

Elijah Benamozegh and Evolutionary Theory: A Nineteenth Century Italian Kabbalist's Panentheistic Response to Darwin

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Introduction

Elijah Benamozegh (1823–1900)¹ was an erudite scholar even for the high standards of the open and well-integrated Italian Jewish scholarly tradition. As a rabbi and teacher of theology in its rabbinical school, he lived his life in Livorno (Leghorn), a flourishing cosmopolitan centre of Jewish culture that was entirely free from hostility towards Jews. Although an adversary of Moses Mendelssohn, he was undoubtedly influenced by the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, and sought in his own way to develop secular studies without doing violence to Jewish tradition. He had a particular fascination with Jewish-Gentile relations, which was the focus of his *Morale juive et morale chrétienne* [Jewish and Christian Ethics], a polemical yet civil work published in 1867, and a subject to which we will return.² Despite a professional interest in Talmud and an abiding interest in Christian theology and Western philosophy, his first love was Jewish mysticism or *kabbalah*.³ Acutely aware how modern Jewish scholars dismissed *kabbalah* as superstition,⁴ Benamozegh spent a lifetime trying to demonstrate its worth and centrality to Judaism, most importantly in his *magnum opus* entitled *Israël et l'humanité* [Israel and Humanity], which was published

¹ For short overviews of his life and thought, see: Maxwell Luria's introduction to Elijah Benamozegh, *Israel and Humanity*, trans. Maxwell Luria (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 1-30 and Alessandro Guetta, "Benamozegh, Elijah ben Abraham," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 2007), 317-318.

² Elie Benamozegh, *Morale juive et morale chrétienne: examen comparatif suivi de quelques réflexions sur les principes de l'islamisme* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1867). English translation: *Jewish and Christian Ethics with a Criticism on Mahomedism* (San Francisco: Emanuel Blochman, 1873).

³ With regard to his secular reading, Benamozegh referred to reading 'science books' in his youth, which comprised the writings of the liberal Catholic philosopher Vincenzo Gioberti and of Spinoza. Over time, he became increasingly interested in the Italian and French scientific milieu. He left Livorno only twice in his life, both times to visit Pisa: the first time to meet the French philosopher Adolphe Franck, and the second to attend a philosophy of law lecture at the University. He did not read German and much of his learning was obtained indirectly through learned articles and histories of philosophy. Alessandro Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah: Elijah Benamozegh and the Reconciliation of Western Thought and Jewish Esotericism* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2009), 5-6.

⁴ Celebrated examples of Jewish scholars in Benamozegh's day who were scornful of *kabbalah* included the German historian Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), author of the multi-volume *Geschichte der Juden* [History of the Jews, 1853-70], and the Italian rabbi and scholar, Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865), who published *Vikuach al Chochmat ha-Kabbalah* [Dialogues on Kabbalah] in 1852.

posthumously in 1914.⁵ In arguing for the significance of Jewish mysticism, he used the term 'Hebraism', which for him encompassed the totality of Jewish religion, including not only the biblical and rabbinic teachings but also mysticism, which he regarded as its highest theological expression. His idiosyncratic teachings, and in particular his interest in non-Jewish sources, got him into trouble, and one of his biblical commentaries, *Em la-Mikra* [Matrix of Scripture], published 1862-65,⁶ was condemned as heretical by Orthodox authorities in Jerusalem and Damascus. Central to his thought was a kabbalistic vision of cosmic evolution, which featured strongly panentheistic overtones.⁷

Benamozegh's theory of theistic evolution went well beyond the biological realm to encompass the evolution of the universe itself. Initially he rejected Darwin's proposed mechanism of natural selection, which he appeared to misunderstand quite seriously. Due to an absence of references, it is not clear exactly which of Darwin's works he had read, or when he had read them. Faur suggests that he might have come across Darwin as early as 1860.⁸ His incorporation of French technical terms in his first work to tackle the subject (which is written in Hebrew) suggests that he had read the French edition published in 1862,⁹ and he would have had access to an Italian edition after 1864.¹⁰ In any case, what he was more interested in was the idea of a

⁵ Elie Benamozegh, *Israël et l'humanité. Etude sur le problème de la religion universelle et sa solution* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1914). English translation: Benamozegh, *Israel and Humanity*.

⁶ Eliyahu ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture]*, 5 vols. (Leghorn: Author, 1862-65).

⁷ Panentheism can be defined as the idea that all is *in* God but that God is greater than all, that is, that God's immanent presence in nature does not adequately delimit the reality of God. It can be contrasted with pantheism which is the idea that all *is* God and God *is* all, that is, that God is to be identified with the totality of nature.

⁸ Faur notes that the journal in which Darwin was first mentioned in French was one which Benamozegh read: Auguste Laugel, "Nouvelle théorie d'histoire naturelle: L'Origine des Espèces," *Revue des Deux-Mondes* 26, no. 2 (1860). José Faur, "The Hebrew Species Concept and the Origin of Evolution: R. Benamozegh's Response to Darwin," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 63 (1997): 44.

⁹ Charles Darwin, *De l'origine des espèces*, trans. Clémence-Auguste Royer (Paris: Guillaumin and Masson, 1862). Royer's introduction presented Darwin's ideas as an alternative to religious revelation and considered the implications of natural selection for humankind, drawing eugenic and social Darwinian conclusions. There is nothing in Benamozegh's thought, however, to suggest that he was influenced by her idiosyncratic interpretation of Darwin.

¹⁰ Charles Darwin, *L'origine delle specie*, trans. Giovanni Canestrini and Leonardo Salimbeni (Modena: Nicola Zanichelli e soci, 1864-65). According to Brömer, there was very little in the way of Italian engagement with Darwin until this Italian translation; early exceptions included one moderate review of *Origins* in the northern Italian magazine *Il Politecnico* in 1860 by its editor Carlo Cattaneo, and one anti-Darwinian polemic by the Jesuit naturalist Gian Battista Pianiani in the religious journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* in 1862, neither of which the rabbi in Leghorn would have been likely to read. Rainer Brömer, "Many Darwinisms by Many Names: Darwinism and Nature in the Kingdoms of Italy," in *The Reception of Charles Darwin in Europe*, ed. Eve-Marie Engels and Thomas Glick (London: Continuum, 2008), 378-379.

progressive concept of evolution, for which he drew upon his mystical interests. In what follows, much the same evidence will be considered as in previous scholarship,¹¹ but in offering a close reading of three key works by Benamozegh we will suggest that his views shifted to a much greater extent than earlier treatments allow,¹² and, in particular, that his earlier defensive reflections on biological evolution were transformed into a justification for a panentheistic theory of cosmic evolution, with implications not only for human evolution but for the development of religion itself.

1. Biblical commentary

In the earliest of the works, *Em la-Mikra* [Matrix of Scripture], a biblical commentary that incorporated the findings of comparative philology, archaeology and ancient history, which he published himself in Hebrew in Leghorn in 1862-63, Benamozegh offered his most sustained treatment of the subject.¹³ In volume one he readily admitted that the earth was much older than a literalist reading of the Bible would

¹¹ Previous scholarship has been uninterested in tracing the stages of his thought, however. Faur focuses on Benamozegh's earliest relevant work, *Em la-Mikra*, and particularly his linguistic analysis, in a slightly anachronistic account in which he is presented as having anticipated later biological theories relating to the genotype/phenotype). Throughout, he fails to recognize just how critical Benamozegh was of Darwinian theory in this work. Faur, "The Hebrew Species Concept and the Origin of Evolution: R. Benamozegh's Response to Darwin." Cherry, who does try to take other relevant writings into account, sees Benamozegh as exemplifying dialogue between religion and science, and does not appreciate how his panentheistic tendencies allowed him to go much further and attempt a synthesis. Michael Shai Cherry, "Creation, Evolution and Jewish Thought" (Doctoral thesis, Brandeis University, 2001). Shuchat's short treatment is primarily concerned with Benamozegh's cosmogony, rather than any detailed reading of his evolutionary thought *per se*. Raphael Shuchat, "Attitudes Towards Cosmogony and Evolution Among Rabbinic Thinkers in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: The Resurgence of the Doctrine of the Sabbatical Years," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 13 (2005). The two most recent major general studies of Benamozegh discuss his interest in evolution in the sense of historical progress, especially with regard to the formation of the Oral Law and partly as a result of the absorption of non-Jewish elements, but neglect the topic of Darwinian evolutionary theory: Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah: Elijah Benamozegh and the Reconciliation of Western Thought and Jewish Esotericism* and the doctoral thesis by Clémence Boulouque, "Kabbalah, Tradition and the Challenges of Interfaith Encounter" (New York University, 2014).

¹² This is by no means the only topic on which Benamozegh modified his opinions. Gopin has noted how his attitudes towards Gentiles, which was a life-long concern, changed over time. Marc Gopin, "An Orthodox Embrace of Gentiles? Interfaith Tolerance in the Thought of S. D. Luzzatto and E. Benamozegh," *Modern Judaism* 18, no. 2 (1998): 182.

¹³ The commentary is characterized by a historical-contextual approach and by its omissions of *halakhah* and ethics; Guetta observes that 'this denial of the Bible as an ethical treatise' can be explained in part because, for Benamozegh, 'the text, in the age and triumph of science, *can no longer* be read as a source of authority'. Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah: Elijah Benamozegh and the Reconciliation of Western Thought and Jewish Esotericism*, 92-95.

suggest.¹⁴ And in volume five,¹⁵ he acknowledged the possibility that biological species did develop and that there were variations within species, but he went on to reject the ideas that new species could originate from such variants or that all species had originated from just a few ancestors. Although he would conclude that the tradition and the science could be reconciled, he began by contrasting the biblical view, which appeared, at first sight, to suggest permanence rather than change, with Darwin and those natural scientists who followed him, who had reached what appeared, again at first sight, to be a very different position:

It is clear that, in the view of the author of the Torah, animal species are intrinsically and permanently distinct from one another, each having its own origin from the time of creation... [The natural scientists] maintain that the species, and the variants among them, are not enduring and eternal, but, rather, evolved one from another.¹⁶

He went on to offer a somewhat vague summary of Darwin's theory of inheritance as a process of development that led ultimately to the creation of a permanently fixed, stable form or species.

[The natural scientists] have established as a fundamental principle the continuity of the physical and psychological characteristics of a family that are inherited from parents to offspring and the offspring's offspring, as we can clearly see. They maintain that this is what happened at the time of the creation of the species, that each and every characteristic that is permanent [i.e. inherited], was one that served to sustain a particular species, whereas the others that were not inherited from parent to offspring, disappeared forever. And this selection of what is permanent and what is not is called *Selection naturelle* ['Natural Selection'].¹⁷

¹⁴ Commenting on Gen. 1:5, Benamozegh wrote: 'Recently, researchers wanted to explain that those days [of creation] were not literal but were one thousand years or more. There is nothing new under the sun, for I have seen that R. Abraham Ibn Ezra wrote this (*Ozar Nehmad*, 215:2), saying that each day was a thousand years; and, who knows, maybe this was what our sages meant when they said: This means that there was an order of time beforehand [i.e. before creation].' Eliyahu ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture] vol 1*, 5 vols. (Leghorn: Author, 1862-65), folio 4b.

¹⁵ The context is a long discussion of Deut. 22:10: 'Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.'

¹⁶ Eliyahu ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture] vol 5*, 5 vols. (Leghorn: Author, 1862-65), folio 87a.

¹⁷ Ibid., folios 87a-b. Faur offers the translation, which Cherry follows: 'every characteristic which is permanent [i.e. inherited] eventually became a separate species', which is semantically difficult (how can a characteristic become a species?) He appears to have confused *lekhyot* (להיות 'to keep alive' or 'to sustain') with *lihiyot* (להיות 'to be' or 'to become'). My thanks to Noam Livne for this particular observation, and for his assistance with the translation of Benamozegh's Hebrew in general. Faur, "The Hebrew Species Concept and the Origin of Evolution: R. Benamozegh's Response to Darwin," 57.

According to Benamozegh's interpretation of Darwin, then, any particular species is the end product of a process of 'natural selection' in which useful characteristics have been passed on to the next generation, while deleterious characteristics have not. He neglected to define what made a characteristic useful or deleterious, other than to suggest that it served to sustain the species, but he appeared to project onto Darwin the belief in a progressive teleology, rather than an open-ended process at the mercy of the selective forces of the environment. After pointing out that this theory was new and had not been conclusively demonstrated, he went on to suggest that even if it were shown to be true, one need not view it as opposed to religious tradition.

Although this view is quite new and it has hardly been tested – who knows what its future outcome will be? – I should say that even if it is eventually confirmed to be true, the critics [of the biblical tradition] could not deny the reality of an internal rationale and a cause, even if we do not know what it is, determining that certain traits and characteristics will survive [i.e. be inherited], leading to [the development of] an enduring and permanent species, while others do not endure and fail to result in a species. And this [internal rationale and cause] is what determines how traits and characteristics combine with some but not with others. It is agreed among scientists that the traits and characteristics [of a living creature] and its *Organiques* [i.e. its organic parts] are related and that they interact with one another. This relationship, combining certain characteristics and isolating others, constitutes the inner spiritual type, which is also the species.¹⁸

Thus, in Benamozegh's view, regardless of whether one was religious or not, any theory of evolution demanded that there be an internal developmental force of some sort (an 'internal rationale and a cause') that drove the process of coordinated change that resulted in any particular species or its variants, or that produced an organism of any particular species. Otherwise, he reasoned, what could explain the means by which specific characteristics were selected for, or how these psychological and physical traits could interact harmoniously within the organism? Crucial to Benamozegh's definition of a species (and its variations) was the idea of an 'inner

¹⁸ ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture] vol 5*, folio 87b. Cherry criticizes Benamozegh's 'understanding that certain organisms have permanent characteristics, *contra* Darwin', which he suggests is a consistent feature of Benamozegh's thought. Cherry, "Creation, Evolution and Jewish Thought", 101fn41, 105fn60. It seems reasonable, however, to read 'permanent characteristics' in the sense of 'characteristics which have been inherited and have lasted until now', and 'permanent species' as 'species which have not gone extinct'. Benamozegh certainly accepted that over time species developed, and therefore that their characteristics changed, and so the question rests on whether or not he believed the process of evolution was complete; as will become clear, his later views on biological and cosmic evolution assumed an on-going process.

spiritual type', a kind of essential form or template, which was the product of the unknown causal force that had generated the species and had determined the coordination of the parts within the organism. The problem, Benamozegh continued, was that Darwin and his followers only recognized natural forces in their scientific work.

[A]ll the labours of Darwin and his followers will only succeed (if at all) to prove that many of the species that we now regard as distinct species in their own right, have been, over the course of the generations, no more than *Variétés* ['variants'] of other species, and that through the continuous changes from one generation to the next they have acquired their own distinct morphologies and names... The reason that these scientists hold such views is their lack of belief in the action of any force above the forces presently active among living things, which could instantaneously produce new creatures... [A]nd if they did succeed in proving that the majority of the species are nothing more than variations and strains from other species, they would still be compelled to acknowledge that in the beginning there existed a few species which did not develop from other species, but which gave rise [to all the other species].¹⁹

For Benamozegh, the rejection of the idea of a guiding 'force above the forces' revealed the weakness of the scientific argument. For in their account of how new species originated from earlier species, the natural scientists had failed to resolve the issue of the origin of life itself, and were themselves reliant upon the idea of a few ancestral forms whose origins could not be explained. (Earlier in his commentary he had dismissed the idea of abiogenesis, or life from inanimate matter, which Darwin assumed.²⁰) It seemed clear to Benamozegh that a 'force above the forces' was the solution not only to the question of how to explain the teleological development of any particular organism or species, but also to the question of the very origin of the ancestral species upon which Darwin and his followers premised their theory. Furthermore, if such a force could create a few ancestral species, was it reasonable to assume that it could not create all such species?

¹⁹ ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture]* vol 5, folios 87b-88a.

²⁰ Benamozegh had argued that 'Living organisms are not generated from putrefaction, as it was believed by the ancients, unless there were previously deposited in the rotten body the eggs of these that incubate during the putrefaction process. Accordingly, [the Scripture] mentioned first "and it bore worms" and then "and it was rotten."... And although there are some scientists in Germany who reject this view today, their arguments cannot disprove what was demonstrated and accepted in our day.' Eliyahu ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture]* vol 2, 5 vols. (Leghorn: Author, 1862-65), folio 47b.

And what caused these [ancestral species] to grow? What produced them and gave rise to them? If not that force, superior to the present forces of nature? And if it [i.e. the superior force] was capable of producing and creating one or two species, its capabilities would [surely] extend to creating a thousand thousands of species at once.²¹

Benamozegh concluded that there was no need to posit that new species were the result of natural selection acting upon variants within older species. In reality, whether the scientists admitted it or not, Darwinian theory was in agreement with biblical tradition in requiring a ‘creative force’ to account for the origin of the ancestor species. And if this was true for the ancestor species, then it was almost certainly true for all species. It would be strange if this were not the case, he mused, since it would mean that this superior, creative force had behaved entirely unlike any other productive or sustaining force in nature by limiting its effect to only a miniscule fraction of the myriad forms of life in existence – and to what purpose? Although he did not quite make it explicit, the implication was that all species were originally created effortlessly and simultaneously by a supernatural force for whom the rich plenitude of life held divine purpose. And the generation of all species had come about through the action of this ‘force above the natural forces’, operating in nature.

[This] is almost certain, since, as it is well known, nature does not produce a highly active force capable of great variation for no purpose or for some nonsensical purpose. And how could we think that this creative force manifested its activities through nothing more than a few species, contrary to what is seen in all the rest of the forces in nature, which, through small actions, produce or maintain countless [generations of] species of plants and animals.²²

At this point, Benamozegh shifted from a panentheistic account of the origins of life by means of a creative force which was both superior to and part of nature, to a

²¹ ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture] vol 5*, folio 88a.

²² Ibid. This is a particularly confusing passage, even if one assumes a pantheistic or panentheistic vision of creation. Previously, there had been a clear distinction between a superior force and ‘the present forces of nature’ and yet Benamozegh now appeared to suggest that the superior force was produced by nature (‘nature does not produce a highly active force capable of great variation for no purpose’), was actually one force of nature among others (‘all the rest of the forces of nature...’), and acted like other forces of nature (otherwise it would be acting ‘contrary to what is seen in all the rest of the forces in nature’). At the same time, a plain reading of the text also suggests that natural forces other than the superior force could produce new species (‘all the rest of the forces of nature... produce or maintain countless species of plants and animals’), although here *yimts’u* (יִמְצִי’וּ, ‘[will] produce’) probably has the sense of an on-going production of generations of species rather than the sense of the origination of any species.

linguistic analysis of the Hebrew term for species, *min* (מין), which Faur has described as his ‘Hebrew species concept’.²³ Benamozegh noted that if the root of *min* was *mwn* (מונ), from which was derived the word *temunah* (תמונה) ‘appearance’ or ‘structure’, then *min* could be said to refer to the ‘inner form and structure of every living being.’ It meant a kind of fixed functional potentiality or, as he put it, ‘the specific form concealed in every fertile seed, always generating something which is like itself and which has the same functions’. Another etymological possibility was that the root of *min* was *mnh* (מנה) ‘counting’, leading him to muse about numbers as the cornerstone of Jewish mysticism, since the kabbalists ‘postulate that numbers are the origin of things and [constitute] their form, structure, or *typus* [‘type’].’²⁴ For Benamozegh, the rich meanings of the word *min* yielded a concept that involved the sense both of potential function and of mathematical structure. What it added to his earlier assertion that an individual species evolved according to its ‘inner spiritual type’ was the sense of the heritable potentiality being governed in accordance to mathematical laws and structures, which, in the context of Jewish mysticism, had divine connotations.

At no point was Benamozegh disrespectful of the author of the *Origin of Species*, and any differences did not prevent him citing the authority of Darwin when convenient.²⁵ Nevertheless, his own conception of a divinely directed model of evolution was undoubtedly anti-Darwinian. It was dependent upon a ‘force above other forces’ to ensure that beneficial characteristics would be inherited and a progressive trajectory established for a species according to its own internal spiritual essence or form. And while he allowed for the idea of variants within a species, he clearly rejected the idea that newer species had evolved from earlier species or their variants, highlighting the

²³ In his study Faur reads too much into Benamozegh’s account, in particular the meaning of *min* as sectarian. The idea of a group of Jews as autonomous and separate from the original group is a legitimate definition of the term, but Faur’s claim that Benamozegh believed that *min* included the sense of ‘an intrinsic isolating system’, in addition to the other senses he discussed, would be much more convincing if here, in his etymological study of the term, Benamozegh had actually referred to it. Faur, “The Hebrew Species Concept and the Origin of Evolution: R. Benamozegh’s Response to Darwin,” 54-55.

²⁴ ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture] vol 5*, folio 88a. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* observes that ‘no truly convincing etymology has yet been found.’ Daniel Sperber, “Min,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 2007), 263-264.

²⁵ For example, in relation to Genesis 1:27 (‘So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.’) Benamozegh cited both ancient and modern scholars, from Empedocles to Darwin, in agreement that at the beginning all animals were hermaphrodite, that is, both male and female. ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture] vol 5*, folio 141a.

failure of evolutionary science to explain the origins of the ancestral species; it seemed self-evident to him that a ‘creative force’ was necessary to begin the process of evolution, even according to the evolutionists’ own account. In language redolent of a panentheistic conception of the divine, he suggested that the most plausible, least inconsistent explanation for understanding the phenomenon of life was that a supernatural force, at once beyond nature and one with it, was directly responsible for all species in their original forms. Thus in order to maintain a belief in divine creation, his theistic evolutionism focused on the increasing perfection of species and their variants, and rejected speciation by common descent; nor did he see any need to consider humans in this context.²⁶

2. Dogmatic Theology

A few years later, in his Italian treatise, *Teologia Dogmatica e Apologetica* [Dogmatic Theology and Apologetics], published in 1877, Benamozegh returned to the question of evolution.²⁷ At first it appeared as though he had not shifted his position. He suggested that the phrase in Genesis *leminehu* (למיניה), usually translated ‘according to their kind/species’, could be understood to mean ‘for the purpose of the conservation of the species’,²⁸ thus allowing for his idea of the development of species and even of variants within species, while disallowing the possibility of the transmutation from one species to another. And regarding the question of human evolution, he explicitly stated that evolution did not apply to humankind, since a close reading of the text of the story of creation showed that ‘*leminah* [למיניה, ‘according to its kind/species’] applies to plants and animals but not to humans.’²⁹ But in fact there were signs that, in affirming the reality of biological transmutation, Benamozegh had begun to soften his stance against one aspect of Darwinian evolutionary theory in

²⁶ Earlier in his biblical commentary, in relation to Genesis 9:25, Benamozegh had cited the work of the pre-Darwinian German anatomist Friedrich Tiedmann in arguing against the claim that black slaves were not fully human. From this one can say that Benamozegh asserted the unity of the human race but did so without reference to evolutionary theory. ben-Amozeg, *Em la-Mikra [Matrix of Scripture]* vol 2, folios 34b-35a.

²⁷ This work contained chapters on, among other things, the historical and ontological arguments for God’s existence, and on the nature of logical, moral, and aesthetic arguments in relation to the senses and psyche. Elia Benamozegh, *Teologia dogmatica e apologetica, per Elia Benamozegh* (Livorno: Tipografia di F. Vigo, 1877).

²⁸ Ibid., 254.

²⁹ Ibid.

particular, namely, the development of new species from previous species; for while he did not explicitly support the idea, he was now prepared to include it as a distinct possibility:

I believe, as science teaches, that the forms of animals on earth appear ever more perfect, whether this is by revolutions and cataclysms, as stipulated by Cuvier, or by slow evolution, as stipulated by modern [natural scientists], such as Lyell, Darwin and others, [who claim that] ever more perfect species and *genera* have developed, one after the other, for millions of years on the face of the earth.³⁰

And there were some intriguing suggestions in this work of systematic theology that Benamozegh could conceive of humanity, and even human morality, in evolutionary terms. For example, in a discussion about the foundations of morality, he wrote

That morality is not to be attributed to education or to habits derived from the observation of laws, but is grounded in the moral nature of man, is evident from its observation, at least in its rudimentary form, even in animals, and in all those countless everyday cases when animals demonstrate gratitude, compassion, loyalty, sociability, so that in his works Darwin has attributed to them not only aesthetic but also the moral and even religious [sensibilities].³¹

He even suggested that the evolution of the human moral animal had not ended.

Having asserted his belief in the evolution of animal life, he mused,

But will nature stop here? That would be very strange... [Yet] the order which reigns in the physical world must also reign in the moral world, and there is no reason for me to believe that the force that has formed man as he exists now should not form man and improve him in the future.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 276. The Italian is ‘... specie e generi sempre più perfetti siansi succeduti per milioni di anni...’

³¹ Ibid., 258. See, for example, the chapter entitled ‘Comparison of the Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals’ in Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: J. Murray, 1871). The Italian and French translations had been published just a few years before: Carlo Darwin, *L'Origine dell'Uomo e la scelta in rapporto col sesso*, trans. Michele Lessona (Torino, Napoli: Dalla Società Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1871). Charles Darwin, *La descendance de l'homme et la sélection sexuelle*, trans. J.J. Moulinié, 2 vols. (C. Reinwald & Cie, 1872-3).

³² Benamozegh, *Teologia dogmatica e apologetica, per Elia Benamozegh*, 276.

3. Israel and Humanity

3.1 Introduction

In some ways this interest in the development of morality prepared the ground for the way in which Benamozegh wrote about evolution in perhaps his most famous work, the French study entitled *Israël et L'Humanité*, which was begun around 1885 but never completed, and only published posthumously in an edited version in 1914.³³ As he explained in his introduction, the general context of the work was that of the crisis of modernity, including the challenges of science and of the evolution of religious thought.

Everyone agrees that we are in the midst of a great religious crisis. This reveals itself in three ways. The conflict between religion and science is in an acute state, and therefore occupies us the most; but to this must be added the antagonism among religions themselves, and the evolutionary changes which are occurring at the heart of each religion.³⁴

His solution to the crisis was to suggest possible ways forward in each of these areas. His unique approach to the problem of antagonism between Judaism and Christianity is perhaps one the best known features of his thought. In summary, he offered an alternative to the ubiquitous supercessionist account of the evolution of religion, which was commonly understood to have progressed from paganism through Judaism to Christianity. Key to his counter narrative was an ancient universal, monotheistic religion that Jewish tradition associated with Noah, whose traces could be found in many religions. According to Benamozegh, the Mosaic Law was not meant to be a universal law but to keep the Jewish people separate and free so as to achieve their purpose; and this purpose, the Mission of Israel, was to promote the Noachide Laws to the Gentile world, which essentially taught how to live in social harmony. In this way, Judaism and Noachism were both vital aspects of God's providential plan, with Judaism offering validation and correction to the universalist religions of Christianity

³³ Benamozegh published a booklet also entitled *Israël et L'Humanité* in 1885, which would be the basis for the introduction to the great book. The original French edition was prepared by Aimé Pallière and published in 1914, and this was abridged further for another French edition by Émile Touati published in 1961. The standard English edition is Benamozegh, *Israel and Humanity*, which is based on the 1961 edition. Wherever possible, I have used the English version in quoting this work, but I have used the pagination of the much longer 1914 French version and have included my own translations of it since many of the most useful references (for example, all references to Darwin) are missing in the later French and English editions.

³⁴ Benamozegh, *Israël et l'humanité. Etude sur le problème de la religion universelle et sa solution*, 3.

and Islam, which were essentially Noachide in character. Thus Israel's *raison d'être* was to serve humanity. Of course, encompassing the truths of both Jewish religion and Noachism was *kabbalah*, whose origins lay in antiquity and in which all of the world's most significant theosophical concepts could be found most perfectly expressed.³⁵ As for the other issues that had led to the great religious crisis in the nineteenth century, namely, the conflict of science and religion and the disruptive transformations going on within the various religious traditions, he would offer original solutions that were heavily dependent upon evolutionary assumptions, as we shall now see. Since, by this time, he had come to accept both speciation according to common descent and the animalistic origins of humankind, he believed that significant progress was possible in regard to the reconciliation of religion and evolutionary science. Even more interesting, however, was his attempt to present an unthreatening, non-revolutionary account of religious change, which drew upon a mystical model of cosmic evolution that provided an over-arching explanatory framework for the whole book.

3.2 Human evolution

As noted previously, Benamozegh had in *Teologia Dogmatica e Apologetica* already admitted that the common descent of species (*à la* Darwin) was one of several viable models of evolution, and he had accorded to evolution a role in the development of mankind, albeit only within the sphere of moral progress. Now, in an argument in *Israël et L'Humanité* about the unity of humankind, he went considerably further by drawing upon the idea that all species had evolved from a single primordial ancestor, that is, he appeared to accept the correctness of the Darwinian teaching of evolution by common descent, even with regard to mankind. In relation to the mythic account of the creation of Adam in the context of discussing the origins of humankind, he wrote

Let us hear Science give us the conclusion of the Darwinian system: 'Starting from the principle of natural selection with divergence of character, it does not

³⁵ For an overview of Benamozegh's understanding of *kabbalah*, see Moshe Idel, "Appendix: Kabbalah in Elijah Benamozegh's Thought," in *Israel and Humanity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 378-396. For his theological appreciation of Gentiles and Christianity, see Gopin, "An Orthodox Embrace of Gentiles? Interfaith Tolerance in the Thought of S. D. Luzzatto and E. Benamozegh." and Michael S. Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 80-84.

seem incredible that animals and plants are formed from some earlier intermediate form. If we accept this starting point, we must also admit that all organic beings which have ever lived may be descended from a single primordial form.' [*Revue Scientifique*, August 24, 1875]. Adam would thus not only be the father of all mankind, but all that has life in the world would form one family, though infinitely varied in its members.³⁶

A little later in the book he stated even more clearly his acceptance of mankind's place in the evolution of life in general, suggesting that the Genesis account of the stages of creation better reflected the progressive stages of the development of life articulated by modern Darwinian science than did the account by the Greek philosopher Anaximander, who was then (as now) cited as the classic proto-Darwinian.

But if we consider the biblical text alone, do we not see established the principle of progress? Each new creation during the six days of work marks a step forward on previous creations. Life appears after the inanimate, and in the manifestations of animal life there is a progression, until the appearance of man, the last and most perfect beings... Whatever else it may be, the account of the stages of life in the story of Genesis is something that has always attracted attention. For here is an admirable intuition of what science should find after so many centuries of research. Anaximander, whom we sometimes hear cited as a precursor of Darwinian doctrines, had only a vague idea of this progression. According to him the action of sunlight on the ground, then covered by the waters, brought forth films that produced imperfect bodies, something like modern protoplasm, and these organisms then developed gradually to give rise to all currently existing species. The ancestors of man were aquatic animals like fish. We have only read the first page of the Pentateuch to be convinced of the superiority of the biblical data on the theories of the Ionian philosopher.³⁷

3.3 Cosmic Evolution

Central to *Israël et L'Humanité* is a vision of cosmic progress and rebirth, which was expressed in the ideas and language of Jewish mysticism and of Bible.

Just as the present order of things represents an advance beyond what has come before, so too, that which will follow will surpass what is. In the history of the earth, each period thus forms a palingenesis, a renewal or rebirth, with

³⁶ Benamozegh, *Israël et l'humanité. Etude sur le problème de la religion universelle et sa solution*, 280. Reflecting a relaxed approach to bible interpretation, he then added, 'We do not claim to support that this is the only acceptable meaning of the first chapters of Genesis, or that, outside of this cosmological conception, the rabbis do not recognize an historical Adam closer to us and created in our image.'

³⁷ Ibid., 339-340.

respect to the preceding ones, while it is a birth or beginning with respect to those which will follow. The succession of worlds and their increasing perfection, whether in the past or in the future, are of indefinite extent. There is an evolution governed by the laws represented in the Kaballah by the various *sefirot*, aeons, hypostases, or emanations. This is but a vast application of what Scripture teaches us about the various ages of mankind, in each of which God is worshipped by a different name: *Elohim*, *Shaddai*, and finally the Tetragrammaton.³⁸

This vision of cosmic evolution extended to a belief in other worlds and to the very fabric of the universe itself, which was understood to be in a perpetual cycle of birth, death and resurrection. This was not only taught in Bible³⁹ but this was also countenanced by natural science.⁴⁰ Benamozegh asserted that Judaism had taught that from its earliest stages humanity had always been the *telos* of this purposeful process.⁴¹ Man's very nature as the end-product of the development of the universe,

³⁸ Ibid., 338. Or as he put it a little later: 'For Judaism, history is not a succession of events without connection, but rather an organism that develops, a world which acquires form, which has at its start, chaos (the *tohu va-vohu* of Genesis), and at its end, Shabbat (the name given to palingenesis, or cyclical rebirth, in imitation of the Shabbat which followed the six days of creation).' Ibid., 318.

³⁹ He wrote: '[I]n another psalm we read: 'Blessed is the Lord, God of Israel, From world to world.' (Ps.106:48). And again, 'Your kingship is a kingship of all worlds; Your dominion is for all generations.' (Ps.145:13) – thus embracing both past and future. For the Bible, then, as for other expressions of Hebraic tradition, not only did worlds exist before this one, but others will exist after it, and the grand principle of advancement to a higher state is a law which governs the birth, development, end, and rebirth of all the successful universes.' Ibid., 343-344.

⁴⁰ In this instance, his chief authority was the English philosopher Herbert Spencer: 'Critics will object that all these cycles, harmonic transformations and rebirth of worlds are just expressions of poetic imagination with no scientific basis. Doubtless we have not mathematical proofs, but there is at least one serious hypothesis that Science is far from rejecting, and one illustrious scientist, entirely foreign to the doctrines of the Talmud, Herbert Spencer, who grants his authoritative support for the idea in terms that are curiously analogous to rabbinic ideas... "[T]his development [i.e. the evolution of the universe] will reach an absolute limit and this limit will be the steady state that is reached after all movement has gradually decreased until reduced to a stable equilibrium." And Spencer added: "Obviously if evolution should end in a balanced or complete stillness, one must recognize that one day there will be universal death, but it can also be argued that after the stable equilibrium of the universe is achieved, some form of latent molecular motion will emerge to move the masses. With this transformative renewal of the masses to form a nebula, development begins anew, and so on indefinitely..." [Philosophy, IX August 1878]' Ibid. Elsewhere he showed how the story of creation also indicated through allegory this truth of cosmic evolution. 'Before leaving this question of the Jewish conception of cosmic progress in the succession of worlds, let us consider for a moment the myth of the Garden of Eden, or earthly paradise, in the book of Genesis. The Garden of Eden is the anticipation of the world to come, or, according to Hebrew belief, the palingenetic earth. Just as Adam is the archetype of mankind, so Eden is the image of the [next] world which he will inhabit.' Ibid., 344-345.

⁴¹ He argued that 'Man, high priest of creation, is thus its culmination, so far as earth is concerned, and this high dignity, which leads him to cooperate with God in the accomplishment of the designs of Sovereign Wisdom, links up in him the terrestrial creation with the rest of the universe.' Citing the German biologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel and others, he noted that 'science did not need to wait for Darwin to assert that mankind, from the beginning of its formation, was this idea [made manifest] on earth. Similarly, Judaism regards man as the end of creation and thus, from the Jewish perspective, Blusche only offers a slight exaggeration when he says: "The organization and the culture of humanity is the last goal and the highest development of the planets."' Ibid., 360.

and his purpose in linking the earth to the rest of the cosmos,⁴² were intrinsic to this over-arching theological contract, which found and celebrated progress in every dimension of creation. Understanding the breadth of his vision of cosmic evolution, and humankind's place within it, helps to make sense of Benamozegh's approach to the phenomenon of religious progress, which was the last of the three key issues that he had sought to address in his final book.

As in Benamozegh's panentheistic account of biological evolution that had featured a supernatural force moving in nature and embedded within the species itself that guided the direction of development, so in relation to moral or religious progress one could trace an internal guiding force or law whose effect was unaffected by external factors.

It is certain that, in the moral as well as in the physical world, those individuals endowed with great vital force are able to withstand environmental influences. Each can assimilate to itself that which is appropriate, and will attempt to avoid assimilation. This is even a prerequisite for growth. Because instead of claiming with Darwinism that the environment forms the species, [one might rather say] that the species takes from the outside world that which is necessary for its full development. It is in accordance with this law of assimilation that the strongest individual develops, and it ennobles not only itself by transforming that which is inferior into its own substance in the development of its own nature, but it also elevates by a few degrees that which is used to that end [i.e. the world around it]. Such is the course of all human as well as cosmic progress, and such is the theosophical doctrine known by the beautiful name of *elevation*.⁴³

Spiritual evolution was, he admitted, a matter of fits and starts. That spiritual developments within humankind moved at different tempos among different groups was the inevitable result of human free-will. Yet progress itself was also inevitable

⁴² He expressed this profound interconnection of the evolution of the universe and of humankind, by suggesting that they mirrored each other in their movement through their evolutionary stages. 'Here we find what we have called the Hebrew theory of the macrocosm, the universe designed in the form of man, just as, in microcosm, man is conceived of in the form of the universe, since in its evolution [the universe] goes through all embryonic stages corresponding to the zoological and paleontological order.' Ibid., 428-429.

⁴³ Ibid., 59.

because, quite apart from Judaism's messianic convictions,⁴⁴ it was integral to human nature itself. As he explained,

The ox is called an ox from the time it enters the world [say the rabbis]. And it is so with the other animals. But man becomes a man only when he earns this identity. [Yoma 65b.] And with regard to a phrase in Numbers 15:39, 'Observe them (i.e. 'fulfill my commandments') – in Hebrew *va-acitem otam* – the sages note that *otam* can be read in the holy text as if it were *atem*, 'you', and the phrase then be read 'You will be your own creators'. [cf. Zohar 3:113.] This idea reminds us of the saying of [the German philosopher Eduard von] Hartmann: 'The force that maintains and develops is the same that created' [*Philosophy of the Unconscious*, I, p.97]. It is obvious that if somehow man can create himself, then he is a product of his own perfectibility. It therefore seems to us necessary to challenge the doctrine of Darwin and his school (which claims that the function of an organ dictates [its form], so that the [inner, spiritual] form is irrelevant), with the paradoxical principle that it is actually the true self [or inner, spiritual form] in its intrinsic virtue that perfects itself. This ability to change we understand to be the influence that the soul exercises over its own future.⁴⁵

With all this in mind, Benamozegh believed that he could make an important contribution to the highly contentious contemporary debate about the future of Judaism and the desirability (or not) of change. Certainly, he offered no liberal, progressive form of Jewish theology, despite his interest in Christianity and secular thought. Quite the contrary: Benamozegh fully accepted the historicity of the written and oral revelations of Jewish tradition and was careful to distance himself from the divisive innovations of the Reform Jewish movement, which he rejected utterly as too reactionary. On the other hand, as we have seen, there was undoubtedly a strong evolutionary strain in his writings about religion. His approach to the issue of development in religious history paralleled his approach to natural history, in that it was a matter of a regeneration of succeeding generations according to a kind of internal drive, rather than radical divergences resulting from external, environmental pressures.

⁴⁴ In discussing Jewish and Christian forms of messianism, he wrote 'Judaism's approach to history is shaped by the fact that unlike other religions it locates perfection not at the beginning but at the end of history.' Ibid., 315.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 308-309. He would go on, 'Freedom can temporarily disturb the smooth and synchronous evolution of the parties, but it cannot in any way compromise the outcome assured in advance by the tendency to progress, innate in man.' Ibid., 389.

[W]e must accept the metaphor of religion as an organism, developing through all its phases from the seed to the fruit, always changing, but – like everything that lives – always identical in substance... Yet we must not confuse the natural growth of an institution, its organic evolution, with changes which may be imposed in order to adapt the institution to new times and places. The first kind of change is proper, legitimate, in a word, orthodox, whereas the second [which he associated with Reform Judaism] is false and injurious to the idea which it claims to serve, and one could even say anti-scientific since [evolutionary] science does not know revolution, but only slow transformation, unconscious selection... [The first kind of change] is not inconsistent, far from it, with the principle of inheritance and identity and even the notion of a primitive type.⁴⁶

Benamozegh's was a dynamic conception of religious history, which, with Hegelian undertones, had begun with Noachism's transcendent monotheism, had moved on to paganism's pantheistic multiplicity and diverse forms of divine immanence,⁴⁷ and had attained a grand synthesis in Hebraism and especially *kabbalah*. As he put it, 'authentic Jewish tradition acknowledges both the immanence and the transcendence of God, and thus links monotheism with the reasonable element in pantheism.'⁴⁸ The providential plan was for the evolution of a truly universal religion that would bring about the regeneration of mankind, leading it into the messianic age and a higher appreciation of divine, human and cosmic unity.⁴⁹ However odd it might seem to modern sensibilities accustomed to a different species of Orthodoxy, it was hardly a matter of concern to the kabbalist from Livorno that Judaism, which had evolved

⁴⁶ Ibid., 320.

⁴⁷ In this context, it is interesting to note Benamozegh's pantheistic or panentheistic interpretations of biblical verses such as Isaiah 6:3 ('all that fills the world is His Glory' rather than 'the world is filled with His Glory') and Isaiah 45:5 ('I am the Lord and nothing else exists' rather than 'I am the Lord and there is none else'). Ibid., 76. cited in Gopin, "An Orthodox Embrace of Gentiles? Interfaith Tolerance in the Thought of S. D. Luzzatto and E. Benamozegh," 185-186. It is also worth noting his claim that '[T]he Semite is a monist, and for him nothing created can count for anything in opposition to the Absolute Unity.' Benamozegh, *Israël et l'humanité. Etude sur le problème de la religion universelle et sa solution*, 373.

⁴⁸ This was related in his mind to his project to reconcile science and religion. He went on: 'Belief in the unity of God, as Israel preserves it, therefore harmonizes the demands of science and the needs of religious faith.' Benamozegh, *Israël et l'humanité. Etude sur le problème de la religion universelle et sa solution*, 72.

⁴⁹ Gopin, "An Orthodox Embrace of Gentiles? Interfaith Tolerance in the Thought of S. D. Luzzatto and E. Benamozegh," 184, 189. Moshe Idel has written that 'Kabbalah, the ancient and undistorted mystical lore, is conceived of [by Benamozegh] as the ideal religiosity, that was not only the pristine religion of the Jews, but also the perfect religious solution of the future. In other words, Benamozegh's universalism was of a limited type... It assumed a static phenomenology, that is, not so much an evolving process, but a synthesis that contains within itself the most perfect form of religion.' Idel, "Appendix: Kabbalah in Elijah Benamozegh's Thought," 396. In the context of Benamozegh's broad vision of religious evolution, Idel's stress on the static nature of Benamozegh's conception of *kabbalah* and the future of religion misses the larger picture.

from more primitive religious forms, was subject to on-going development since the very cosmos itself could be regarded as an evolutionary process.

Conclusion

Benamozegh's position on evolution changed over time. He moved from a rejection of the idea of Darwinian speciation (in *Em La-Mikra*), to a reluctant admittance of its possibility as one possible mode of evolution and a recognition that human morality had evolved (in *Teologia dogmatica e apologetica*), to a full acceptance of the idea of common descent, even applied to the human animal, understood as an aspect of the wider phenomenon of cosmic evolution (in *Israël et l'humanité*). In his last, posthumous work, cosmic evolution was portrayed as a profound truth enshrined in *kabbalah* and as an over-arching explanatory framework for understanding all forms of progress located within both natural history and religious history. Despite the fact that he never quite reconciled himself with Darwinian 'natural selection' (i.e. he ignored its open-ended nature, and rejected explicitly the selective pressures of the environment), Benamozegh came to value the majestic vision of the common descent of all life. Over time its status shifted in his thought from being an erroneous claim, the result of Darwin's materialism, to proof or confirmation of the kabbalistic teaching about the evolving nature of reality itself.

What, in the end, is the significance of Benamozegh's particular theory of theistic evolution? He has been described by Cherry as an adherent of Darwinisticism, rather than Darwinism, where Darwinisticism refers to a combination of 'Darwinian theory with metaphysics of providence and progress which, by supplanting causal-mechanical explanations, could secure a teleology and a theodicy on an evolutionary basis.'⁵⁰ Strictly speaking, Benamozegh was not interested in developing a theodicy, but otherwise this label seems accurate enough.⁵¹ Cherry also suggests that

⁵⁰ Cherry, "Creation, Evolution and Jewish Thought", 102, citing James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 15. The term was originally coined by Peckham in Morse Peckham, "Darwin and Darwinisticism," *Victorian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1959).

⁵¹ Other candidates for the label who were indeed focused heavily on the challenges of theodicy included Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, and Hans Jonas, the German-

‘Benamozegh was a true advocate of the dialogue model between religion and science’,⁵² and again this seems a helpful observation, bearing in mind the way in which the Italian rabbi’s views on evolution and Judaism changed over time to accommodate each other. Insofar as it had important implications for understanding how and why morality and religion developed over time, this Orthodox Jew’s selective reading of Darwin came to play a significant role in articulating a provocative belief that religious change, even change in Judaism, was inevitable since it was intrinsic to the very nature of religion itself.⁵³ However, it is not so much Benamozegh’s embrace of change within Judaism that is so surprising, as much as his conception of what constituted normative Judaism. As we have seen, his views on evolution brought to light his latent panentheistic tendencies, which correlated with the kind of monism that he expounded in relation to the Jewish understanding of the nature of God and of the cosmos more generally. Arguably, he went beyond dialogue in an ambitious attempt to synthesize evolutionary theory with Judaism so that scientific knowledge took its place alongside Hebraic wisdom and philosophical learning as evidence supportive of a panentheistic vision of Orthodox Judaism. Panentheistic theologies of evolution have been extremely rare until relatively recently.⁵⁴ Accounts of its emergence in Christian thought have tended to emphasize the influence of philosophical currents such as nineteenth-century German idealism, leading to a *via media* between supernaturalism (epitomized by Leibniz) and pantheism (as formulated by Spinoza),⁵⁵ or leading to a rejection of classical theism’s

born philosopher of technology. See Daniel R. Langton, "Jewish Religious Thought, The Holocaust, and Darwinism: A Comparison of Hans Jonas and Mordecai Kaplan," *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 13, no. 2 (2013). Arguably, another adherent of Darwinisticism who engaged seriously with theodicy was Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the Father of American Reform Judaism. Daniel Langton, "Isaac Mayer Wise, Cosmic Evolution, and the Problem of Evil," in *Chance or Providence? Religious Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. Louise Hickman (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

⁵² Cherry, "Creation, Evolution and Jewish Thought", 107.

⁵³ It is worth noting that Guetta would see it rather as a complementary model: ‘Benamozegh was not looking for agreement between the Scriptures and science, but between science and the rabbinic tradition.’ Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah: Elijah Benamozegh and the Reconciliation of Western Thought and Jewish Esotericism*, 97.

⁵⁴ For example, in his classic survey of Protestant engagement with evolutionary theory in the US and UK in the period 1870 to 1900, Moore found no examples of panentheistic approaches and showed how pantheism featured rarely and was always referred to negatively. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870-1900*.

⁵⁵ According to Gregersen, this was the goal of the German idealist philosopher Karl Krause (1781-1832), who is usually credited with having originated the term ‘panentheism.’ Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Pantheism," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic*

‘substance ontology’ (i.e. a conception of the divine and world substances as being profoundly distinct and discordant) in favour of a ‘relational ontology’ (i.e. a conception of different forms of being in profound relationship to one another). Or to view it as a product of the psychological need for theologies of immanence (i.e. divine manifestation in the world) and passibility (i.e. divine suffering) following the horrors of the First and Second World Wars. Or as the logical theological response to science and the Enlightenment, that is, to the necessity of finding a non-interventionist conception of God’s activity in the world *vis-à-vis* natural scientists’ refusal to invoke non-natural causes.⁵⁶ Some of these factors may well also help explain Jewish panentheistic accounts of evolution, several of which predate Christian efforts, suggesting that this might well be the distinctive contribution of Judaism to the evolution-creation debate. But for Jewish thinkers, an equally significant influence appears to be that of Jewish mysticism.⁵⁷ In any case, Benamozegh’s lasting legacy is as the first Orthodox Jewish proponent of such an approach.

Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 28.

⁵⁶ Michael W. Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Pantheistic Turn in Modern Theology," *ibid.*

⁵⁷ For example, two of the American Jewish thinkers referred to in footnote 51, namely the Reform rabbi Wise and the philosopher Jonas, adopted panentheistic stances in relation to evolution and both drew upon *kabbalah* in so doing. Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Cosmic God: A Fundamental Philosophy in Popular Lectures* (Cincinnati: Office American Israelite and Deborah, 1876). Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God After Auschwitz," in *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature*, ed. Albert H. Friedlander (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1968). In outlining the possible historical, philosophical and theological origins of the rise of panentheistic theologies, Brierley overlooks the influence of mysticism, despite identifying Dean Inge’s study of mysticism (in which Karl Krause is cited as the inventor of the term) as the earliest Christian work of English theology to refer to ‘pantheism’. William Ralph Inge, *Christian Mysticism: Considered in Eight Lectures Delivered Before the University of Oxford*, The Bampton Lectures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), cited in Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Pantheistic Turn in Modern Theology," 2-3.

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