averroes in that work.⁴² However, the same distinction occurs also in the *Intermediate De Caelo* which we know to have been used by him.⁴³ It is certain, however, that he has made use of Algazali's *Maḳāṣid al-Falasifah* (*Kawwanot ha-Pilosofim*), though the work is never mentioned by title and no direct quotation from it can be discerned. This work, translated into Hebrew many times⁴⁴ and commented upon by Narboni and Albalag, was a popular source book of philosophic information and was used as a text book in the instruction of philosophy to the young until late in the sixteenth century.⁴⁵ It must have

⁴⁰ Cf. notes 91, 97, 99, 100 and 103 (p. 365 f.) on Prop. I, Part I; notes 13, 16, 17 (p. 403) and 40 (p. 424) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 8 (p. 556) on Prop. VIII.

⁴¹ Cf. notes 40, 44 and 48 (p. 424) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 8 (p. 478) on Prop. II.

⁴² Prop. XII, Part II and n. 7 (p. 612).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Steinschneider mentions three translations (*Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters*, p. 309, §174). But a comparison of the different MSS. would seem to point to an intermingling of these translations.

⁴⁵ Cf. Alexander Marx, "Glimpses of the Life of an Italian Rabbi of the First Half of the Sixteenth Century", *Hebrew Union College Annual* I (1924), pp. 613, 617.

been this work, too, that furnished him with information about Avicenna, for the work is nothing but a summary of Avicenna's philosophy. He may have also made use of Narboni's commentary on that work.⁴⁶

The question as to whether Crescas was acquainted with Algazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (*Happalat ha-Pilosofim*) and to what extent it had influenced his own critical attitude toward philosophy requires special consideration.

A tradition has already grown up among modern students of Jewish philosophy that Crescas' criticism of Aristotle was inspired by Algazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah*.⁴⁷ The source of this tradition would seem to be nothing but a vague surmise based on a general impression and on a haphazard combination of irrelevant facts. Algazali, it must have been reasoned, is known as an opponent of philosophy, and also to have influenced Jewish philosophers. Crescas is a Jewish philosopher and an opponent of philosophy. Furthermore, Crescas happens to mention Algazali. Hence, it was concluded, it must have been Algazali who inspired Crescas in his criticism of philosophy.

In order to prove the influence of the *Tahafut al-Falasifah* on the *Or Adonai* it is necessary first to determine whether it was possible for Crescas, who derived his knowledge of Arabic philosophy from Hebrew translations, to have used the *Tahafut*, for there is no direct reference in the *Or Adonai* to the *Tahafut* and whenever the name of Algazali is mentioned the reference is always traceable to the *Maqasid al-Falasifah*.⁴⁸ Such a possi-

⁴⁶ Cf. n. 54 (p. 437) on Prop. I, Part II. Cf. Index of Passages: Narboni.

⁴⁷ Cf. Joël, *Don Chasdai Crescas' religionsphilosophische Lehren*, p. 3; Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, p. 134; Broyde, "Ghazali", *Jewish Encyclopedia*, V, 649; Husik, *Hist. of Med. Jewish Phil.*, p. 392.

⁴⁸ Joël seems to have based his conclusion as to Algazali's influence upon Crescas upon the vague references to Algazali which are to be found in the *Or Adonai*, without realizing that none of them is to the *Tahafut*. He also speaks of Abravanel as one who had noticed a resemblance between Crescas and Algazali (*op. cit.*, p. 80, Note III). Abravanel's reference (מה שכתב אבונמר בספרו)

bility, it must be admitted, existed. While the *Tahafut* itself was probably not translated into Hebrew until after the completion of the *Or Adonai*,⁴⁹ there had existed a Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (*Happalat ha-Happalah*) ever since the early part of the fourteenth century⁵⁰ and this work incorporated the work of Algazali. The *Tahafut* was thus available to Crescas, but was it ever used by him in the composition of his *Or Adonai*?

An answer to this question was undertaken by Julius Wolfsohn in a treatise devoted especially to the evidence of Algazali's influence upon Crescas.⁵¹ He deals with the subject under four headings. First he discusses the influence of Algazali on Crescas as to the general tendency of his philosophy (pp. 8–33). Then he takes up in succession the following special topics: Attributes (pp. 34–46), Unity of God (pp. 47–55), and Free Will (pp. 55–72). We shall examine his arguments one by one.

Under the first heading the author tries to prove the dependence of Crescas upon Algazali by showing certain similarities in their general attitude toward philosophy: that both come out for the liberation of religion from philosophy (pp. 8–11), that both undertake to refute philosophy by the reasoning of philosophy itself (pp. 15–18), and that both refute philosophy not only when it is opposed to tradition but also when it is in agreement with it (pp. 23–28). That such similarities exist between them cannot be denied, but general similarities of this kind, even when not offset by a more impressive list of differences that

(באלהיות) is likewise to the *Maqāṣid*. Abravanel, as we shall see later, did not believe that Crescas had any knowledge of the *Tahafut* at the time of his writing of the *Or Adonai*.

⁴⁹ The *Or Adonai* was completed in 1410. Don Benvenisti, for whom Zerahiah ha-Levi ben Isaac Saladin translated the *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, died in 1411. See Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters*, p. 328.

⁵⁰ Translated by Kalonymus ben David ben Todros shortly before 1328. See Steinschneider, *op. cit.* p. 332.

⁵¹ *Der Einfluss Gazali's auf Chisdai Crescas* 1905.

can easily be drawn up, do not in themselves establish a literary relationship. Crescas had no need for an inspiration from without to take up the cudgels in behalf of tradition as over against speculation. The rise of philosophy to a dominant position in any religion inevitably brings its own reaction, and as far as Judaism is concerned the native opposition to philosophy which had appeared simultaneously with the rise of the philosophic movement itself, is sufficient to account for the particular position taken by him. Still less convincing is the author's attempt to establish a literary influence by the fact that both Algazali and Crescas argue for the creation of the world, for God's knowledge of particulars, and for bodily resurrection and reward and punishment (pp. 18–23). These are common problems to be found in almost any work on theology of that period, and Crescas' attitude on all these problems reflects the traditional Jewish view, and there is no need for assuming a foreign influence.

In his chapter on attributes the author again shows a similarity in the general attitudes of Algazali and Crescas without establishing a literary relationship between their works. It is indeed true that both Algazali and Crescas raise objections to the theory of negative attributes, but Algazali's objections as reproduced by the author are unlike those reproduced by him in the name of Crescas (pp. 35–40). It is also true that both Algazali and Crescas try to justify the admissibility of positive attributes, but beyond the fact that both believed that positive attributes are not incompatible with the simplicity of the divine essence, the author establishes no similarity in their arguments. That Crescas' attempt to justify positive attributes would have to contend that they do not contradict the simplicity of the divine nature was only to be expected—that much Crescas could have gathered from Maimonides' polemic against the upholders of positive attributes. But what was it that made Crescas override Maimonides' objections and assert with certainty that there

was no contradiction? Were his reasons the same as Algazali's? I believe it can be shown that Algazali and Crescas justify the admissibility of positive essential attributes on entirely different grounds. To Algazali the justification is to be found principally in his contention that the concept of necessary existence does not preclude an inner plurality; to Crescas it is to be found in a moderately nominalist conception of universals.⁵²

In his discussion of the unity of God the author adduces only one argument from Crescas which bears some relation to a similar argument by Algazali. Both argue against the philosophic contention that two deities could not adequately divide their fields of activity within the world and try to show that some adequate division of labor could exist between them. In Algazali the contention is that such a division of labor can be found in the fact that one deity may be the cause of the celestial sphere and the other of the sublunar elements, or that one may be the cause of the immaterial beings and the other of the material beings (p. 51). Crescas argues somewhat similarly that, while within this universe there could not be any adequate division of labor between two deities in view of the fact that the universe is an organic unit in which all parts are interconnected, there is still the possibility of a division of labor on the assumption of the existence of more than one universe, in which case one deity may be the cause of one universe and the other of another. That there is some relation between these two arguments may be granted. Still it does not follow that Crescas had knowledge of the *Tahafut*, for Algazali's argument is reproduced, without the mention of the name of Algazali, in Narboni's commentary on the *Moreh Nebukim*, and we know that Crescas had made use of that commentary.⁵³

Similarly unconvincing is the author's discussion of the prob-

⁵² See H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas on the Existence and Attributes of God*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

lem of the freedom of the will wherein, again, the reasoning is based upon vague and general similarities.

If general similarities of this kind are to be the basis of establishing the influence of Algazali on Crescas, a more imposing number of them might have been gathered. In the commentary on the text I have called attention to all such instances. Two of these are of particular importance as they contain arguments which are individual to Algazali and which form some of the crucial points in Crescas' criticism. First, Algazali contends that the concept of necessary existence precludes only external causation and is not incompatible with an inner composition of the essence. Crescas repeats a similar contention several times in his criticism of the proofs of the existence of God.⁵⁴ Second, Algazali argues that the motion of the celestial sphere should be regarded as natural instead of voluntary, as was the general assumption. Crescas has a similar contention which he repeats several times referring to it as "our own view" in contradistinction to the commonly accepted view of the philosophers.⁵⁵ In both these instances, however, as well as in other similar instances, we have shown that there are other sources, with which Crescas is known to have been acquainted and from which he could have taken these views.⁵⁶

Not only are all these evidences inconclusive, but there is evidence which shows quite the contrary, that Crescas could not have known the *Tahafut*. In one place Crescas lines up two groups of philosophers as to the question of the possibility of an infinite number of disembodied souls. Algazali is placed by him among those who admit that possibility. This is quite in agreement with Algazali's view as given in the *Maḳāṣid* where he only restates the views of Avicenna, without necessarily committing himself to them. In the *Tahafut*, however, Algazali

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Cf. n. 11 (p. 535) on Prop. VI.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid*

explicitly rejects the possibility of an infinite number of disembodied souls.⁵⁷ Had Crescas known the *Tahafut* he certainly would not have allowed that fact to pass unnoticed.

The question as to whether Crescas had knowledge of Algazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah* or of Averroes' *Tahafut al-Tahafut* at the time of writing the *Or Adonai* has already been raised by a mediaeval Jewish author. The question comes up in the following connection.

In the chapters on the problem of creation in the *Or Adonai* Crescas refutes a certain argument which he quotes in the name of Gersonides. The same argument is also found in Algazali's *Tahafut*. In another work, the *Biṭṭul 'Ikkere ha-Nozerim*, Crescas makes use of the very same argument which has been rejected by him in the *Or Adonai*.

Joseph ben Shem-ṭob, the Hebrew translator of the latter work of Crescas, after calling attention to the origin of Crescas' argument in Gersonides and Algazali and to Crescas' own refutation of the argument in the *Or Adonai*, suggests that Crescas' *Biṭṭul 'Ikkere ha-Nozerim* must have been written after his *Or Adonai* and that after he had written the latter work he must have changed his mind with regard to the validity of the argument under consideration.⁵⁸ Isaac Abravanel accepts this suggestion of Joseph ben Shem-ṭob, adding that Crescas' change of view must have resulted from his reading of Algazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah* or of Averroes' *Tahafut al-Tahafut* after he had written the *Or Adonai*.⁵⁹ Furthermore, on the basis of other evidence, Abravanel tries to show that Crescas could not have

⁵⁷ Cf. n. 6 (p. 485) on Prop. III.

⁵⁸ *Biṭṭul 'Ikkere ha-Nozerim*, ch. III, p. 30: והרב הזה העתיקו הנה נגד הנוצרים שהוא כבר טען ע"ז מופת בספרו אור ה'. ואדמה בהולד הבן ואצילות הרוח, ואח"כ שב מדרכיו, שהוא כבר טען ע"ז מופת בספרו אור ה'. ואדמה שהוא חבר המאמר הזה אחר חברו אותו הספר.

⁵⁹ *Shamayim Ḥadoshim* III, p. 28: ואחשוב אני שאחרי שעשה הרב חסדאי ספרו ראה: דברי אבוחמד ואבן רשד וחור להחיות במופת הר"ל אשר נער בו. ולכן במאמר אשר עשה בלשון ארצו בספוקות אמונת האומה הנצרית, כפ"נ ממנו, הקשה כנדרם בהולדה החמירית אשר שמו בתאר הבן, ועשה עליו המופת הזה שעשה הר"ל כנגד הקדמות וחייב להם כל הבטולים האלה,

known of these two works at the time of the writing of the *Or Adonai*.⁶⁰

As for the accuracy of the conclusion that the *Biṭṭul Ikkere ha-Nozerim* was composed after the *Or Adonai*, it is open to grave doubt. The Fourth Book of the *Or Adonai*, according to a colophon which occurs in most of the manuscripts, was completed in 1410,⁶¹ which is probably also the year of the author's death, whereas the *Biṭṭul Ikkere ha-Nozerim* would seem to have been written in 1398, for it refers to the Great Schism (1378) as having occurred twenty years previously.⁶²

In mitigation of this doubt, however, the following two considerations may be urged:

First, the composition of the *Or Adonai* must have extended over many years, for the discussion of the Messiah (III, viii), which occurs not far from the end of the book, was written five years before the completion of the entire work.⁶³ It is not impossible, therefore, that the problem of creation (III, i) was written before 1398.⁶³

Second, it would also seem that the *Or Adonai* was not written in the order in which it is now arranged. Certain chap-

ושבח המופת ההוא והענדהו עטרות לו, וכמו שהעיר עליו החכם ר' יוסף אבן שם טוב שהעתיק אותו המאמר ללשון הקודש.

ואתה דע לך שכל הטעות הזה קרה להר' חסדאי לפי שלא ראה או לא: ⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. 27–28: עיין בדברי אבוחמד בספר ה פ ל ת ה פ י ס פ י ם ובדברי אבן רשד בן מחלוקתו בספר ה פ ל ת ה פ ל ה . . . ואחשוב אני שאחרי שעה הר' חסדאי ספרו ראה דברי אבוחמד ואבן רשד וחזר להחזיק במופת הר"ל אשר נער בו Cf. *Mif'alot Elohim* IX, 7, p. 67vb.

והיתה ההשלמה בחדש זיו שנת מאה ושבעים לפרט האלף הששי ליצירה בסרקוסטה אשר ⁶¹ This colophon evidently does not come from the hand of the author. It does not occur in the *editio princeps* nor in the Paris manuscript. The Parma manuscript, which seems to have been written by a student of Crescas, reads here as follows: המחבר ז"ל השלימו בעיר סרקסטה במלכות ארנון שנת: ק"ע לפרט האלף השש The same reading occurs also in the Jews' College manuscript. Cf. also colophon of Turin MS. quoted at the end of Bibliography I.

כי עוד היום בעבור שבכל יותר הרברים בין האמונה הנוצרית קרוב לכ' שנה: ⁶² Chapter 8: יש להם שנים ראשונה (שני ראשים) אפיפיורים, וכל אחד מהם ומהנמשכים אחריהם חושב לזולתו למנוחה ונענש לשמים. Cf. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Vol. VIII, Note 2.

עתה שהיא שנת אלף ושלש מאות שלשים ושבעה לחרבן הבית: ⁶³ *Or Adonai* III, viii, 2: This is the correct reading according to the Munich, Paris, Vienna, and New

ters in Book IV bear the unmistakable internal evidence of having been written originally as a sort of preliminary studies to problems dealt with in earlier parts of the work. Thus the discussion as to "whether there is only one world or whether there are many worlds at the same time" in IV, 2, seems to have been written as precursory to the same problem dealt with at the end of Prop. I, Part II, and similarly the discussion as to "whether the celestial spheres are animate and intelligent beings" in IV, 3, seems to have been written as precursory to the same problem discussed in Prop. VI. In both these instances, the problems are treated in greater detail and in a spirit of greater impartiality in Book IV than in the earlier parts of the work. It is thus not impossible that the problem of creation was among the first to have been taken up by Crescas and to have been written by him long before 1398.

But whatever value one may attach to the conclusions of Joseph ben Shem-ṭob and Abravanel, there is no positive evidence of Crescas' acquaintance with the *Tahafut al-Falasifah*. Even if we assume his acquaintance with that work and recognize it as the source of all those arguments for which we find parallels in it, it is far from being the predominant influence upon the *Or Adonai*. The most that can be said is that it is one of the many works from which Crescas has borrowed certain arguments which he has incorporated in his own work. It is not impossible that his knowledge of the *Tahafut*, assuming that he had any knowledge of it, he obtained not from a study of the book itself but from his pupil Zerahiah Saladin who was versed in Arabic and later translated the *Tahafut* into Hebrew.⁶⁴

Another class of sources of the *Or Adonai* are the commentaries on the *Moreh*. Of these the most widely used by Crescas is Altabrizi's commentary on the twenty-five propositions.

York manuscripts. The editions and some of the other manuscripts have here corrupt readings.

⁶⁴ See above p. 11, n. 48.

The commentary of Altabrizi was originally written in Arabic. Its author was a Persian Mohammedan, who flourished probably in the thirteenth century. From a remark in his introduction it may be inferred that the author had intended to interpret the entire work of the *Moreh*,⁶⁵ but whether he really did so or not there is no way of determining. Two Hebrew translations of this commentary are extant, one of which, done by Isaac ben Nathan of Cordova or Xativa, was published in Venice, 1574, and the other, anonymous, is found only in manuscript form.⁶⁶ The fact that this anonymous commentary is a translation of Altabrizi was first noticed by Steinschneider.⁶⁷ There is, however, this to be added to the description of this work. While indeed it is nothing but a translation of Altabrizi, there is sufficient evidence to show that the translator, whoever he was, wished to have that fact unknown and to have his work passed off as an original composition or, at least, as a compilation made by himself out of different Arabic sources. The deliberate purpose of the translator to mislead his readers is evident at the very outset of the work. In Isaac ben Nathan's translation, Altabrizi begins with that inevitable jingle of glorifications, exaltations and elevation to the Creator, Causator, and Originator of this our universe, from which he passes to a second topic wherein he gives an account of himself and of his genealogy and concludes with a eulogy of Maimonides and his works. All these are omitted by the anonymous translator in the three out of the

⁶⁵ Cf. Altabrizi's Introduction in the Vienna manuscript of Isaac ben Nathans translation: אמר עבד האלה מחסר אבוכר בן מחסר אלחבריי. זה החלק אשר כתבו [בגנרפס: סדר בן] הנכבד השר [בגנרפס נוסף: הראש] משה עבד האלהים הישראלי הקדטבי מהספר [בגנרפס: מהספרים] אשר נחשוב לבארו ולגלותו, והוא הספר הרשום בהוראת [בגנרפס: להוראת] הנבוכים. My inference as to the author's intention of writing a commentary on the entire *Moreh* is based upon the expression אשר נחשוב לבארו. It is quite possible, however, that the clause אשר נחשוב לבארו refers to חלק.

⁶⁶ Six MSS. are recorded by Steinschneider in *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, p. 362.

⁶⁷ See *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodliana*, p. 1143.

six extant manuscripts which I have examined in Paris, Vienna, and London. But beginning with the third topic of Altabrizi's Introduction which contains a brief description of the twenty-five propositions, the translator adds a long statement of his own, the evident purpose of which is to create the impression that his work is a compilation of various Arabic commentaries supplemented by numerous remarks of his own, which, however, he modestly says, are not differentiated by him from the unoriginal portions of the work, as his main object, he concludes, is to impart information.⁶⁸ Upon examination, however, his claim seems to be rather exaggerated. The commentary faithfully follows the single work of Altabrizi with a few exceptions where the translator either omits some passage found in the original, or, acting upon a suggestion of Altabrizi himself, expands certain brief statements of the author. The following examples will illustrate the nature of what the translator has claimed as his own original contributions.

(1) In Proposition I, after the third argument against the existence of an infinite magnitude, the translator remarks that his restatement of the arguments is the fine flour of the lengthy discussions of the numerous commentators.⁶⁹ As a matter of fact, his text is a faithful translation of Altabrizi except for the omission of a few digressions found in the original.

(2) In Proposition IV, Altabrizi has a brief illustration of the phenomenon of expansion, which is included among the subdivisions of quantitative change. That illustration is more

הפרוש בעורר על קצת מאנשי החכמה, וראיתי באורם ומופתיהם באלה ההקדמות, ושענין על הבנתן עמוק, ושהרב מיכ לא זכרם אלא בזכרון פרוץ, כי הוא אומר שאריסטו הביא מופת על כל אחת מהן, והענין אשר עמדתו עליו ממבארי ההקדמות האלה היה בלשון הערב, אמרתי גם אני אכתבנו בלשון העברי, כדי שיקבלו תועלת ממנו מחכמי אומתנו אשר אין להם דרך בלשון הערב, ואחיה מוכה וזוכה, ופה שיתחדש לי גם אני בביאור הזה אכללנו עם באור זולתו, כי אין הכונה אלא להוסיף התועלת.

וזהו המופת התבאר [בו] זאת ההקדמה, ולא יצא זה אלא אחרי בלבולים רבים וקושיים,⁶⁹ והוא סולת דבריהם.

elaborately restated by the anonymous translator. In substance, however, the two illustrations are identical.

(3) In Proposition VI, after discussing various classes of motion, Altabrizi remarks: "The tabulation of the motions under this class can be done by yourself."⁷⁰ In the translation a complete list is given introduced by the words: "I shall now draw up the classification myself."⁷¹

(4) In Proposition XVII, the translator says: "As for the meaning of motion according to essence, many have been confused concerning it and have advanced a variety of explanations, but we shall restate here the fine flour of their views."⁷² Here, too, excepting his omissions of several alternative views stated by Altabrizi, the translator closely follows the original text.

These two translations of Altabrizi represent the two different styles of philosophic Hebrew, the Arabicized and the native, which were used in the translations from the Arabic and the classic examples of which are to be found in the two translations of Maimonides' *Moreh*, the one by Samuel ibn Tibbon and the other by Judah al-Ḥarizi. Isaac ben Nathan uses the Arabicized form of expression; the anonymous translation is written in the native form of rabbinic Hebrew. Of these, Crescas has used Isaac ben Nathan's translation.

Next in importance as a source used by Crescas is Narboni's commentary on the *Moreh*. Crescas mentions this commentary in several places,⁷³ but his indebtedness to it is evident in many other places where no mention of it is made.⁷⁴ As Narboni often

⁷⁰ ויצא מהם מהודונו אלה החלקים קצתם עם קצת שונה חלקים לתנועה ההכרחית, ועליך
בחינת הפרדתם בהמשלם.

⁷¹ והנה יעלה בידנו מיוון אלה החלקים קצתם עם קצתם שונה חלקים לתנועה הכרחית
ואני אסדר לך חלקיהם ומשליהם עליך.

⁷² ואמנם פירוש המתנועע מעצמו נחבלבלו בו רבים בפירושים משתנים, וסולת הפירוש בו נוכיך.

⁷³ Cf. above p. 5, n. 17.

⁷⁴ Cf. n. 16 (p. 492) on Prop. III; notes 8 (p. 507), 9, 11 and 16 on Prop. IV; n. 8 (p. 534) on Prop. VI; notes 4 and 10 (p. 551) on Prop. VIII; n. 5 (p. 605) on Prop. XI; n. 2 (p. 682) on Prop. XIX; n. 5 (p. 697) on Prop. XXIV; n. 6 (p. 700) on Prop. XXV.

follows Altabrizi's method in expounding the proposition, it is sometimes not clear as to which of these sources he directly follows.⁷⁵ Besides Altabrizi and Narboni, no other commentary on the *Moreh* is mentioned by Crescas, but it is not impossible that he made use of the *Moreh ha-Moreh* and also of Hillel of Verona's commentary on the twenty-five propositions.⁷⁶ It is certain, however, that Crescas had no knowledge of Maimonides' own comments on Propositions IV, XXIII and XXIV, contained in his letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, for Crescas gives entirely different interpretations of those propositions.⁷⁷

In addition to these works there is the entire body of philosophic Hebrew literature extant at the time of Crescas. Whether any of these Hebrew works is mentioned by him or not and whether it is directly used by him in the *Or Adonai* or not, we have reason to assume that he was acquainted with it and we are therefore justified in drawing upon it for the reconstruction of the historical background of his ideas. One can speak, however, with greater certainty as to Crescas' direct indebtedness to the *Emunah Ramah*. Not only is its author Abraham ibn Daud mentioned by him in the general list of Maimonides' philosophic predecessors,⁷⁸ but one can discover in several places not merely parallels to some of Crescas' arguments but concrete literary relationships.⁷⁹

Close observation of Crescas' proofs of the propositions reveals the fact that with the exception of propositions I, VIII, XII, XIV, XXIV, XXV, all of them start out with an opening based on Altabrizi and that even of those which do not start with such an opening all, with the exception of XXIV and XXV, contain

⁷⁵ Cf. n. 8 (p. 534) on Prop. VI; n. 3 (p. 540) on Prop. VII; n. 4 (p. 551) on Prop. VIII.

⁷⁶ See "Index of Passages" under these names.

⁷⁷ Cf. n. 3 (p. 502) on Prop. IV; n. 2 (p. 690) on Prop. XXIII.

⁷⁸ Cf. above p. 4, n. 7.

⁷⁹ Cf. n. 73 (p. 354) on Prop. I, Part I; notes 7, 8, 9, 13, 16 (pp. 571-579), 26 and 27 (p. 598) on Prop. X; notes 6 and 7 (p. 670) on Prop. XVII.

some elements which can be traced to Altabrizi. Then also the Hebrew text of seventeen propositions (II, III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, XII, XIII, XIV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXV) is taken from Isaac ben Nathan's translation of Altabrizi, the text of five propositions (I, IX, XI, XV, XVI) is taken from Ibn Tibbon's translation of the *Moreh*, two of these (XI, XV), however, containing some phrases from Altabrizi. Propositions V and XIV read alike in both translations, and Proposition X is composed of parts taken from both translations. The inference to be drawn from this is that Crescas has taken Isaac ben Nathan's translation of Altabrizi as the basis of his own commentary on the propositions, departing from it only when he finds it unsatisfactory or insufficient for his purpose. In most cases his departure from Altabrizi consists merely in amplifying the former's discussion by the introduction of material drawn from other sources. But sometimes he departs from Altabrizi completely and follows entirely new sources. An example of this is the first proposition, where the entire structure of the proof is independent of that of Altabrizi, though within it are incorporated also the arguments of Altabrizi. It is not impossible that the collection of material and especially the abstracts of literature used in the composition of the work were prepared by students, for Crescas informs us that in preparing the work he is to avail himself of the assistance of a selected group of associates⁸⁰—"associates" being a polite Talmudic term applied by teachers to their advanced students. This may explain the inadequacy of some of these abstracts, the unevenness of their style and their occasional misplacement in the text.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Cf. *Or Adonai, Haḳdamah*, p. 2a: ובהסכמת החברים ובעזרתם, and p. 2b: עם חשובי החברים.

⁸¹ See, for instance, notes 104 (p. 374) and 107 on Prop. I, Part I; n. 6 (p. 611) on Prop. XI; n. 6 (p. 699) on Prop. XXV.

II

The research into the literary sources of Crescas undertaken in the present study was not a matter of mere idle play or even of intellectual curiosity. It was essentially necessary for the understanding of the text. Crescas like all mediaeval philosophers operates on the whole with conventional concepts of his time which to a large extent are foreign to our way of thinking and to understand which we must acquaint ourselves with their origin and background. But there is even something more than this in Crescas' method of literary composition. He not only re-echoes the ideas of his predecessors but he collocates torn bits of their texts. The expository part of his work is a variegated texture into which are woven many different strands. Mosaic in its structure, it is studded with garbled phrases and expressions torn out of their context and strung together in what would seem to be a haphazard fashion. At times the text is entirely unintelligible and at times it is still worse—misleading. We read it, and think we understand it. If we do happen to come across some ambiguity, some abrupt transition, some change of point of view, or some unevenness of style, we are apt to attribute it to an inadequacy of expression on the part of the author and try our best, by whatever general information we may happen to possess or may be able to gather, to force some meaning upon it—and trying, we think we succeed. But sometimes by a stroke of good luck we may happen to stumble upon the immediate source of Crescas' utterances and at once our eyes are opened wide with surprise and astonishment, ambiguities are cleared up, certainties call for revision and what has previously seemed to us meaningless or insignificant assumes an importance undreamed of.

The critical part of Crescas' works offers still greater difficulties to the modern reader on account of its adherence to what may be called the Talmudic method of text study. In this

method the starting point is the principle that any text that is deemed worthy of serious study must be assumed to have been written with such care and precision that every term, expression, generalization or exception is significant not so much for what it states as for what it implies. The contents of ideas as well as the diction and phraseology in which they are clothed are to enter into the reasoning. This method is characteristic of the Tannaitic interpretation of the Bible from the earliest times; the belief in the divine origin of the Bible was sufficient justification for attaching importance to its external forms of expression. The same method was followed later by the Amoraim in their interpretation of the Mishnah and by their successors in the interpretation of the Talmud, and it continued to be applied to the later forms of rabbinic literature. Serious students themselves, accustomed to a rigid form of logical reasoning and to the usage of precise forms of expression, the Talmudic trained scholars attributed the same quality of precision and exactness to any authoritative work, be it of divine origin or the product of the human mind. Their attitude toward the written word of any kind is like that of the jurist toward the external phrasing of statutes and laws, and perhaps also, in some respect, like that of the latest kind of historical and literary criticism which applies the method of psycho-analysis to the study of texts.

This attitude toward texts had its necessary concomitant in what may again be called the Talmudic hypothetico-deductive method of text interpretation. Confronted with a statement on any subject, the Talmudic student will proceed to raise a series of questions before he satisfies himself of having understood its full meaning. If the statement is not clear enough, he will ask, 'What does the author intend to say here?' If it is too obvious, he will again ask, 'It is too plain, why then expressly say it?' If it is a statement of fact or of a concrete instance, he will then ask, 'What underlying principle does it involve?' If

it is a broad generalization, he will want to know exactly how much it is to include; and if it is an exception to a general rule, he will want to know how much it is to exclude. He will furthermore want to know all the circumstances under which a certain statement is true, and what qualifications are permissible. Statements apparently contradictory to each other will be reconciled by the discovery of some subtle distinction, and statements apparently irrelevant to each other will be subtly analyzed into their ultimate elements and shown to contain some common underlying principle. The harmonization of apparent contradictions and the inter-linking of apparent irrelevancies are two characteristic features of the Talmudic method of text study. And similarly every other phenomenon about the text becomes a matter of investigation. Why does the author use one word rather than another? What need was there for the mentioning of a specific instance as an illustration? Do certain authorities differ or not? If they do, why do they differ? All these are legitimate questions for the Talmudic student of texts. And any attempt to answer these questions calls for ingenuity and skill, the power of analysis and association, and the ability to set up hypotheses—and all these must be bolstered up by a wealth of accurate information and the use of good judgment. No limitation is set upon any subject; problems run into one another; they become intricate and interwoven, one throwing light upon the other. And there is a logic underlying this method of reasoning. It is the very same kind of logic which underlies any sort of scientific research, and by which one is enabled to form hypotheses, to test them and to formulate general laws. The Talmudic student approaches the study of texts in the same manner as the scientist approaches the study of nature. Just as the scientist proceeds on the assumption that there is a uniformity and continuity in nature so the Talmudic student proceeds on the assumption that there is a uniformity and

continuity in human reasoning. Now, this method of text interpretation is sometimes derogatorily referred to as Talmudic quibbling or pilpul. In truth it is nothing but the application of the scientific method to the study of texts.

A similar attitude toward texts and a similar method of interpretation was introduced by Jewish thinkers into the study of philosophy. One need only look into some of the commentaries upon Averroes, or upon Maimonides, especially the commentary of Abravanel upon the *Moreh*, to become convinced of the truth of this observation. It is well-nigh impossible to understand their writings and to appreciate the mode of their reasoning unless we view them from this particular angle. It is still less possible to give an accurate account of their philosophy without applying to them the same method that they applied to their predecessors. The mere paraphrasing of the obscurities of their texts is not sufficient. Still less sufficient is the impressionistic modernization of their thought. We must think out their philosophy for them in all its implications and rewrite it for them in their own terms. We must constantly ask ourselves, concerning every statement they make, what is the reason? What does it intend to let us hear? What is the authority for this statement? Does it reproduce its authority correctly or not? If not, why does it depart from its authority? What is the difference between certain statements, and can such differences be reduced to other differences, so as to discover in them a common underlying principle? We must assume that their reasoning was sound, their method of expression precise and well-chosen, and we must present them as they would have presented them had they not reasoned in symbols after the manner of their schools. In the case of Maimonides we have his own statement as to the care he exercised in the choice of terms, and in the arrangement of his problems, declaring that what he has written in his work "was not the suggestion of the

moment; it is the result of deep study and great application."⁸² Similarly Crescas declares that everything in his work, though briefly stated, was carefully thought out and is based upon long research.⁸³

Now this Talmudic method of reasoning is intelligible enough when it is fully expressed, when its underlying assumptions are clearly stated and every step in the argument distinctly marked out. But in the literature in which this method is followed, owing to the intimacy of the circle to which it was addressed, the arguments are often given in an abbreviated form in which the essential assumptions are entirely omitted or only alluded to, the intermediary steps suppressed or only hinted at, and what we get is merely a resultant conclusion. This abbreviated form of argumentation is characteristic of the recorded minutes of the school-room discussions which make up the text of the Talmud. It was continued in the rabbinic novellae upon the Talmud, reaching its highest point of development in the French school of the Tosafists which began to flourish in the twelfth century. Shortly after, it was introduced into the philosophic literature in the form of novellae upon standard texts, resembling the Talmudic novellae in their external literary form even to the extent of using the same conventional phrases by which questions and answers are introduced.⁸⁴ Crescas' work belongs to that type of novellae literature, conforming to the Talmudic novellae literature in all its main characteristics, its attitude toward texts, its method of text interpretation, its abbreviated form of argumentation. Again and again Crescas declares in his *Or Adonai* as well as in his *Biṭṭul 'Iḳḳere ha-Nozerim* that whatever he has to say will be expressed by him

⁸² *Moreh Nebukim*, Introduction: כי המאמר הזה לא נפלו בו הדברים כאשר נודמן, אלא בדקדוק גדול ובסקידה רבה.

⁸³ *Or Adonai, Haḳdamah*, p. 2b: וזה אמנם בעיון גדול ושקידה רבה.

⁸⁴ E. g., such expressions as ואם תאמר, ויש להקשות, etc.

with the utmost brevity,⁸⁵ and to this declaration of his he has lived up faithfully.

But it seems that Crescas' vaunted brevity was too much even for those who had been used to that form of expression. It often bordered upon obscurity. Joseph ben Shem-ṭob, the Hebrew translator of his *Biṭṭul 'Iḳḳere ha-Nozerim* was in one place compelled to give a free paraphrase of a certain passage in order to make it intelligible, justifying himself for so doing in the following declaration: "This is how the words of the Master, of blessed memory, are to be understood here. In translating them I have expanded their meaning, for his original words in this passage are all too brief and all too abstruse, so that I have not met anybody who was able to understand them. Hence, in this passage, more than in any of the other passages of his book, I have allowed myself to overstep the bounds of what is proper in a translation."⁸⁶ A student of Crescas, in a marginal note on his copy of the *Or Adonai* preserved at the Biblioteca Palatina at Parma, has the following characterization of his master as lecturer and writer: "When I studied under my Master I could not fathom the full meaning of his view on this subject . . . The Master, of blessed memory, was accustomed to express himself with the utmost brevity both in speaking and in writing."⁸⁷ This statement would also lead us to believe that the *Or Adonai* had its origin in class-room lectures and discussions. We know of other instances where Hebrew philosophic works were the result of class-room lectures. It was while thus addressing himself to a group of initiated students, expecting to be interrupted with questions whenever he failed

⁸⁵ Cf. Prop. I, Part I, p. 178: בקצור מופלג; *Biṭṭul 'Iḳḳere ha-Nozerim*, p. 11: זוהי יהיה בתכלית הכללית והקצור, כל אריכות דברים נעזוב.

⁸⁶ *Biṭṭul 'Iḳḳere ha-Nozerim*, Ch. III, pp. 27–28: הגה על זה האופן ראוי שיובנו דברי: ואני הרחבתי הביאור בהעתקתי אותם, כי לשונו קצר ועמוק במקום הרב וז'ל במקום הזה. ולכן עברתי חק ההעתיקה בזה יותר משאר מאמריי הזה, לא ראיתי מי שיבינהו, ולכן עברתי חק ההעתיקה בזה יותר משאר מאמריי.

⁸⁷ והנה הרב ז'ל היה מדבר גם כחב בקצור מופלג. The same note occurs also on the margin of the Jews' College manuscript.

to make himself clear, as is evidenced from his former student's remarks, that his style assumed that allusive and elliptical form by which it is characterized. In order, therefore, to understand Crescas in full and to understand him well, we must familiarize ourselves with his entire literary background. We must place ourselves in the position of students, who, having done the reading assigned in advance, come to sit at his feet and listen to his comments thereon. Every nod and wink and allusion of his will then become intelligible. Words previously quite unimportant will become pregnant with meaning. Abrupt transitions will receive an adequate explanation; repetitions will be accounted for. We shall know more of Crescas' thought than what is actually expressed in his utterances. We shall know what he wished to say and what he would have said had we been able to question him and elicit further information.

A faint echo of the class room discussion of Crescas' lectures on philosophy has reached us indirectly in the work of his student Joseph Albo. In several instances, and as far as the scope of this chapter is concerned we may mention only the discussion of place and of time, he makes use of several specific arguments which are found in the *Or Adonai*. He does not mention the *Or Adonai* in any of these instances. Nor does his restatement of the arguments bear any specific, verbal resemblance to the corresponding originals in the *Or Adonai*. Sometimes the arguments are considerably modified and are made to prove different conclusions.⁸⁸ Sometimes also a well developed and clearly expressed argument in Albo's *Ikkarim* has as its counterpart in the *Or Adonai* only a meaningless ejaculation.⁸⁹ All this would seem to point to the fact that what we get in the *Ikkarim*, at least in these instances and in a few others like them, is not direct borrowings from the *Or Adonai* but rather material of

⁸⁸ Cf. notes 66 (p. 448) and 78 (p. 456) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 23 (p. 556, 558) and 33 (p. 663) on Prop. XV.

⁸⁹ Cf. n. 80 (p. 457) on Prop. I, Part II.

those class room discussions out of which the *Or Adonai* was composed.

The period which witnessed the rise of opposition to philosophy among Jews was also the period of the greatest philosophic activity among them. The knowledge of Aristotle which became widespread through the Hebrew translations of Averroes created a genuine interest in the study of philosophy as an independent discipline, irrespective of its bearing upon problems of religion. The works of Aristotle were included as a subject in the school curriculum. Expositions and studies of Aristotle became a popular form of literature. In certain families specialization in the works of Aristotle or Averroes became a tradition. Especially notable for this was the Shem-ṭob family, the two brothers, Joseph and Isaac (fifteenth century) and the son of the former, Shem-ṭob. Sons and grandson of Shem-ṭob Ibn Shem-ṭob, who was active as an opponent of philosophy, they became champions of philosophy and strict partisans of Averroes—not to be confused, however, with the hybrid Averroism of the Scholastics. It was therefore quite natural for them to come out in the defense of Aristotle as against Crescas. All these three authors appear as critics of Crescas. For our present purpose only two are important, Isaac ben Shem-ṭob and his nephew Shem-ṭob ben Joseph ben Shem-ṭob.

Isaac ben Shem-ṭob was more prolific a writer than he is generally considered. He was the author of at least fourteen works, of which eight are still extant.⁹⁰ Among these are four commentaries on Averroes' *Intermediate Physics*, evidently successive revisions of lectures delivered before students. We shall designate them as *first*, *second*, *third*, *fourth* successively. The *first*, *third*, and *fourth* are preserved in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, bearing no name of author, but his authorship of

⁹⁰ See H. A. Wolfson, "Isaac Ibn Shem-tob's Unknown Commentaries on the *Physics* and His Other Unknown Works" in *Freidus Memorial Volume*.

these works has been established by the present writer.⁹¹ Of the *second*, there are two copies, one in Munich, wrongly ascribed to Isaac Albalag, and the other in the University Library, Cambridge. In all but the *fourth* there are refutations of Crescas. In the *second*, the name of Crescas is mentioned in two places, where he is referred to as Ibn Ḥasdai.⁹² In three other places references to "one may say," "one may raise a doubt" and "a certain one of the philosophers" can be traced to Crescas.⁹³ In his *first* commentary references to Crescas can be discerned under the guise of such expressions as "one may ask," "one may object," "some one has asked," "some one has objected"⁹⁴ or in the commentator's excessive zeal to justify a certain statement of Aristotle which, upon examination, is found to have been assailed by Crescas.⁹⁵ In the *third* commentary there is one discussion introduced by "some one asks," which probably has reference to Crescas.⁹⁶

His nephew Shem-ṭob ben Joseph ben Shem-ṭob is best known for his commentary on the *Guide*, which is printed together with the text in almost every edition of the work. He is also the author of a supercommentary on Averroes' *Intermediate Physics* of which only one copy is extant in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. In both of these works he takes occasion to criticise Crescas' commentary on the twenty-five propositions, referring to him either as Rabbi Ḥasdai or as Rabbi Ibn Ḥasdai.⁹⁷ But more than his criticism is of interest to us his personal estimate

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² See n. 40 (p. 424) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 8 (p. 479) on Prop. II.

⁹³ See n. 1 (p. 395) on Prop. I, Part II (ויש לאומר שיאמר); n. 44 (p. 428) on Prop. I, Part II (ויש למספק שיספק); n. 22 (p. 650) on Prop. XV, Part II (ועוד יש למספק שיספק and כמו שחשב חכם אחד מן החוקרים).

⁹⁴ See notes 1 (p. 396, ויש לשאול), 4 (p. 398, ויש מי שישאל), 40 (p. 425, ויש מי שהקשה) and 48 (p. 431, ויש להקשות) on Prop. I, Part II.

⁹⁵ See n. 44 (p. 428) on Prop. I, Part II.

⁹⁶ See n. 4 (p. 398) on Prop. I, Part II (ויש מי שישאל).

⁹⁷ See notes 1 (p. 394, הרב חסדאי), 44 (p. 427, הרב ן' חסדאי) and 57 (p. 441, הרב ן' חסדאי) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 23 (p. 549, הרב ן' חסדאי) on Prop. VII.

of Crescas. In his commentary on Maimonides he concludes his proof of the first proposition with the following words: "When you have grasped the meaning of these two arguments you will be able to answer all the objections against the Master raised by Rabbi Ḥasdai in his commentary on this proposition, for against these two arguments no doubt and objection can be raised except by a perverse fool who is incapable of understanding. Similarly all the objections and criticisms levelled by Rabbi Ḥasdai against the Aristotelian proofs of this proposition are mere figments of the imagination, for the truth of these proofs can be understood by anyone whom God has endowed with reason and understanding to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood."⁹⁸ In his commentary on Averroes he also uses words to the same effect: "To this we answer that his [Rabbi Ḥasdai's] contention is quite right, but Aristotle is addressing himself here to men of intelligence and understanding . . . inasmuch as thou, who art of sound mind, already knowest . . ."⁹⁹ Again, "Aristotle is addressing himself here to a man of good sense."¹⁰⁰ The implication of these passages is quite clear, Crescas is a "perverse fool" and is lacking in good sense and understanding. There is the note of an *odium philosophicum* here which has in it more odium than the proverbial *odium theologicum*. To a confirmed Aristotelian like Shem-ṭob, evidently, any attempt to question the veracity of his master's teachings could not be explained except on the ground of a perversity of judgment. Or, perhaps, Shem-ṭob was merely re-echoing a prevalent contemporary opinion about Crescas.

וכשתבין אלה הדרכים יבוטל מעלינו כל הטענות שעשה הרב ר' חסדאי על הרב על ביאור ⁹⁸ וזאת ההקדמה, כי באלו השני מופתים אין ספק ולא רחיה אל מסכל מתעקש ובלתי מבין הדברים. ואף גם כן כל הקושיות והדחיות שעשה הרב ר' חסדאי על הביאורים שעשה אריסטו על זאת ההקדמה הם הזיות, יבינם מי שנתן לו השם שכל ודעת להבין האמת והשקר.

⁹⁹ Cf. n. 1 (p. 394) on Prop. I, Part II: . . . אנשי השכל והתבונה. אבל אריסטו ידבר עם אנשי השכל והתבונה. אבל אחר שאתה, הבריא השכל, כבר ידעתה.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. n. 44 (p. 427) on Prop. I, Part II: שאריסטו ידבר עם בעל שכל.

The approval which Crescas failed to receive from the Jewish Aristotelians was granted to him in generous measure by the non-Jewish opponents of Aristotle. With the setting in of the reaction against Aristotle, which is marked, if indeed not brought about, by a revival of the views of the early Greek philosophers, Crescas came into his own. The exponents of that movement saw in Crescas a kindred spirit, for he, too, fought against Aristotle by setting up in opposition to him the views of pre-Aristotelian or post-Aristotelian philosophers. One of these, Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, in his work *Examen Doctrinae Vanitatis Gentium*, draws frequently upon Crescas for the confirmation of his own views in the discussion of such problems as vacuum, place, motion and time.¹⁰¹ Sometimes the name of Crescas is mentioned, and in such instances he is referred to as Hebraeus R. Hasdai, or Hebraeus Hasdai or R. Hasdai. The passages from the *Or Adonai* are sometimes translated but more often paraphrased. The accuracy of these translations or paraphrases of Crescas would indicate that he must have received his knowledge of Crescas from some learned Jew, for even if he himself had been a student of Hebrew as his more celebrated uncle Giovanni Pico della Mirandola he could hardly have known enough of the language to read and understand Crescas' work.¹⁰² This confirms us in the belief that a great deal of Jewish philosophy was transmitted orally to non-Jews through the medium of Jewish assistants and that one must not confine the study of Jewish influence upon mediaeval philosophy to Hebrew works which happened to have been translated into Latin. Ever since the time of Emperor Frederick II, Jewish scholars had been used

¹⁰¹ Cf. notes 4 (p. 398) 10, 12 (pp. 402–3), 22, 24, 26, 29, (pp. 412–17) 33, 34, 36 (pp. 41–22), 66, 68 (p. 449) and 78 (p. 456) on Prop. I, Part II; n. 14 (p. 560) on Prop. VIII; n. 5 (p. 564) on Prop. IX; notes 20 and 22 (p. 625) on Prop. XIII; notes 22 (p. 650), 23 (p. 658), 27 (p. 661), 30 (p. 662) and 31 (p. 663) on Prop. XV.

¹⁰² Cf. Joël, *Don Chasdai Crescas' religionsphilosophische Lehren*, pp. 9 and 83.

in Europe as intermediaries. Of some the names are known; but there must have been others whose names are unknown to us.

If it was possible for Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola to become acquainted with some of Crescas' criticisms of Aristotle through some unknown Jewish scholar, we have reason to believe that it is not a mere fortuitous coincidence that many of Giordano Bruno's strictures on Aristotle have a reminiscent ring of similar strictures by Crescas. The name of Crescas is not mentioned by Bruno, but still one cannot help feeling that there must be some connection between them. While any single one of his arguments might have occurred to any one who set out to study Aristotle critically, the accumulation of all of those arguments creates the impression that there must have been some connecting link between Crescas and Bruno. Like Crescas, Bruno argues that Aristotle's definition of place does not apply to the place of the uttermost sphere.¹⁰³ Again, like Crescas, Bruno tries to prove the existence of a vacuum by arguing that according to Aristotle himself the nothingness outside the finite world must be a vacuum and that since that vacuum cannot be limited by a body it must be infinite.¹⁰⁴ Like Crescas, he argues against Aristotle's denial of the existence of an infinite force in a finite body by drawing a distinction between infinite in extension and infinite in intensity.¹⁰⁵ Both of them argue against Aristotle's theory of the lightness of air by the use of the same illustration, the descent of air into a ditch.¹⁰⁶ But more important than these individual arguments is Bruno's refutation of Aristotle's arguments in *De Caelo* against the possibility of circular motion in an infinite body, which bear a striking resemblance to the criticism levelled against them by Crescas. Both of them dismiss all these arguments by declaring that those who believe

¹⁰³ Cf. n. 58 (p. 443) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. n. 36 (p. 422) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. n. 7 (p. 613) on Prop. XII.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. n. 23 (p. 414) on Prop. I, Part II.

the universe to be infinite claim also that it is immovable.¹⁰⁷ Both of them argue that the infinite would be figureless,¹⁰⁸ that it would have no weight and lightness,¹⁰⁹ that it would have neither end nor middle,¹¹⁰ and that when an infinite acts upon a finite or upon another infinite the action would be finite.¹¹¹ Both of them at the conclusion of their refutation of the arguments against infinity take up Aristotle's discussion of the impossibility of many worlds and refute it by the same argument.¹¹² That two men separated by time and space and language, but studying the same problems with the intention of refuting Aristotle, should happen to hit upon the same arguments is not intrinsically impossible, for all these arguments are based upon inherent weaknesses in the Aristotelian system. But knowing as we do that a countryman of Bruno, Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, similarly separated from Crescas in time and space and language, obtained a knowledge of Crescas through some unknown Jewish intermediary, the possibility of a similar intermediary in the case of Bruno is not to be excluded.¹¹³

There was no need for some unknown intermediary to furnish Spinoza with his undoubted knowledge of Crescas' work. Crescas' revised form of the cosmological proof of the existence of God is reproduced by Spinoza with the acknowledgment that he has found it "apud Judaeum quendam Rab Ghasdai vocatum."¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Cf. n. 102 (p. 664) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. n. 122 (p. 470) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. n. 49 (p. 431) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹¹⁰ Cf. n. 125 (p. 472) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹¹¹ Cf. n. 111 (p. 466) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹¹² Cf. notes 126 (p. 472) and 130 (p. 476) on Prop. I, Part II.

¹¹³ General suggestions as to a similarity between Crescas and Bruno have been made by the following authors: Joël, *Don Chasdai Crescas' religionsphilosophische Lehren*, p. 8; Julius Guttman, "Chasdai Crescas als Kritiker der aristotelischen Physik" in *Festschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage Jakob Guttmanns*, p. 45, n. 3; Waxman, *The Philosophy of Don Hasdai Crescas*, p. 45.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Epistola XII olim XXIX.

But more than this. His entire discussion of the infinite, both the restatement of the arguments against its existence and his refutation of these arguments, are directly based upon Crescas. This conclusion does not rest upon similarities between restatements of individual arguments or between individual refutations, for each of these individually could be accounted for by some other source. But there are certain intrinsic difficulties in Spinoza's presentation of the views of his "opponents" which could not be cleared up unless we assumed that he had drawn his information from Crescas. Furthermore, there is something in the literary form in which the problem is treated by him in two independent sources, in the *Ethics* and in his correspondence, which seem to suggest Crescas as his immediate source. In the *Ethics* Spinoza enumerates three "examples" by which the philosophers have tried to prove the impossibility of an infinite. In his letter to Ludovicus Meyer he declares that the problem of the infinite is considered "most difficult, if not insoluble," owing to a failure to make three "distinctions." Now, it happens that these three "distinctions" are suggestive of three refutations advanced by Crescas against three of Aristotle's arguments which correspond to Spinoza's three "examples."¹⁵

Perhaps one should be careful not to overestimate the importance of Crescas' influence upon these men in evaluating their philosophy. One cannot, however, altogether overlook the importance of the striking resemblances between them if one wishes to evaluate the place of Crescas in the general history of philosophy. He anticipated these men in his criticism of Aristotle; his criticism, like theirs, took the form of a revival of the views of pre-Aristotelian Greek philosophers; and what is of still greater importance, he opened for us the vistas of a new conception of the universe.

¹⁵ See H. A. Wolfson "Spinoza on the Infinity of Corporeal Substance" in *Chronicon Spinozanum* IV (1924-26), pp. 79-103; cf. notes 1 (p. 394), 37 (p. 423) and 112 (p. 466) on Prop. I, Part II.