

## THE *ABSCONDITA SAPIENTIAE* OF JOSEPH DEL MEDIGO.

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The following essay is offered as a contribution to the understanding of the environment out of which Spinoza sprang. It has long been recognized that the almost complete anonymity of his work conceals a synthesis of various elements drawn from widely different sources, and few students have failed to add yet another source to the long list. The well known saying of Trendelenburg that Spinoza had *thought much but read little* was refuted once for all by the revelations of the catalogue of his library<sup>1</sup>; but we now know, or are assured, that his reading extended far beyond the confines even of that extensive collection. Spinoza displays so many affinities with the results of this, that and the other thinker, that we are forced to assume (so the argument runs) that he was directly acquainted with their work.

To the unprejudiced mind however a different hypothesis presents itself to account for this phenomenon, if it be accepted as a fact. A system may be a synthesis, even a cogglomeration, of various distinct elements; but it by no means follows therefrom that the author of the system himself effected the synthesis. The different elements might have been taken over by him already synthesized, and he may well have been ignorant of the original sources from which ultimately they sprang. The most original thinker draws much from the intellectual environment in which he is brought up, and his seemingly most complex thought might have been absorbed by him as a commonplace of cultural tradition. The book to which I propose drawing attention offers a striking illustration of this truth. It belongs to the generation before Spinoza and was therefore part of the intellectual equip-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gebhardt: *Die Bibliothek Spinozas* in Appendix to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Kuno Fischer's *Spinoza* (Heidelberg 1909) p. 600.

ment of his own time; the Hebrew language in which it is written allows us to conceive its content as characteristic of the community from which he was early severed; and the prestige of the writer under whose name it was issued, not only traveller and philosopher, but also for some time acting Rabbi of that same community, explains its presence in his library. Now a casual glance at this work reveals the remarkable fact that the actual inquiries which it comprehends are precisely the same as those which went to make up the characteristic portions of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Ethics*. I do not for one moment believe or assert that in itself it exercised any influence whatever on the course of Spinoza's thought. Its value is rather that of an objective picture of the intellectual atmosphere of the place and time. Its very existence indeed indicates the presence of a range of interest and of an accumulation of material, within the four walls, and in the very language, of the Synagogue, such as only waited for a man of sufficient intellectual power in order to result in that wealth of creative ideas which we associate with the name of Spinoza.

The *Abscondita Sapientiæ* of Rabbi Joseph del Medigo, No. 56 in the list of Spinoza's library, is, as the Latin title page already informs us, a collection of various treatises by different authors<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Collectanea decerpta per Magistrum R. Samuelem Germanum ex magno opere Absconditorum Sapientiæ: quod quidem exasciavit, nondum tamen undique expolivit vir clarissimus, omniscius καὶ παντοπλοῦν Joseph del Medico cretensis. Quibus adiecti sunt aliquot tractatus delectabiles ex scriptis magnorum virorum, ut sequens pagina demonstrat.* Joseph del Medigo was born in Candia (Crete) in 1591 and died in Prague in 1655. He was educated at Padua where he studied medicine, philosophy, ancient Greek, the natural sciences, and mathematics — these last at the lectures of Galileo. From about 1628 to 1630 he acted as Rabbi of the Amsterdam community, during which time his other published work, a collection of treatises in Hebrew on the higher mathematics, appeared from the press of Menasseh ben Israel. Now the standard monograph, written half a century before the discovery of the inventory of Spinoza's books, remarked on the similarity of Del Medigo's views on prophecy expressed in the course of some bye-remarks in this work on mathematics, with those of Spinoza in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. (Geiger: *Melo Chof-najim*, Berlin, 1840, p. 41, n. 2.) Is it an accident that the volume next to the *Abscondita Sapientiæ* in the library list (No 57) is *Een Rabbinisch Mathematisch boeck*?

The first volume contains the *Behinath Hadath*, or, *Examination of Religion*, of Joseph's great-greatgrandfather, R. Elijah del Medigo; the *Matzref Lehochmah*, or *Refining of Wisdom*, of R. Joseph; accounts of the life and philosophy of the celebrated Kabbalist, R. Isaac Luria; and various Maimonideana, including Nahmanides' letter in defence of the Guide, and Maimonides' own on *Apostacy* and *The Resurrection*. The second volume, which a comparison of the various title-pages shows to have been published together with the first<sup>1</sup>, contains principally the *Nobloth Hochmah* a fanciful name, perhaps to be translated *Last Leaves of Wisdom*, of R. Joseph. Leaving this second volume for later consideration, because the problems to which it gives rise are of more delicate and less obvious character, we draw attention to the indisputable fact that the views of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* on the relations between religion and philosophy are very similar to, and, in most important points, in verbal agreement with, those of the *Examination of Religion* of R. Elijah; and that the opinions expressed in the same treatise on the subject of the nature and antiquity of the vocalisation and text of the Hebrew Bible, might have been taken bodily from the quotations from, and references to, the *Meor Eynaim* (or, *Light of the Eyes*) of R. Azaria di Rossi of Mantua (1513—78), which are given in the *Refining of Wisdom* of R. Joseph. This last point has great interest from the point of view of the history of Spinozistic criticism, because it strikingly confirms a conjecture of the brilliant pioneer worker Dr. M. Joel.

## 1. THE EXAMINATION OF RELIGION AND THE RELATIONS OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY.

The *Examination of Religion* opens with a discussion of the quarrel between Religion and Philosophy. Starting from the Maimonidean position that religion is for the ordinary man, and

<sup>1</sup> In any case the Latin title-page (quoted in the preceding note) from which the title and author of the book were taken for the inventory, and which, therefore, must have been in Spinoza's copy, contains the list of contents of both volumes overleaf.

philosophy for the specialist student, it proceeds to point out that this really implies that the spheres of the two are distinct. Those thinkers, therefore, like Maimonides, who had sought to establish the one on the other, were fundamentally wrong. Religion must be judged by itself: in accordance with its own object, the perfection of the ordinary man in society; and in agreement with its own data, the Bible, which includes as a fact a miraculous element. It follows that true religion is to be distinguished from false religion, not by philosophical, but by religious, considerations; and these religious considerations comprise not only, and indeed not especially, theoretical opinions, but also practical ways of life.

If we compare a couple of the opening passages with the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the striking character of the resemblance is evident. *If perhaps you find a religion agreeing with this our divine law in its speculative grounds*, writes R. Elijah, *it will yet be distinct from it in its practical commandments and ordinances, those factors which without doubt bring man to the good. The truth of a religion, then, cannot be judged on the score of its speculative opinions only<sup>1</sup>. I have not chosen, therefore, in this treatise, to put forward metaphysical arguments against the philosophers in matters appertaining to philosophy, because religion is not within the province of metaphysical argument; but I have taken my stand on prophecy and true tradition. I consider that those of our predecessors among our co-religionists who desired to deal with these questions by metaphysical argument abused the methods of logic, which are, in fact, peculiar to each subject matter. They stood as intermediaries between the scripturalists and the non-scripturalists, and as a result were neither scripturalists nor philosophers. Their intention was, perhaps, to bring wisdom near to ordinary men, but they succeeded only in holding it back . . . Our exalted teacher Moses Maimonides trod in this path . . . And*

<sup>1</sup> That is, those relating to pure metaphysics. R. Elijah distinctly enumerates what he considers to be the essentials of religious belief. If those of specifically Jewish interest be removed, the list is much the same as that proffered in *Theol.-Pol.* cap. XIV.

again: *My way, then, is different from that of many of the philosophers of our nation who perverted the meanings of the Law and of Philosophy, and confused the two spheres of proof, the religious and the speculative . . . They thought they were mediating between the theologians and the philosophers: but the intermediate is justified of neither of the two extremes. The result was that they became followers neither of the Bible nor of philosophy<sup>1</sup> . . .*

It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out how closely this is reproduced in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. The professed aim of the *Tractatus* is to refute the view of Maimonides that philosophy and theology are identical, and the crucial chapter to which all the earlier chapters are preliminary and all the later commentary<sup>2</sup>, fums up the discussion in the very words of the *Examination of Religion*. *Qui philosophiam a Theologia separare nesciunt*, we read, *disputant num Scriptura rationi, an contra Ratio Scripturæ debeat ancillari . . . Utam sequamur sententiam, vel Rationem vel Scripturam corrumpere necesse est. Ostendimus enim, Scripturam non res philosophicas sed solam pietatem docere . . . Adeoque uterque, hic scilicet sine Ratione, ille vero cum Ratione, insaniet. Primus, qui inter Phariseos aperte statuit, Scripturam Rationi esse accomodandam, fuit Maimonides; cuius quidem sententiam . . . recensuimus multisque argumentis refutavimus . . .*<sup>3</sup> This general position of Spinoza's seems to us obvious, but in its time it was a dangerous, indeed revolutionary novelty. The question at issue is not that of a philosophical definition or an abstract idea. We are dealing here with general points of view involving vital issues. The definite fundering of the spheres of theology and philosophy to the establishment of which, as the political principle of the independence of church and state and the intellectual principle of the emancipation of thought from all external authority, the *Tractatus*

<sup>1</sup> *Examination* pp. 3b and 6b. — <sup>2</sup> *Hoc usque Philosophiam a Theologia separare curavimus et libertatem philosophandi ostendere quam hæc unicuique concedit. Quare tempus est ut inquiramus quo usque hæc libertas, . . . se extendat. Theol.-Pol. XVI. § 1.* — <sup>3</sup> *Theol.-Pol. cap. XV. ad init.*

*Theologico-Politicus* is specifically devoted, is one of the landmarks in the history of political freedom as well as of intellectual development. Spinoza's treatise, as is well known, was one of the storm-centres of the controversy which raged on this subject all over Europe. We now see that the very phraseology of its main thesis is to be found in the obscure Hebrew essay of R. Elijah.

There is no mystery of course as to the ultimate origins of the doctrine. R. Elijah, the author of the *Examination of Religion*, was none other than the famous Elias Cretenfis (1460—1497). Called from Crete at an early age to act as head of the Paduan Talmudic Academy, he was invited to decide a philosophical dispute which had broken out in the university<sup>1</sup>, and in recognition of the fairness of his decision is said to have been given the chair of philosophy — at the age of twenty three! However that may be, Elijah was a well-known teacher of philosophy and had among his pupils Pico di Mirandola. Padua was, of course, the home of Averroism, and Elijah borrowed the material for the *Examination of Religion*, as for other of his works, from Averroes<sup>2</sup>. It is the famous doctrine of the *two truths* which has made its way from the Arabic into the Hebrew, from the Hebrew into the Latin, from the Latin into every civilized tongue, to become a classic exposition of the demand of the human mind for freedom.

## 2. THE REFINING OF WISDOM AND THE PHILOLOGY OF THE TRACTATUS THEOLOGICO-POLITICUS.

The *Refining of Wisdom* is attached to the second part of the *Examination of Religion* in which the authenticity of the Zohar had been impugned on internal grounds, and its general aim is to vindicate the antiquity of the Zohar, and indeed of all, and any, traditional lore alike. The value of the work lies paradoxically enough in its copious accounts of the views selected

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<sup>1</sup> *Refining of Wisdom* 3b. — <sup>2</sup> Steinschneider: *Hebräische Übersetzungen*, pp. 277 and 974; Renan, *Averroes*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 197 and 382. It is not surprising, then, that similar views should have been held by Bruno (1548—1600) (see McIntyre: *Giordano Bruno*, Macmillan 1903, p. 299—300).

for refutation. The method of allegorization, for example, particularly as associated with the name of Maimonides, meets with severe criticism, in the course of which extracts are given from a contemporary writer who denied the existence of angels in any sense but that of natural forces; who refused to allow the Biblical text any authority in determining his opinions; and who, on the basis of the long chain given in Chronicles of the descendants of Jechoniah, asserted that the stories current in the period following the destruction of the first temple *varied from one another in the same way as the stories of modern 'historiographers', no two of whom you will find to agree as to the facts of past history*<sup>1</sup>.

The point of particular interest for Spinoza's treatise is the section dealing with the antiquity of the vowel points of the Hebrew Bible, where those very opinions of Elias Levita which were believed by Joel to have reached Spinoza through the *Light of the Eyes* of di Rossi, are, as a fact, quoted by R. Joseph from *The Light of the Eyes*. *Ich will es dahin gestellt sein lassen*, remarks Joel<sup>2</sup>, *ob Spinoza nicht aus ihm (di Rossi) den Nachweis des Elias Levita kennt, dass die Vokal- und Accentzeichen der hebräischen Sprache erst spätere Einführungen sind, da er für diese Behauptung Beide nicht citiert*. Nor of course does he cite the *Refining of Wisdom*. It is however a curious fact that the relevant portions of the fifty-seventh chapter of di Rossi's work to which Joel rightly refers is reproduced *word for word* in pages 10a and b of the *Refining*. Indeed so enchanted is R. Joseph with the clarity of di Rossi's treatment that he cannot forbear urging on the reader again and again<sup>3</sup> to refer to it directly himself. Since di Rossi's quotations from Philo, which are repeated in *Theol.-Pol.* 10 § 3 and § 26<sup>4</sup>, are not to be found, so far as I have

<sup>1</sup> *Refining*, pp. 29a—b. The last difficulty would seem to have been well known. Cf. *Theol.-Pol.* Annot. XXI to cap. X ad init. — <sup>2</sup> *Spinozas Theologisch-Politischer Tractat*, Breslau 1870, p. 62. — <sup>3</sup> *Refining* pp. 10b, 11a, 11b. Anyone interested in the general archæological question can follow it in Buxtorf: *De Antiquitate Punctorum* (Basel 1648) where much of the relevant portions of the *Light* appears in a Latin translation. — <sup>4</sup> Joël loc. cit. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that so far as we know, Spinoza did not possess a copy of Philo.

noticed, in the *Refining*; it would seem necessary to assume, as indeed would be natural, that di Rossi's work was well known in Amsterdam, and was used, equally and independently, by both Del Medigo and Spinoza<sup>1</sup>.

In this case, too, as in that of the *Examination of Religion*, the point at issue is of far more than antiquarian importance. The progress of the human mind has depended in no small degree on the rational criticism of texts; indeed, the standard of criticism in any age may be held to be the measure of its intellectual development. The last century saw the range and potency of the influence exerted by philological enquiry into authorities; these enquiries, as applied to the most authoritative texts of all, were firstly clearly initiated by Spinoza. And just as we have discovered the far-reaching theories of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* to have been achieved already in the *Examination of Religion* of R. Elijah, so we see now that its philological researches

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<sup>1</sup> There are, indeed, very few points of Biblical lore raised by Spinoza, as Joël remarks, which are not to be found in the *Light*. One passage will suffice: The long note of R. Selomo (= Rafhi) on Chronicles I, cap. 8, is quoted (as in *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* X § 40) and the following remark added: *From this note of R. Selomo it is clear that the later scribes who composed the histories even in our holy books copied from earlier records, and when they found different versions in different records, put the two accounts down side by side . . . You will now have no difficulty in believing the same with regard to the vowel points and letters, particularly the similarly shaped letters . . . Here you have one of the many and different reasons for the Massoretical notes . . .* (I: 131 b ed: Ben-Jacob, Wilna, 1863). The similarity with Spinoza's views (ib. X § 41; IX S. 55 f.) is manifest.

An additional reason why it is interesting to know whether Spinoza used the *Light* is because the *Light* contains an account of the philosophy of Philo and may therefore well be as easily as any other work the direct source of the Neoplatonic colouring of e. g. the *Short Treatise*. Thus we have the following in the account of Philo's theory of creation:—*God, who is prior to the universe, not by a temporal priority, because time is one of the created things, but by a priority of number caused to emanate from Himself by the action of His Intelligence, not by anything outside of Himself, the intellectual world . . . all of it corresponding to the intellectual, part by part . . . This intellectual world of emanation He called the first born son of God, or, His light which is pure of all corporeality; and the physical world He called His plain and corporeal son . . . the whole universe being His only son.* (p. 43a). One naturally compares the well known phrases of the *Short Treatise* on *Extension and Understanding* as the *Sons of God* (I. cap. IX, p. 57 and II cap. XXII, p. 134 (ed. Wolf, London 1910).

are only the continuation of long discussions, a typical example of which is to be found in the *Refining of Wisdom* of R. Joseph.

### 3. THE LAST LEAVES OF WISDOM AND THE MOVEMENT TO SPINOZA.

Joseph del Medigo was not only Hebraist and Mathematician; he was also, as became a graduate of Padua, physician and philosopher. His range of reading is remarkable and due to an exceptional linguistic equipment. He himself recounts how in disgust at the debased dialect of the Crete from which he came, he set himself to learn ancient Greek<sup>1</sup>, and he used it to read Plato and Aristotle, Philo and Plotinus and the whole gamut of later mystics. In Latin he had in addition to more modern writers, Cicero, Quintilian and Seneca, Augustine, Aquinas, and Nicholas de Lyra. He was deeply influenced by Renaissance neo-Platonism, particularly as represented by the *Dialoghi di Amore*. And even if he were not acquainted with Arabic, all the Arabic thinkers, as well as most others, were available to him in Hebrew. From all this wealth of reading he seems to have composed a multitude of treatises, some few only of which however were afterwards edited by a disciple as the second volume of the *Abfcondita Sapientiae*. The most important of these, the *Last Leaves of Wisdom*, must now engage our attention. To deal with it adequately would be beyond the competence of a short essay. As an original work indeed it is not worthy of much attention. Yet from the point of view of the present enquiry it is for that very reason of supreme interest.

In the first place the work is eclectic in the extreme. Few writers then known are not quoted by name. Greek and Roman, Jewish, Arabic and Christian thinkers, jostle one another on every page. Augustine and Aquinas come as readily to his pen as Saadyah and Ibn Gabai; now he is explaining a point in mathematical optics, now setting Ibn-Roschd against Al-Ghazzali. All the minor strands of Scholasticism, Neo-Platonism, Renaissance

<sup>1</sup> *Refining* 10a.

science and mystic theology, the traces of which have been noted by various students in the philosophy of Spinoza, may be found, in one form or other, within this prolix work of the Paduan polymath and metaphysician. When we remember that Del Medigo was for the space of a few years the accredited public teacher of the Amsterdam community, we may begin to form a truer judgment of the intellectual temper of the time. There is of course no virtue in eclecticism, nor does much reading make a man wise. But the mere fact of the existence of such a man goes far to explain the phenomenon of a Spinoza.

The second point of interest for our purpose is the guiding thread adopted by Del Medigo, for it must not be thought that all this intellectual profusion was turned out scrap-book fashion. As a matter of fact it was used by him in order further to elucidate the problems and solutions which had been laid down once for all in the history of Jewish thought by the metaphysical masterpiece of the Middle Ages, the *Guide for the Perplexed* of Maimonides. This is not the place to discuss the significance of this great work — how deeply Spinoza himself felt its influence is attested by the fact that in composing the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* he felt himself obliged specifically to reject one of its main theses. It is sufficient for us to note that Del Medigo starts out from the premises of Maimonides, and after recapitulating the criticisms to which they had been subjected ends up with something very like the main tenets of what was afterwards to be known as Spinozism. It is in fact the peculiar value of the *Last Leaves of Wisdom* that it gives an insight, by offering us an example of a parallel development, of the psychological growth of the system of Spinoza.

The *Last Leaves of Wisdom*, is roughly divisible into three sections. The first begins with a Maimonidean confession-of-faith in God as timeless and absolute existence, the source of all existents, indescribable by attributes; and proceeds to discuss the various problems resulting therefrom on the lines laid down by Maimonides. The second concentrates on the question of creation,

which had been set by Maimonides at the centre of his system, but the implications of which had only been laid bare by the further discussions of Gersonides and Crescas. The third is devoted to an exposition of the emanational theories of the philosophical Kabbala, which Del Medigo accepts as metaphysically preferable to those of the professed philosophers. Now, whatever be thought of the Kabbala in general — and most uninstructed views are current in its regard — there is no doubt that in its philosophical form it bears great affinities with the system of Spinoza<sup>1</sup>. That Del Medigo, after a minute examination of the results of the Maimonidean school, ended up in the philosophical Kabbala, seems to suggest, not so much that his book might have been the direct source of this element in Spinoza, but that a similar intellectual evolution to that which it manifests might have been undergone, with much more thoroughness and far deeper appreciation of the consequences, by Spinoza himself.

From this point of view, and with these reservations in mind, the structure of the work becomes of peculiar interest. It is from a metaphysical criticism of the concept of creation, as he is careful to note himself<sup>2</sup>, that Del Medigo turns to the Kabbala. He thrusts his way (if only by transcription) through the thorny discussions of the problem of the nature of the act of creation which he found in Gersonides and Crescas, discussions which centre largely around precisely those questions of continuity (involving particularly the problem of time) which form one of the central problems of the *Guide for the Perplexed*, and, later, of the Cartesian school<sup>3</sup>. One by one the various volun-

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<sup>1</sup> It is sufficient in this connexion to point to the opinion of no less a thinker than Solomon Maimon (*Autobiography* cap. XIV). The curious would do well to follow the hint of the historian H. Graetz (*Geschichte der Juden* vol. X) and compare the first book of Spinoza's *Ethics* with the first dissertation of Abraham Herera's *Porta Coeli* (accessible in vols 3—4 of part I of Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*, Sulzbach, 1678), which was translated into Hebrew from the Spanish Mss. by Isaac Aboab and published in Amsterdam in 1655. — <sup>2</sup> e.g. 125b. — <sup>3</sup> e.g. pp. 100—4 with ref. to Gersonides, *Milhamoth*, VI. 7 and Crescas, *Or* III. 1. S. 3—5 (burked by the historians). [Del Medigo follows closely on the discussions of Abraham Shalom (15<sup>th</sup> Century Italian) in the first

taristic theories of creation are dismissed, and finally the very concept of Nothing is condemned as unintelligible<sup>1</sup>. There remains then one only way by which the co-existence of God with the universe may be defended and understood, and that is by the adoption of some variety of pantheism, or, as it has more properly been called, panentheism<sup>2</sup>. It would seem to be wrong to call the Kabbala pantheistic in the ordinary sense. To put the case very crudely, one may say that, although it tends to look upon the universe as a part of the Deity, it refuses to allow that the physical universe is the whole of the Deity. It is, therefore, as definitely opposed to hylozoistic or artistic pantheism as it is to the crude dogma of transcendent creationism. *God, in the famous Rabbinic phrase which penetrates the whole literature, is the place of the world, but the world is not His place.* It is in response to this feeling, it seems to me, that Spinoza spoke of the infinite attributes, and in spite of the logical difficulties involved, held to them to the end<sup>3</sup>. Few errors seemed to him to be more repulsive than the idea that the material universe as we see it and tread on it is God<sup>4</sup>; but this is only one form of the more subtle error that the Divinity is confined within the two paltry attributes which happen to be open to the understanding of men<sup>5</sup>. Del Medigo, therefore, can quite consistently

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part of his *Neveh Shalom*.] For Descartes see particularly *Princ.* I, 21; *Resp.* V p. 369: 14—p. 370: 12 (ed. Adam and Tannery); appendix to *Resp.* II, where the discreteness of the parts of time is the axiomatic foundation for the *a posteriori* argument for the existence of God; and *Ep.* vol. II, 4 (Latin edition Amsterdam 1668) p. 15. — <sup>1</sup> From Crescas *Or III. I. § 5* cf. Spinoza *Cog. Met.* II, 10, § 2. The point is the same as in Bergson's criticism of the *idea of nothing* in cap. IV of *Creative Evolution*. — <sup>2</sup> *Die emanatistische Doctrin der Kabbala tritt nicht in bewusster, auf philosophische Gründe gestützter Opposition gegen die Schöpfungslehre, sondern als Deutung derselben auf.* (Überweg-Heinze, Vol. II ed. 10, p. 392). In this connexion it is interesting to recall the remark of Christian Wolf, which is confirmed by such expressions as that of the *Short Treatise* that *creation cannot really be said ever to have taken place* (I, 2, p. 23 n.), that *die Spinozisterei ist also entsprungen aus der Unmöglichkeit der Schöpfung*. (See the introduction to Scholz' *Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn*, Berlin, 1916). — <sup>3</sup> *Ep.* 66. — <sup>4</sup> *Theol.-Pol.* VI § 10 note; *Ep.* 73. — <sup>5</sup> Already in *Short Treatise I*, cap. I, p. 19, 17f. *Lorsque Spinoza conçoit une infinie d'attributs infinies autres que la pensée et l'étendue*, remarks M.

reject with horror the substantial pantheism which he attributed to the Jewish thinker Ibn Ezra and the whole school of Platonists<sup>1</sup>; and yet approve the famous Kabbalistic doctrine of *Tzimtzum* (= self-contraction, or determination); according to which the universe is translated from intellectual to physical existence in the space made, or left, by the self-concentration of the infinite<sup>2</sup>. In this emanational theory of the creative act the primary conception is just that of the degrees in the reality of created things<sup>3</sup> which plays so fundamental a role in the more thoroughly logical system of Spinoza.

It would be impossible to pursue the subject further without going into wearisome technicalities. Enough however has been shown to demonstrate our original thesis. Spinoza is the culmination of a long preceding historical development, and this historical development can be traced step for step within the bounds of Hebrew literature. That Spinoza possessed a copy of the *Abscondita Sapientiæ* is an interesting but unimportant accident. To us the book suffices to indicate the nature of the problems which were of interest to the Amsterdam community; the spirit in which they were treated; and the solutions with which they were met.

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Brunschvicg (*Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, Jan. 1906, p. 65), *il se propose, non d'entourer le monde réel comme d'une ceinture de mondes hypothétiques, mais de faire échec aux tendances de l'imagination humaine vers le limite et vers le représentable; il n'ajoute pas à ce qui est, il interdit de donner à ce qui est la forme d'un système fermé.* —

<sup>1</sup> 136b—138b. — <sup>2</sup> e. g. 117b. foll. — <sup>3</sup> Cf. Neumarck: *Toldoth Hapilulosophiah* (1921) p. 179 note.

# SPINOZA'S UNENDLICHE ATTRIBUTE GOTTES

VON EGON v. PETERSDORFF / HEIDELBERG.

## I

Der Gegenstand unserer Untersuchung macht es notwendig, uns zunächst einen Überblick über die Grundanschauungen Spinozas zu gewinnen, soweit sie Voraussetzungen bilden für die Frage der unendlichen Attribute. Und da wir es mit einem Teil der spinozistischen Metaphysik zu tun haben, müssen wir uns von vornherein darüber klar werden, daß Spinoza nicht eine Metaphysik, sondern eine *Ethik* hat schreiben wollen. Das erhellt unzweideutig aus den einleitenden, persönlichen Bemerkungen seiner *Abhandlung über die Verbesserung des Verstands* (6—7)<sup>1</sup>. Das *höchste Glück*, das *höchste Gut* war, was er suchte, und da er es schließlich im amor dei intellectualis fand, wird verständlich, warum Teil 1 und auch Teil 2 seiner *Ethik* fast ausschließlich Metaphysik enthalten, aber eben doch nur soviel Metaphysik, wie zur Begründung der folgenden eigentlich ethischen Teile unbedingt notwendig war. Es kann daher nicht wunder nehmen, daß einzelne metaphysische Fragen, wie vor allem die vorliegende der unendlichen Attribute, die für die praktische Philosophie kaum in Frage kamen, recht stiefmütterlich behandelt wurden. Spinoza war eben, obwohl seine Metaphysik in der Folgezeit mehr gewirkt, seinen gedanklichen Beweggründen nach in erster Linie Ethiker (O. Baensch, Einleitung zu Spinozas *Ethik*, *Philos. Bibl.* 1919 S. XI).

Damit hängt vielleicht auch zusammen, daß alle metaphysischen Voraussetzungen — Voraussetzungen geblieben sind, Dogmen, die als wahr hingestellt ihr einziges Kriterium in sich selbst finden sollten. Das gilt vor allem von der ersten dieser Voraussetzungen, der *wahren Idee* oder der *Wahrheit*, überhaupt, die,

<sup>1</sup> Ich führe an (unter Benutzung der lateinisch-holländischen Ausgabe von Vloten und Land, 4 Bände, 1914) nach den deutschen Übersetzungen der *Philosophischen Bibliothek* (Felix Meiner) — den *Kurzen Traktat* jedoch nach der Übersetzung von Christoph Sigwart, Tübingen 1870.