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BARUCH SPINOZA'S RELATION TO JEWISH PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT AND TO JUDAISM

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THE question of how great is the debt of Spinoza to his predecessors, the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, who like him have cogitated on the great problems of God, the world, man and his destiny, has been mooted for generations. Many keen minds have spent a great amount of energy to determine the extent of the residue of Jewish philosophic ideas found in the system of Spinoza. The opinions on the subject are as usual divided. Some claim a close dependence of Spinoza's leading ideas on those of Maimonides and others. Thus, Leibnitz in his time asserted that the foundation of Spinoza's system can be traced to Neo-Platonism and certain forms of Arabic thought colored with a Jewish view, all of which Spinoza obtained through the medium of Maimonides' Guide,¹ a book which he diligently studied. Another early critic, J. Georg Wachter, endeavored to prove the affinity between the Spinozistic system and the Kabbalah.²

The subject has been picked up again in modern times. Dr. Joel³ zealously endeavored to prove Spinoza's dependence on Jewish sources, and even attempted to identify some of his teachings as Jewish. This endeavor, however, is not confined to the Jewish world. There are many non-

¹ Cf. S. Rubin: *Spinoza and Maimonides*, Wien 1869, p. 2 seq.

² Johan Georg Wachter: *Der Spinozismus in Judenthum oder die von dem heutigen Judenthum und dessen geheime Kabbala Vergötterte Welt*, Amsterdam 1699, 2, extracts quoted by Jacob Klatzkin in his ברוך שפינוזה, p. 74.

³ M. Joel *zur Genesis der Lehre Spinozas*.

Jewish scholars who likewise believe in Spinoza's dependence on Jewish thought. Almost the majority of the writers on Spinoza lay great emphasis on his assiduous study of the Jewish philosophers. Some, like Santayana, go even further and speak of "the genuine Hebraism of Spinoza," claiming that pure Hebraism when interpreted philosophically becomes Pantheism.⁴

Yet, there is no lack in thinkers who endeavored zealously to minimize the extent of Jewish influence upon the system of Spinoza and reduce it to almost a negligible quantity. Of these, we can point out Pollock and Kuno Fischer.

The truth, as always, lies in the middle. To speak of Spinoza as a pupil of the Jewish philosophers, as Joel does in his "Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinoza's," where he puts forth the theory that in later years Spinoza turned from Descartes back to the teachings of Jewish philosophy⁵, is unjustified. Spinoza, for one reason or another, entertained no love for Judaism or for its philosophic teachers. It can be surmised that in developing his philosophy, he always felt a conscious or unconscious desire to prove the irrationality of the fundamental principles of Judaism and also to indicate the superiority of his teaching to that of the philosophic doctors of the synagogue.

On the other hand, to minimize the influence of Jewish philosophic thought upon the system of Spinoza is more than unjustified, it is positively contrary to facts. But as I have pointed out elsewhere,⁶ the term influence is not to be construed to mean borrowing or imitation. It really connotes the existence of points of contact between two systems of thought, or as the German calls it *Anregungs-*

⁴ Santayana's Introduction to Boyle's Translation of the Ethics p. xlx.

⁵ *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinoza's* pp. 8, 9 seq.

⁶ *The Philosophy of Don Hisdai Crescas*, p. 27.

punkte, and what is more, the supply by one form of thought of motive power to the other, namely giving it an impulse in a definite direction. This kind of influence between Jewish philosophic thought and the speculation of Spinoza undoubtedly exists, and that in a marked degree.

To understand this kind of influence, its extent and depth, we must have a general characterization of the philosophy of Spinoza. The first thing which attracts our attention is the limited extent of Spinoza's philosophy. As is known to everybody, Spinoza did not elaborate a complete philosophy, for we find that his psychology is wanting, the whole subject dealing with the operation of the mind, such as the processes of sensation, perception, conception, and other phases. Nor are the problems of time and space elaborated upon. In the early "short treatise", which as known contains the skeleton of his Ethics, Spinoza limits his philosophic discussion to three problems, namely, God, Man, and his Happiness. The very same number of problems are treated in the Ethics. The first book is devoted to God, the second, to the nature of the mind, which means as much as the problem of man, and the other three books are devoted to the possibility of human happiness. The limitation of the extent of the problems may be due to other reasons such as the general interest of the intellectual class at the time in just such problems, for the scholastic world had not as yet entirely vanished. But, we cannot help noticing that the two most systematic Jewish philosophers, namely, Saadia and Maimonides, adopted a very similar division in their books. Saadia discusses God in the first two chapters of his *Emunoth Wedeoth*, God and man in the subsequent three chapters, and the other four chapters are devoted to man, namely on the soul, its immortality, and resurrection. The last chapter is devoted to human happiness. We find a similar

arrangement in "The Guide," the first two parts are devoted to God, His attributes, and various phases of His activity, a number of chapters in part III are devoted to the nature of man, and the last four chapters of the book to human happiness. It is true that these subjects are not as sharply delineated and as logically arranged in the works of these two philosophers as in that of Spinoza, but the general lines of division of thought are there. It appears that Spinoza, while the content of his thought is on the whole opposed to the theories of the Jewish philosophers, his thought moves in the same atmosphere, and as we shall see Jewish philosophy and its problems actually gave his speculation the motive power in its definite direction.

What was said about the nature of his problems cannot, however, be said regarding the purpose of his philosophy. Much has been made of the name Ethics, under which Spinoza includes also his metaphysics, and some argued that it goes to prove the Hebraism of Spinoza, and that it demonstrates to what extent he was permeated with the Jewish spirit. But on close analysis the case is not so. It is true that the primary interest of Spinoza lay in the field of human life, for he states distinctly in his Treatise On The Correction of The Understanding, "After experience had taught me that all things which frequently take place in human life are vain and futile—I determined, I say, to inquire whether I might discover and acquire the faculty of enjoying through eternity continual happiness."⁷ We see then that the origin of his philosophy and its source is the quest after the *summum bonum*, and the Metaphysics is really an introduction to his doctrine of conduct in life, namely as a means to determine the exact principle of conduct which shall be both certain and immutable. If we take interest in life as against interest in nature to be

⁷ *De Intellectus Emendatione*, Opera Ed. Van Vloten V. 1, p. 3.

a trait of the Hebraic spirit, in so far Spinoza undoubtedly displayed the influence of race. But if we view the quest for happiness which forms the spring motive of his philosophy in the light of Jewish tradition, Jewish thought, and the state of Judaism in his time, it is most un-Jewish. Jewish philosophers never sought for happiness, for it was given to them by the Torah and by Jewish life. Their primary object in speculation was, as is well known, to harmonize their tradition with the principles of reason. It is only after Spinoza had cut himself entirely loose from the synagogue and its teachings, that he had to find a way *de novo* to happiness. That this is so can be proved by the fact that it is just this part of his system, namely his Ethics proper, in which Spinoza departed most from Jewish ideas, and as Santayana says, "approached the ethical ideas of the Greeks."⁸ It is there where he unfolds his doctrine of freedom and immortality, which is more a negation of both than an affirmation, and it is thus un-Jewish, some similarities in Crescas notwithstanding, for the relation is only a homonymous one.

II

What was remarked about the purpose of Spinoza's philosophy can be said about the content, or the essential nature of his philosophy, though with great modification. The conclusions reached by Spinoza are essentially opposed not only to the basic conceptions of Judaism, but also to their modified form as expressed by the Jewish philosophers.

As is well known to all students of Spinoza, his system, stripped of its quasi-theological language, not only posits a God who is deprived of all semblance of personality—if it is possible to say so, an infinite machine—but ascribes

⁸ Santayana, *loc. cit.*, p. XVII.

also extension, the principal quality of matter, as one of his attributes. It further robs mind or soul of all personal connotations and turns it into a mere cumulus of ideas,⁹ and assumes a freedom which differs only in name and very abstractedly from necessity. It is just such conceptions as Jewish philosophy in all its forms shrank from, vagaries of language and similarities of expression in the writings of some mystics notwithstanding.

Yet, in spite of the conclusions reached by Spinoza, it seems to me that the source motive of his system lay in Jewish philosophy. I believe, first, that Spinoza's speculation arose primarily from his criticism of Jewish Mediaeval philosophy. Second, that its basic ideas, namely, the proof of the existence of God, which ultimately influenced his conception of God, found its spring motive in the theories of at least one Jewish philosopher—Chasdai Crescas.¹⁰

In order to prove our first claim, we shall have to cast a cursory glance upon the difficulties in which Mediaeval Jewish philosophy involved itself, and which difficulties, in my opinion, aroused the severe criticism of Spinoza, and thus gave an impulse to his speculation in its definite direction.

The difficulties of that philosophy are involved in its very nature. The moment philosophy began to change the religious conception of God as such according to which God is represented as a distinct personality with an absolute will, who can perform the impossible, and endeavored to make it more compatible with philosophic notions and divested God of the anthropomorphic conceptions, at that

⁹ Cf. James Martineau, "Spinoza," in his *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. I, p. 322.

¹⁰ This subject was partly touched upon in my book on Hasdai Crescas but only as illustration to the theories of Crescas, but here I want to elaborate the point of showing to what extent Crescas' proof of the existence of God is incorporated in that of Spinoza's.

moment its difficulties began. The question arose if God is to be conceived as an absolute perfect being, strictly immaterial and incorporeal, how then could He have any positive relation to the world, or more definitely, how could the world ever have been created? The objections to creation are as follows: Since God is immaterial, whence then did matter come, for according to the conception of causality, *the like produces the like*, namely, a simple element can only produce a simple element?¹¹ Besides, if creation was in time, we must then posit a reason why God created the world at that time and not before. We cannot assume that it is because of impotence, for He is eternally potent. To assume that there was a certain cause which prompted him to create at a specific time is to limit Him.¹² Aristotle posited, therefore, the eternity of the world. But to assume this solution meant to Jewish philosophers not only to deny tradition, but also to have two eternal entities. There was another solution offered, and that is the Neo-Platonic theory of emanation, namely, that there is a series of emanations from God, which in the measure that they are

גורה מוסכם עליה מאריסטו ומכל מי שנתפלסף, כי הדבר הפשוט אי אפשר שיתחייב מן ממנו אלא פשוט אחד. ואם היה הדבר מורכב יתחייבו ממנו דברים כמספר מה שבו מן הפשוטים אשר הורכב מהם. . . . ולפי זאת הגורה אמר אריסטו שלא התחייב מהשם חיוב ראשון אלא שכל אחד פשוט לא דבר אחר *More Nebukim*, part 11, ch. 22.

The last statement is rather questionable, as the assertion is of a Neo-Platonic character and not Aristotelian. Shem Tob ibn Falkera, the commentator, remarks ad locum: שלא ידעתי באיזה מקום אמר אריסטו' שלא התחייב מהשם חיוב ראשון אלא שכל אחד פשוט לא דבר אחר.

"I do not know where and in what place Aristotle stated that the direct emanation from God must be one simple intelligence and nothing else." But it is known that the Mediaeval Jewish philosophers did not distinguish between Aristotelian ideas proper, and Neo-Platonic ideas which were ascribed to Aristotle by the Arabs.

ודרך אחר יאמרו אמנם יפעל הפועל בעת אחת ולא יפעל בעת אחרת לפי המונעים¹² או המביאים המתחדשים לו בו, ויחייבו לו המונעים בשל פעולה מה שירצוהו, ויחייבו לו המקרים רצון מה שלא היה רוצהו מקודם, ואחר שהבורא יתעלה שמו אין מקרים לו שיחייבו שנוי רצון ולא מונעים אצלו, ולא מעכבים, שיתחדשו או יסורו, איך אין צד להיותו פועל בעת אחת ולא יפעל בעת אחרת, אבל פעלו כמו התמדתו נמצא בפועל *More Nebukim*, Part II, Ch. 14. Cf. also Ch. 18 Second Method.

further removed from God, become more and more material. This solution is repeated often by Jewish Neo-Platonists, especially by Kabbalists, in different and quaint expressions which remind us often of the language of Spinoza. Hence, the oft-repeated assertion that Spinoza derived his principles from the Kabbalah.

These difficulties greatly worried the Mediaeval Jewish philosophers. Maimonides attempts to dispose in his way of the eternity of the world. He tries to disprove it on physical grounds, and also rejects the theory of emanation. The last one, he says, is unthinkable, for as we go back to the first emanation, we find that we cannot overcome the difficulty. The first intelligence is undoubtedly simple, since it was evolved from pure spirit. How then can the compound form of existing things come from such an intelligence in a fixed and necessary manner?¹³ He, therefore, takes refuge in saying that we cannot actually conceive God and really perceive how it is possible to overcome all these difficulties. We have to assume that in God's will there is no potentiality and it is always an actuality. It is, therefore, possible for Him to act at one time and not to act at another time.¹⁴ That this is a refuge in mysticism rather than in philosophy is evident.

Gersonides, who was more of a rationalist and more consequential in his reasoning, disdained such a refuge and thought to be able to solve the difficulty by adopting the

¹³ ואחר אלו ההקדמות אומר שזה אשר יזכרוהו אריסטו שהשכל הראשון סבה לשני והשני סבה לשלישי. וכן אלו היו מדרגותיהם אלפים, השכל הראשון מהם פשוט הוא בלי ספק. ומאין נמצאת ההרכבה הנמצאת באלו הנמצאות ע"צ החיוב כמו שיחשוב אריסטו? *Ibid.*, Ch. 22. As it was remarked in the previous note, this is not Aristotelian but Neo-Platonic.

¹⁴ שזה הענין (רצ"ל יציאה מן הכח אל הפועל) אמנם יתחייב בכל מורכב מחומר בעל היה אפשרות ומצורה, כי בלא ספק כשיפעל הנשם ההוא בצורתו אחר שלא עשה כלל היה בו דבר בכח ויצא לפועל וא"א לו מבלתי מוציא—אבל מה שאינו נוף ואין לו חומר אין בעצמו בשום פנים אפשרות וכל מה שיש לו הוא בפעל תמיד ולא יתחייב בו זה ולא ימנע בו שיעשה עת ולא יעשה עת *Ibid.*, Ch. 18, First Method. Cf. also in the same chapter Second Method toward the end.

Platonic theory, i. e. Creation out of chaos to which even Maimonides was not averse.¹⁵ He, therefore, believes that creation was out of chaos or formless matter, and that the creation in time was due to the imperfection of that matter which was not as yet ready to be created or formed.¹⁶ The weakness of this solution is quite patent and Crescas did not fail to seize hold of it. He argues that Maimonides did not satisfy the requirement, for to say that God's will is different in nature does not answer the question, for as long as we call it will, it must either be constantly active since it is always the same, or there must be a cause for its inactivity at a certain time.¹⁷ As for Gersonides' idea of formless matter placing obstruction, Crescas refutes it by saying how could it obstruct anything, since it is formless and could possibly not have had any perfection or imperfection?¹⁸

Crescas' own solution is that creation is through will though necessary. Briefly, it is thus; since we conceive God as a thinking being, it follows that together with bringing about the existence of things, there ought to be a presentation of that existence. Again, a thinking principle wills what it desires, creation is, therefore, through will. And since God's thinking is necessary, so is creation necessary, and it follows also that since His will is eternal, creation

¹⁵ ——— אמנם אם יאמין הקדמות על הדעת השני אשר בארנוהו והוא דעת אפלטון ———
הדעת שהוא לא יסתר יסודי התורה ולא תמשך אחריו הכובת האותות אבל העברתם
Ibid., Ch. 25.

¹⁶ כן לא יתואר השם יתברך ביכולת שישים נמצא תמיד הטוב בנושם אשר נתהוה ממנו
העולם כי החסרון אשר בטבע הגשם ההוא בעצמו יחייב שיהיה הטוב בו נברא
Milhamot Vi, 1, 18.

¹⁷ ולזה מה שחוייב שלא יהיה תכלית אחר בייחוד העת אלא הרצון לבר ובוה אפשר
שיאמר שאחר שנור חכמתו להמציא אחר האפס המוחלט הנה ראוי שיבוקש תכלית לעת
מיחד. *Or Adonai III*, 4, p. 66b.

¹⁸ ואחר שיהיה יחסו יתברך ויתעלה שמו אל כל העתים אחד ויחס הגשם ההוא וכל
המתהווה ממנו אל כל העתים אחד גם כן' הנה אי-אפשר שיהיה לשנוי הרצון בייחוד העת
שום סבה. *Ibid.*, 68b.

must be eternal.¹⁹ The question of the relation between God and matter, he attempts to solve by saying that God is essentially good, and reality is also good, so that we can say that like produced like. Moreover, existence in as far as it is good is also simple, so there is again a likeness.²⁰ However, he did not really explain the origin of matter, and what is more, he turns suddenly around and even assumes the novelty of the world, though he subsequently modifies it by saying that there is a possibility of a series of worlds continually being created and destroyed.²¹

I have gone somewhat at length into this matter, for, to my mind, these difficulties and their weak solutions formed the starting point of Spinoza's speculation. After meditating upon the insoluble difficulties, Spinoza thought, especially after Crescas had drawn conclusions further than his predecessors, that it would be best to draw them still further and thus come to a solution. We can imagine that the initial process of his own speculation which ultimately deviated so greatly from Jewish philosophy ran in such fashion. If, after all proposed solutions to the problems of creation in time and origin of matter, the difficulty still remains, for even if we assume with Crescas that creation is eternal, the origin of matter still remains to be explained, may I then not try a different solution, namely, to include matter or extension as an attribute of God and thus solve the riddle?

Of course, the inclusion of matter or extension as an

¹⁹ ולזה יחויב מהנחתנו זאת, רוצה לומר אצילות המציאות תמיד על צד החיוב, חיוב
יכולת בלתי בעל תכלית נפעל תמיד. *Ibid.*, 69a.

²⁰ וזה שלמה שהתבאר—— אין דרך לצאת מהספק הזה איך נאצל זה המורכב בעל
חומר ונשמות מהאחד הפשוט אלא כשיאמר שלמה שהיה המציאות בכללו איש אחד טוב
בתכלית השלמות מה שאפשר לפי המקבל, והיה מדרך ה ט ו ב להשפיע הטוב על צד
החניניה—— והיה הטוב במה שהוא טוב הוא אחד פשוט, הנה עם היותו המציאות
מורכב אשר מזה הצד הם רבים אין הטוב והשלמות הנמצא לא במה שהוא רבים אלא
במה שהוא אחד. *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70a.

attribute of God brought about a complete change in Spinoza's conception of God which resulted in the absolutely impersonal and almost mechanical God such as He is revealed to us in the Ethics. But this change was a gradual one. Spinoza did not break suddenly with Jewish philosophy. In the short treatise, where he already began to develop his God conception, he still uses such expressions as goodness of God, omniscience, and similar terms used in Jewish philosophy.²²

I believe that the first claim maintained above, namely, that Spinoza's criticism of Jewish philosophy formed the starting point of his speculation is thus somewhat established.* We will now pass over to the second point which is, that in building up his system, Spinoza utilized the arguments of Jewish philosophers, especially that of Crescas. I have already remarked on the general points of contact between the two systems in my book, but here I wish to further elaborate one point which is the corner-stone of the philosophy of Spinoza, namely the proof for the existence of God and His conception.

Crescas' proof of the existence of God runs as follows: Whether there is a finite number or an infinite number of effects, or whether an infinite series of causes is given, but as long as the series is infinite and all things are caused, we

²² Short Treatise, English translation by A. Wolf. P. 21 note 2, & p. 25.

*After this essay was written, there came to my notice an excellent article by Prof. Harry Wolfson entitled "Spinoza on the Unity of Substance" in volume II of the *Chronicon Spinozanum*, where a similar line of reasoning is followed in regard to Spinoza's relation to these two fundamental problems in Jewish philosophy, i. e. creation and origin of matter. But while I am especially interested in proving the probability of the hypothesis that criticism of Jewish philosophy gave the impetus to Spinoza to start on his line of speculation, Prof. Wolfson takes up the more detailed refutations by Spinoza of the solutions offered by Jewish philosophers. I am exceedingly glad to refer the interested reader to that article for further study on the matter.

do not find in nature a thing which is absolutely necessary of existence. But to conclude this is impossible, for if all beings are possible, there must be some power that calls forth existence, so as to overbalance privation.²³ As we can notice, this proof does not emphasize temporal causality, but logical priority. The proof was not only read by Spinoza, but was even quoted in his letter to Ludwig Meyer (Ep. XII, Ed. Van Vloten), and he mentions Crescas by name, and remarks correctly that the strength of the proof rests on the absurdity of positing a world of possibles. It is, therefore, my opinion that it is this proof which is contained in the basic conception of Spinoza's philosophy, i. e. in his own proof of the existence of God.

To understand his proof, though, we must take cognizance of another element contained in it besides the Crescasian. It is the one which posits the reality of conceived truth. Spinoza was a great believer in the truth of clear ideas. He says distinctly, a clear idea carries its own truth with it,²⁴ and whatever is true must be real.²⁵ These two elements, that of Crescas and the reality of truth constitute his proof. It runs in its final form presented in the Ethics, in my opinion, as follows: The first definition Book I reads: "I understand that to be the cause of itself (*causa sui*) whose essence involves existence and whose nature cannot

²³ והנה אם שהיו עלות ועוללים ב'ת או בב'ת אין המלט מהיות ע'לה אחת לכל'לם למה שאם היו כלם עלולים היו אפשרי המציאות בבחינת עצמם והם צריכים למכריע ה'ת יכריע מציאותם על העדרם, והעלה לכלם המקב'עת מציאותם והוא האל ה'ת Tr. 1 sect. 3 ch. 2 p. 22.

²⁴ Nam si esset simplex, esset clara et distincta, et per consequens vera. De Intellectus Emendatione, Opera Ed. Van Vloten P. 20.

²⁵ Quod certitudinem involvat, hoc est, quod sciat res ita est formaliter ut in ipso objective continentur, namely that the understanding involves certainty, that is that it knows things to exist formally just as they are contained in it objectively. *Ibid.* P. 32.

be conceived unless existing."²⁶ This means as much as to say that "causa sui" and "essence involves existence" are the same thing, for when a thing is not self-caused but caused by something else, I can conceive its essence as *supposed* to be caused by something else, but not really as caused, hence, it is really not existing. This definition is not only the keystone of the proof of the existence of God but carries the proof itself. The underlying thought is Crescasian. The world of things is all caused. We must then logically conceive one self-caused cause, and we do conceive it. It follows, then, that this cause is really existing, for its very essence in conception involves existence and a true idea is real. Spinoza, however, did not make it so simple. He goes about the proof in a circuitous way, so as to make it more geometric and also to draw other conclusions regarding the nature of that self-existing cause.

After equating "causa sui," with that "essence which involves existence" he applies to it the good old name of substance, a term which is his principal tool of operation in his system, in Definition III. which reads: "I understand substance to be that which is in itself and conceived through itself: I mean that the conception of which does not depend on another thing from which it must be formed." In this definition, he does not add anything new. He merely explains the two previous terms, i. e. causa sui and essence involving existence, namely, why does "causa sui's" essence involve existence, because its conception does not depend on the conception of another thing from which it must be formed, since it is self-caused, and its existence could not have possibly been taken away, as in the case of a caused

²⁶ Per causam sui intelligo id, cujus esentia involvit existentiam; sive id, cujus natura non potest concipi nisi existens.

thing whose essence I might conceive but whose existence was prevented.²⁷

He further buttresses his main idea by Axiom IV where he says, "The knowledge of effect depends on the knowledge of cause, and involves the same," which is only an explanation why the conceived essence of a possible, namely, a caused thing, does not involve existence, since its true conception depends on the cause inasmuch as its existence depends on it. This axiom is directly related to axiom VII which says, "The essence of that which can be conceived as not existing does not involve existence," which means the essence of a caused thing which can be conceived as not existing, namely, being prevented from existence by another body, does not involve existence since it can be prevented. These axioms, as well as definition III are really auxiliaries to definition I, and thus complete the proof for the existence of God, or self-caused substance whose essence involves existence which equals the Jewish term **מחויב** **המצויאות**.

Returning to Spinoza's proof for the existence of God, we pick up the thread in Proposition VII which says, "Existence appertains to the nature of substance," the real proof of which is as follows: Since we conceive substance to be such that can have no cause, it follows that existence

²⁷ I am quite aware that my interpretation of the third definition which construes it to be merely an explanation of definition I differs from the one followed by many scholars who consider it the most important of his definitions. I believe that Spinoza arranged his definitions with great care. They are after all not arbitrary assumptions, but as Höfding well remarked (*Das erste Buch der Ethica, Chronicon Spinozanum*, Vol. II, p. 27) the result of Spinoza's scientific analysis of conceptions. If he placed the definition of 'causa sui' first, he meant by it to signify its importance. And if my interpretation of this definition is correct, then the third definition can have no other meaning than the one given in the text. Prof. Wolfson offers a very ingenious interpretation but to my mind not the right one, in his article 'Spinoza's Definition of Substance and Mode' in *Chron. Spinozanum*, Vol. I.

is expressed in the conception of its essence, for otherwise its conception has no meaning, i. e. is self-contradictory. Proposition VI which preceds this one and reads, "One substance cannot be produced by another," is really not relevant to the proof of Prop. VII itself, for as Wolfson has shown²⁸ the group of propositions from II to VI inclusive are intended to prove the unity of God and the impossibility of two deities or substances, and are primarily a criticism against the creation doctrines of Jewish philosophy. If Spinoza refers to it as a part of proof of Prop. VII, it is only for other purposes. He then comes to the final step Prop. XI, "God or a substance necessarily exists,"²⁹ the word "necessarily" is added for strength of conclusion, for that God exists by necessity is already included in Def. I. The first proof of Prop. XI which is short is really the proof, and the meaning is as follows: God necessarily exists, namely, cannot be prevented from existing, for if God does not exist, then we must say that His essence does not involve existence, i. e. He has a cause. But we have conceived God as not being produced, then either our conception is contradictory or we have no true conception.

I believe that I have shown to what extent Crescas' proof is the fundamental element in the foundation of his philosophy. That this is the right interpretation of his proof and that of the first definition is corroborated by the second scholium to Prop. VIII where the questions of causality and

²⁸ Wolfson in the above referred to article in *Chronicon Spinozanum*, p. 94.

²⁹ I have quoted the prop. in abbreviated form. It reads in full as follows: "God or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists. I consider the omitted words not relevant to the proposition, for they only explain the kind of substance Spinoza thinks God to be. The infinity of attributes was proved in Prop. IX, in this Prop. (XI) Spinoza clinches the existence of God. The proofs he adduces (three in number) only prove His existence and do not speak about the attributes.

conception are connected. We can thus safely speak of influence, for Crescas gave Spinoza the impulse to his thought. In this connection I want to point out one more proof which is quoted by Spinoza for the existence of God, i. e. Third proof of Prop. XI, which closely resembles one of Saadia's proofs. It runs as follows: "Inability to exist is want of power, and, on the other hand, ability to exist is power. Things which now exist consist only of finite things and are more powerful than a being absolutely infinite, but this is absurd. Therefore, either nothing exists, or a being absolutely infinite exists. And we either exist in ourselves or in something else which exists of necessity. Therefore, a being absolutely infinite, that is God, necessarily exists." The last sentence of the proof gives a Cartesian shade, namely proving the existence of God from our own existence. But this comes only to prove the certainty of the existence of finite things, i. e. our own existence of which we are most certain. The real proof is a special application of Saadia's proof who uses it to prove that things cannot create themselves,³⁰ and Spinoza uses it to prove the existence of God from the existence of things. It is to be understood in the following manner. If you say finite things exist, namely, they created themselves, then you must also say than an infinite being created itself, for it could not be less powerful, and since that happened, the finite things could no more create themselves for they were limited by the infinite. It is rather a clever use of Saadia's proof.

Thus Spinoza proves the existence of God. His main point that He is also extension emerges formally in the second book (Prop. III) but the ground for it has been laid in propositions II-VI³¹. The rest of book I is devoted to a thorough criticism of the theory of creation of Jewish philo-

³⁰ *Emunot Wedeot* Ed. Jusefof, p. 31a.

³¹ Cf. Wolfson *loc. cit.*

sophy without which his thesis could not have been proved. This is done in four steps. In Prop. XV, which says, "Whatever is, is in God and nothing can exist or be conceived without God." This means that God is the cause of existence of all things. Nothing new as yet. God is *causa sui*, other things are possible of existence. But in the note to this Proposition, he starts to argue against those who say that matter is finite. We do not know definitely who they are. It may be Maimonides or Aristotle for that matter, for the arguments of the protagonists of finitude of matter quoted there are the Aristotelian arguments, they are even reproduced by Crescas who like Spinoza championed the existence of the infinite.³² He even mentions that he does not see why extended substance is unworthy of divine nature. But he is not ready yet. The second step then is Prop. XVII, "God acts merely according to His own laws," i. e. by necessity. This is his broadside against creation in time, against Jewish philosophy. In the famous lengthy note to that proposition where the disputed passage occurs, "Those who have asserted that God's intellect, will, and power are the same," he attempts to prove that God's will is not free in our sense and is not subject to change, and, therefore, God's omnipotence was in action from eternity, i. e. creation not in time. Those who assert that creation was in time, he says limit His potency, for His intellect perceives all, if He did create in time, He must then have been prevented. Spinoza further proves his contention by identifying intellect and will—the above mentioned passage refers to my mind to Crescas who says a thing similar to that.³³ I know no other reference to such a saying.—And therefore,

³² Cf. *The Phil. of Don Hasdai Crescas*, pp. 37–40.

³³ Cf. Or Adonai, p. 69a. He does not use these words though, but it is inferred from his theory of creation which combines both will and intellect and (cf. above) also speaks of eternal and infinite creative activity.

since all agree that the intellect of God is eternal, they will have to agree that His will or action is eternal. He then proceeds to prove that the intellect of God is the cause not only of the existence of things but also of their essence—his theory of the homonymity between God's intellect and the human one reminds us of Maimonides (*Moreh*, I, 56). It follows (*Prop.* XVIII) that God is the immanent cause of things and not the transcendent one, namely, creation as an external act has been removed. He has already completed his criticism of Jewish philosophy showing that the difficulties are insurmountable. He now proceeds to speak about attributes, developing his view of creation. This occupies from *Prop.* XX to XXXII, where he returns again to the question of God, free will, and necessity, for as pointed out before this view is the key to his system, namely, the critical side that there is eternal creation and necessary, not free at that. Hence *Prop.* XXXIII, "Things could not have been produced in any other manner or order than that in which they were produced." The whole note to that *Prop.* is intended against the conceptions of Jewish philosophy of the Divine will and the possibility of its change. At the end of this note there is in my opinion a direct charge against Crescas—not mentioning him by name—who is the author of the theory referred to by Spinoza, which states that God acts in all things for the furthering of good. It is he who says that insofar as existence is good, God in acting as the cause of being is voluntarily good.³⁴ Spinoza argues that this seems like imposing an end to God's action to which He looks up. He is, however, not quite right in his stricture, for the goodness Crescas speaks of is not external but an inner one, and is God's very essence.³⁵

³⁴ Or *Adonai* p. 69a, also p. 60a.

³⁵ הטוב המוחלט אשר ההטבה לו דבר עצמי, הנה כשיפעל דבר חכליתו ההטבה
Ibid. p. 61a & b.

We have seen the constant critical attitude which Spinoza assumes toward Jewish philosophy, especially against the theory of creation in time; and how he attempts to prove his other point, extension as expressing the essence of God, in note to Prop. XV, but we cannot follow this proof in detail as it is based on a concatenation of ideas, which would be too lengthy to reproduce. We have shown so far the relation or influence of Jewish philosophy on the first part of Ethics.

With the positing of extension as an attribute of God, Spinoza parted company with Judaism and Jewish philosophy. There may be some points of contact in his theory of the emotions with Jewish thought, but it requires investigation. It is, therefore, unnecessary for us to go at present into its intricate mazes. But a few words ought to be said about his Amor Dei Intellectualis, of which much has been made on account of its similarity in language to the expression of אהבת ה'.

As I have shown elsewhere, its essence is the highest intellectualism which perceives the intrinsic causal necessity of all things.³⁶ This kind of love, it is true, may lead to acquiescence of mind, which will result in a stoic cheerfulness, and to a certain kind of joy arising from the fact that man is being conscious of an all-embracing knowledge, but to nothing more. That Jewish love of God includes a good deal more inasmuch as it is emotional and posits God as some kind of personality is self-evident. Even Crescas who speaks more of the love of God than any Jewish philosopher, and makes it the end of human life, is extremely far in his theory of love of God from that of Spinoza's. According to him, it is based on two propositions: one, that a perfect being loves the good, and that the desire for it is proportional to the degree of perfection a being possesses;

³⁶ *The Phil. of Hasdai Crescas* pp. 148-150.

Two, that love for a thing is not related to the intellectual vigor employed in conceiving the thing.³⁷ Love of God, who is infinitely good, is necessary for the perfection of the soul. This love gives rise to an ethical system based on emotion and duties of the heart. We can see already the intrinsic difference between these two conceptions of Amor Dei.

There is a closer relation on that point between Spinoza and Maimonides, who like Spinoza makes knowledge the highest degree of perfection, and even says that love of God can be attained not by mere observance of the precepts but only by knowledge of God in its full truth.³⁸ Maimonides, however, is rather secretive and not explicit on that point. His words might have served to Spinoza as a certain stimulus, but there is no direct borrowing nor even influence to a greater extent. We have seen that love of God with Spinoza is an integral part of his entire system.

Yet, if we speak of the form of Amor Dei, we may undoubtedly conclude that there was an unconscious desire in Spinoza to retain the favorite terms in Judaism which meant so much to the Jews of his time and probably to himself in his early youth. In general, we can say that Spinoza's system runs close to Jewish philosophy, though not strictly in parallel lines. It began in considering its problems and in criticising the solutions of its problems. It constantly diverged from it, but towards the end it runs again close to Jewish philosophy though only in form. Spinoza, though he separated from the synagogue, always remained in its shadow. He wanted to construct for himself a place of security and happiness where he could rest peacefully, as the believing Jew nestled in the hollow of the hand of God, and this he found in the Amor Dei Intellectualis. Thus, he did not altogether escape Judaism.

³⁷ Or Adonai, p. 54a & b.

³⁸ See *Guide*, p. 111, ch. 51, and the long note to it