



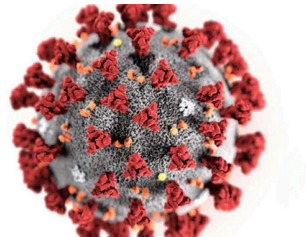
Reading the introductory chapter to Spinoza's *Ethics* again, I am struck by how much it reminds me of the kabbalah: that is, what in the way he discusses substances and how they remind me of the **sefirot** (i.e., the 10 nodes of the Etz Chayim—The Tree of Life): something that is in and conceived through itself.

Substance, attributes and modifications are clustered and their hierarchy in this order. What is to prevent us from looking a substances as emanations, attributes as according to the nomenclature of the nodes of thee tree, and the modifications as the 22 channels that determine the shifts between them?

Spinoza refers to a baggage of debates—contemporary to his time and those going back in the depth of time—amongst which his diatribe with people of his own Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam (1632-1677). At this time the kabbalistic philosophy was part of the cultural baggage from the peninsula.

ספר reads **sefer** (a book), a **sefor** (a count) and **sippur** (a story). In the Sefer Yetsirah it is stated that G-d created the world by writing, number and speech: which is consistent with **book**, **count** and **story**. *Ethics* displays the three: the volume's concept, the numbered paragraphs, and varieties of proof.

A case has been made of his [kabbalistic references](#): especially Abraham Cohen de Herrera's book *Puerta del Cielo* [the Gate of Heaven]. The initial part of the first chapter of *Ethics*—concerning substance—deserves a sufficiently careful look. Substances are defined by that their **essence** also involves **existence**.



Spinoza was a **lense-maker**. If the geometry of the tree of life—which is made up by **circles, squares and triangles**—was part of his cultural baggage, the role of **geometry** is regularly **auxiliary** to his philosophical **proofs** (in the sense of Q.E.D.). They are **auxiliary**, but in Spinoza's perspective **not** contingent.

Still, there are some real questions on how the **book** (as a **found** entity) the **narrative** (his message on things **unknown**) and the **numbers** (as **negotiated** in the book in the sense of being included into the book, or indicated from it) unavoidably **will** involve contingency: now I am speaking **as a reader/receiver**.

Moreover, the **looped** premise of **essence** and **existence**—homologous to properties and attributes—in Spinoza's notion of substance, **rather** define them as subject to **individualisation** than to be conceived as 'isolates'. And, surely, with this premise we cannot consider *Ethics* itself as an isolate!

For instance with murder, the crime is bound to be **twofold**: on the one hand, the victim is denied its **existence**—as a human life-form—on the other hand, the murderer denies his/her **own human essence**. So, as a crime, murder is truly **relational**, in the sense that the **transgression** goes necessarily **two** ways.

Murder here reveals as a **particular** case of a broader transgression: **theft**, or **robbery**. The **separation** of essence and existence is precisely this. And conversely, the **conjoining** essence and existence is the **core** of ethics. Something almost like an ethical **method**. At the same time it is a **design**.

For my part, I cannot read Spinoza without thinking of him—as I read—as one who **writes** philosophy, in a context of having and living from a **trade**: lense-manufacture. He is also someone educated in the philosophy of his time, who has a kabbalistic **cultural** baggage. We do **not** have to call him a Kabbalist.

Because we have a **situation**. Not a problem to be solved. Because we know then exactly what is to be done. A situation is **specific** and becomes clear to us as it **individualises**. Perhaps we have to understand that **between** the infinite **and** the finite, there is a **skin**. That is, they are **connected** by touch.

A **substance** is the infinite aspect of a situation—the aspect relating to individuation—while the finite aspect of the situation is the **specific**. Where the finite aspect lies in **precisation**, the infinite aspect lies in **perfectibility**. The difficult part of is accept that the infinite and the finite **touch** one another.

Touch—or, the **haptic** link—separates **and** connects; it is 'a difference that makes a difference'. It **doesn't** yield meaning it **creates** value. This is what I think when rubbing shoulders with Spinoza, as I work to receive *Ethics* through my effort of **experimental reading**: that is, I work am **cloning** it.

Substances are **infinite**: they are in themselves and conceived through themselves. 1-in-1 so substances are clones of the 'in one', that are **transcendental** by a factor **X**. What expresses **nothing** beyond the thing defined. A conception of which can be formed **independently** of other conceptions.