



On the History of Spinozism

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ON THE HISTORY OF SPINOZISM.

IF one would realize, by the most striking example, the various views that may be entertained of great men and their works, one must study the history of Spinoza and his teaching. Ever since he appeared on the scene and began to beat out a new path in the domain of thought, praise and blame, veneration and depreciation have fallen to his lot to an unusual degree. In the two centuries which have passed since his death, his name becomes the shibboleth of contending theories of the universe, and ever as the one or the other gains the upper hand, the highest admiration for his system alternates with the most scornful contempt for it. Even at the present day the contest around the teaching of Spinoza is not at an end. Just as once the bravest of the Greeks fought round the arms of Achilles, so now we find the most celebrated thinkers at variance with each other concerning the intellectual heritage which Spinoza bequeathed. It is worth while to investigate somewhat closely this continual ebb and flow of opinion for and against Spinoza, and thus to discharge at least one part of the task, which the history of philosophy has hitherto avoided.

I.

The happiness which springs from being known and loved by honest friends of truth, from forming their minds and perfecting their morals by frank exchange of thought: this, as is evident from his letters, Spinoza was by no means slow to appreciate. He was also animated by the desire to gain a hearing for his doctrines, and to secure their diffusion, among those who were capable of comprehending them. But being free from all small feeling, he

never yielded to the mere vain striving after fame and glory, after popularity and universal recognition. He showed by the very form which he gave to his philosophical writings, and especially to his chief work, the *Ethics*, that his object was not to write for the great mass of people, but for the learned few; to the understanding of the masses he made not the smallest concessions. He knew very well that "whoever wishes to teach any doctrine to a whole nation—to say nothing of the whole human race,—and who desires to be understood by all, must prove his subject by experience alone, and must adapt his reasons and explanations chiefly to the understanding of the common people, who form the greater portion of the human race. But he must not develop his arguments with close connexion or present his expositions with strict regard to continuity; otherwise he will write only for scholars, that is, he will be understood only by the very small minority of men¹." And, indeed, whoever has but cast a glance at the *Ethics* of Spinoza and at the stiff mathematical structure of its ideas, which is an object of awe even to many a scholar, perceives that Spinoza had no thought of appealing to the masses when he wrote his masterpiece, but that "he wished to be understood only by the very small minority of men." His general attitude corresponds entirely with this position. He warns his friends to whom he sends the *Short Tractate*, not to communicate its contents to any first comer, but only to those of whom they know for certain that it "will tend to their happiness." In the preface to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, he declares still more emphatically how little he desires that that book should become popular. "I know that it is as impossible to remove superstition from the common people as fear; I know further that firmness with the mass of people is obstinacy, and that in dealing out praise and blame, they are not guided by reason, but are

¹ *Tract. Theol.-Polit.*, V, 37.

transported by passion. Hence I do not invite the populace or those who are controlled by the same emotions as the populace, to read this book. Indeed I would rather that they should leave it quite unnoticed, than that they should become troublesome by wrongly interpreting its meaning, and not only do no good to themselves but injure others."

But it was not only his mean opinion of the common people that prevented him from striving after popularity. He lacked the quality which alone could lead to such striving, viz. ambition. It is entirely in accordance with his innermost being when he remarks in his *Ethics*: "He who desires to assist other people either by advice or by deed, will strive to win their love, and not to draw them into admiration, in the hope that his teaching may be named after him¹." And for this reason he published only one book under his own name, and that one contains the principles not of his own, but of the Cartesian philosophy. Of his other works, though some of them are free from elements that provoke opposition, only one appeared in his life-time, and that was published anonymously, viz. the *Theologico-political Tractate*. And it is clear from the instructions which he gave his friends shortly before his death, that this cautiousness is not due solely to his fear of a conflict with the authorities of the state. He gives them permission to have his posthumous works printed, but not to mention the name of the author, "because," as the literal quotation from the *Ethics* runs, "he did not wish that his tenets should be named after him." He knew that his thoughts would live on eternally; the name of their author might perish. Just as he had lived in calm seclusion, so he wished to vanish and be forgotten after his death.

Fate has decided otherwise than he had thought and wished. Even in his life-time he enjoyed abundant honour

¹ *Ethics*, IV, app. c. 25.

and fame; though his philosophy did not gain the assent of that learned minority, for whom above all he wrote. After his death his name was in every one's mouth, but his philosophy was misinterpreted and distorted. None of the great thinkers of Germany, England, and France ranged themselves on his side; we must seek for his followers among those whom he disdained, among the Protestant clergy and that humbler class whom he regarded as not ripe for scientific knowledge. It is not till a hundred years after his death, that we find in the European world a real understanding of his teaching.

Spinoza had scarcely attained to manhood when a number of young men flocked round him, who were animated with a burning eagerness to assimilate and propagate his doctrines¹. Then, when the *Principia Philosophiæ Cartesianæ* had appeared, and other works in the handwriting of the philosopher were passed from hand to hand; when also in the year 1670 the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was published and the name of the author could not remain long concealed beneath the veil of anonymity, the fame of Spinoza penetrated far beyond the quiet retreat in which he had taken refuge: far, too, beyond the borders of his native land.

Shortly after the publication of the *Principia*, Spinoza wrote that he was scarcely any longer his own master, so many were the friends who came to visit him. Stoupe, a French colonel, who in the year 1673 wrote a book entitled *Religio Hollandorum*, relates in it that Spinoza had become an object of universal curiosity. "Ce Spinoza," he says, "vit dans ce pays; il a demeuré quelque temps à la Hage où il était visité par tous les esprits curieux et même par des filles de qualité, qui se piquent d'avoir l'esprit au-dessus de leur sexe. Ses sectateurs n'osent pas

¹ Regarding Spinoza's circle of friends, see especially *Epist.* 9 and 26 (8 ed. Hag.) and end of the *Tract. Brevis*. Stoupe's account, which I have not read in the original, is given by Jenichen in *Hist. Spinozismi*, p. 56, and by A. v. d. Linde in his *Benedictus Spinoza, Bibliografie*, p. 19.

se découvrir," &c. But not only did men and women of polite society seek out Spinoza in his seclusion, but the best men of Holland were counted among his friends—men like the noble statesman Jan de Witt, the great physicist Huyghens, and the excellent philologist Isaac Voss. From England came Oldenburg, the secretary of the Royal Society, to seek instruction from the hermit of Rhynsburg, and he was the means of effecting an acquaintance between Spinoza and the greatest chemist of that time, Robert Boyle. In France, the atheistical epicureans, who were then a rather numerous body, thought that they had in Spinoza a fellow-thinker. One of them, the poet d'Hénault, made a journey to Holland on purpose to make Spinoza's acquaintance. The latter, however, as Bayle informs us, did not think much of the Frenchman, whose frivolous view of life was very remote from his own lofty outlook upon the world.

Of Germans, Tschirnhausen and Leibniz may be mentioned as having sought out Spinoza and as having maintained a scientific intercourse with him. But the respect which his name enjoyed in Germany, is best proved by the "call" which emanated from Carl Ludwig, the enlightened Electoral Prince of the Palatinate, after he had read Spinoza's *Principia Philosophiæ Cartesianæ*¹. He offered the spectacle-grinder of the Hague a professorship at the University of Heidelberg. Spinoza declined the offer, for the outward splendour of an honourable position would not have sufficed to compensate him for the loss of his independence.

We see that Spinoza had attained to that which he had never striven to gain, viz. great celebrity; but the recognition of his doctrines did not keep pace with the renown of his name. Of all the distinguished scholars, philologists, naturalists, and philosophers, who lived in the time of Spinoza, there is not one who would have acknowledged

¹ *Chevracana*, part II, p. 99 in Paulus' *Benedictus de Spinoza, Opera I*, p. xxiii.

himself Spinoza's disciple. And even among the men just named who visited, knew, and highly esteemed Spinoza, who corresponded with him on the most varied scientific subjects, and who sought enlightenment on the meaning of his philosophy, even among these there is not one who would have liked to hear himself called a Spinozist. Malebranche read Spinoza's works and often quoted them; his mystical teaching, derived from the sources from which Spinoza drew, comes very near to Spinoza's doctrine of Universal Substance. But he indignantly rejects the reproach of Spinozism, which Mairan, Fénelon, and others had cast at him, and his disparaging expressions sound harsh to the point of unworthy rudeness, when he speaks of Spinoza as this "misérable athée," the "méchant esprit," and of his "chimère épouvantable et ridicule."

Again, Henry More, like Spinoza and Malebranche, was led to the adoption of his philosophical system through the study of neo-Platonism and of Descartes, and he comes even nearer to Spinoza than Malebranche in his conception of space, which, like Spinoza, he regards as an attribute of the Deity. But this does not prevent him from strongly emphasizing his remoteness from Spinoza and from disclaiming the latter's theological and metaphysical views in a harsh piece of criticism¹.

Leibniz not only stood on terms of personal intercourse with Spinoza and carried on a correspondence with him, but also read and studied his books with great eagerness, both the earlier works and those which appeared after his death. And in the course of the development of his philosophy, which extended over years and decades, there was certainly one phase in which, according to his own confession, he inclined towards Spinozism². But this phase was of short duration. In the period that follows, he turns

¹ Henrici Mori *Epist. altera in Opera philos.*, I, p. 563, ed. 1679.

² This has been shown by L. Stein, *Leibniz und Spinoza*, p. 27; his other assertions on the relation of the two thinkers are, on the contrary, very disputable.

away with more and more definiteness from Spinoza's mechanical Pantheism, and seeks to widen the breach which separates his own philosophy from Spinoza's to the point of absolute opposition. In this, however, he does not quite succeed, for even the later form of his philosophic teaching exhibits numerous points of contact with Spinoza's. Nevertheless he succeeded in carefully obliterating every trace of the friendly intercourse which once existed between him and the notorious Jew, as he calls him¹.

The philosophy of Walter von Tschirnhausen comes yet nearer to Spinoza's teaching. He seems to have aimed at realizing the ideal which Spinoza, in his self-effacement, had formed of the relation of the teacher to his pupils. Tschirnhausen's work, *Medicina Mentis*, clearly shows the influence of Spinoza's doctrine of Cognition, but the name of the man to whom he is indebted for a considerable portion of his ideas is not once mentioned by him. Thus Spinoza's teaching continues to live a kind of impersonal life in the work of the pupil after the death of the master—exactly as the latter at his death had wished. Yet it cannot escape the attentive reader of the *Medicina Mentis*, that it is after all only the outer shell of Spinozism that we here encounter, and that Tschirnhausen is quite as unfriendly towards its inner kernel as Leibniz.

But what is true of Tschirnhausen may be stated still more emphatically of the admirable scholars who, like

¹ *Otium Hannoveranum*, p. 221, ed. 1737. It is worthy of remark that Leibniz's dissenting criticism of Spinoza had come before the notice of several of the latter's antagonists, and was repeated by them. Jacob Thomasius, Leibniz's teacher, was the first who published a polemical work against Spinoza's *Theologico-political Tractate*. To him Leibniz writes as follows, in January, 1672—the words had been communicated to him by Graevius (Spinoza, *Epist.*, p. 184, ed. Land): "Spinoza Judaeus ἀποσυνάγωγος ob opinionum monstra" (*Epist. ad div.*, III, p. 63). The same words are used by Musaeus, perhaps the most important of the older opponents of Spinoza, in his *Dissertation on the Tractate* (p. 1), and by Kortholt, in his work *De Trib. Impost.*, p. 75.

Huyghens, Vossius, and Boyle, stood in the most friendly relations with Spinoza. They held in esteem the character and mind of the great thinker, but the scientific and religious convictions of these empirics differed too widely from the opinions of Spinoza to allow of his philosophy exercising a lasting influence upon them.

There were but a few unimportant men who were faithful followers of Spinoza in his life-time: men like Simon de Vries, who died young, or the versatile physician Ludwig Meyer, or the Mennonite merchant Jarrig Jellis, or like Saint-Glain first captain, then editor of a newspaper, or the jurist Adrian Koerbagh, and some others of their standing—none of them philosophers by profession, but philosophic dilettants¹. But these could not form a school, they could not win the assent of contemporaries to a system so sharply combated as Spinoza's, or prevent the storm which broke over him and his doctrines even in his life-time.

II.

Spinoza learned, at two widely-separated periods, what terrible power was still in his day wielded by religious fanaticism and theological intolerance. First in the year 1656, when "on account of his bad teachings and actions" he was excommunicated, expelled from the communion of Judaism, and driven from his home by the magistrate of Amsterdam. How dreadful sound the words with which the seceder was excommunicated and anathematized²: "According to the decision of the angels and the judgment of the saints, with the sanction of the holy God and the whole congregation, we excom-

¹ The above-mentioned persons are all well known, except the last two. With respect to St.-Glain, the translator of the *Tract. theol.-polit.*, cf. Des Maizeaux on Bayle, *Op.* iv, p. 46, and Baumgarten, *Nachrichten*, I, p. 69 a. Koerbagh is the author of a work founded upon Spinozistic principles, and entitled: *Een Licht Schijnende in Duystere Plaatsen om te verlichten de voornaamste saaken der Godsgeleertheyd en Godsdiens*, Amsterdam, 1668 and 1711.

² Van Vloten, *Bened. de Spinoza, Opp. Suppl.*, p. 290.

municate, expel, curse, and execrate Baruch de Espinoza before the holy books and the six hundred and thirteen commandments which are contained in them, with the ban which Joshua decreed upon Jericho, with the curse which Elisha pronounced over the children, and with all the execrations which are written in the Law. Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night, cursed be he when he lieth down and cursed be he when he riseth up, cursed be he when he goeth out and cursed be he when he cometh in. May God never forgive him! His anger and his passion shall be kindled against this man, on whom rest all the curses and execrations which are written in the Holy Scriptures. . . . No one shall have intercourse with him, either by speech or in writing, no one may do him a favour, no one be together with him beneath the same roof or within four ells, no one read a book which he has composed or written."

There is something which rouses our indignation in seeing this kind of religious hatred practised by a community, the members of which had almost all but lately escaped from the most terrible religious persecution. They were Marranos or descendants of Marannos; either in their own persons or in those of their fathers and brothers, they had learnt to know the misery and the horrors of religious fanaticism in the torture-chambers of the Spanish Inquisition and the dungeons of the Portuguese ecclesiastical tribunals. Only a short time before had they begun to breathe the freer air of the Netherlands. And now they themselves punish with proscription and excommunication, with curses and denunciations, a man whom no one could accuse of sordid conduct or of any offence against morality and law, against whom no other charge could be brought but that he thought otherwise, more freely about his faith than his co-religionists, and that he ordered his life accordingly. And indeed the ban which fell upon Spinoza's head has not infrequently been regarded as a *proof of the persecuting spirit of Judaism*, and sentence has been

pronounced upon the council of the Amsterdam congregation as upon a *band of fanatics*. If, indeed, we judge of the procedure of this congregational council in the light of our views on the freedom of thought and belief, we can scarcely find a word of blame which would be severe enough. But their excuse is the spirit of their time and of their environment. The Jewish congregations of the Middle Ages and of modern times, though animated by a jealous care that the inner sanctuary of their religion should be untouched by any strange breath, have yet always adapted themselves in externals to the manners and customs of their environment. As with their dress, dwellings, and entire conduct of life, so also in the relations of the individual towards the collective body, they regulated their habits essentially according to the ideas and laws prevalent in the land in which they dwelt. They were lenient and indulgent in matters of faith under the enlightened Mohammedan rule: they were intolerant under the fanatical Christian nations of the Middle Ages. Similarly in the seventeenth century, they followed the example of the nations among which they lived. The period was far removed from religious toleration. In Spain and Portugal religious error was still regarded as a crime worthy of death; there the prisons of the Inquisition were still filled with suspects, and year after year the flames consumed the bodies of the hapless people who had been declared heretics. Even in Protestant countries—in Germany, England, Scotland, Switzerland, Sweden—no real freedom of belief was yet known, and no toleration was extended to unbelievers. Perhaps the most instructive example of the intolerance of this period is afforded by the Protestant settlers in America, who, driven from Europe on account of their faith, had themselves scarcely escaped persecution, when they persecuted all who differed from them with fearful cruelty.

In the Netherlands there was in a certain sense more tolerance. Jews and Dissenters were not only allowed

to live in the country; they were also granted, within certain limits, the free exercise of their religion. Yet here too a rigid religious coercion fettered the members of the ruling Church, and suffered no loosening of religious bondage. The seventeenth century is filled with the persecutions which befel heretics and sectaries in the Netherlands. Hugo de Grot and Oldenbarneveld are witnesses for this; so, too, are the Arminians, who were forbidden by the Synod of Dordrecht to hold Divine worship, and whose ministers were driven into exile. Philosophy, too, and the philosophers were by no means free in the Netherlands. Descartes had to thank the intercession of the French ambassador for his escape from imprisonment and banishment; his philosophy, on the other hand, did not escape proscription. In the same year in which the Jewish community excommunicated Spinoza, the second Synod of Dordrecht issued a prohibition against reading and propagating the works of Descartes. Geulincz was compelled on account of heretical teachings to give up his professorship at Löwen and to flee to Leyden, and he would have perished in misery had not the Cartesian Heidanus taken pity upon him. As late as 1690, the Synod of Amsterdam declared as false and pernicious the doctrine that the magistrates do not possess the right to suppress heresy by force.

It is not to be wondered at that the rulers of the Jewish community imitated the examples, which the ecclesiastical and political authorities of the freest country of Europe set them, and that they on their part strove to protect the purity of their faith by solemn excommunications. The formula which was employed against Spinoza is indeed absolutely barbarous; it was, however, prescribed by ancient legal directions, and was not to be softened for the sake of the heretic.

Moreover, the ban seems to have exerted but a small effect on Spinoza's external life. He enjoyed as before the respect of the best men of his native country. Christian

and Jewish¹ friends of science carried on intercourse with him in the most unconstrained and friendly way. He lived unmolested in the immediate neighbourhood of Amsterdam, and went as often as he wished to Amsterdam itself. Moreover, the Jewish writers who towards the end of the seventeenth century developed an extraordinary activity, hardly took any notice of their famous co-religionist who had fallen under the ban². But that the curse which was pronounced upon him, and the forced separation from his father and brothers and sisters, from friends and relatives, inflicted a wound upon his heart which had not healed many years later, is shown by the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which was not published till 1670. It is alleged that this treatise contains portions of the *Vindication*, which Spinoza wrote immediately after the ban had been pronounced upon him. This accounts for the irritated tone of the *Tractatus*. It is not the passionless thinker, free from prejudice, such as he usually is, that speaks to us here, but the deeply embittered, unjust, grudging opponent of Judaism³. Spinoza was after all a man; and it is conceivable, though not justifiable, that human rancour at the injustice done him found expression in a work, the first planning of which falls into the period of his excommunication.

If, however, a more modern inquirer is right in his data regarding the works of Spinoza, and we should have to assume that the *Tractatus Brevis* was finished before the year 1656, then the only possible hypothesis would be that the opinions expressed in this work were the "bad teachings," on account of which, as the formula of excom-

¹ Greiffencrantz in Kortholt *De Trib. Imp. Magnis*, Praef.: *Judaeis etiam domestico usu non semper inderdixit*; van Vloten, *Spinoza*, p. 29. To letter 49 (43 ed. Hag.), which was formerly believed to have been addressed to Isaac Orobio, it is no longer permissible to refer, since the real addressee is Johann Oosten. Cf. Ben. de Spinoza, opp. II, pp. v and 169, ed. Hag.

² Graetz, *Hist. of the Jews*, vol. X, p. xi.

³ This has been proved by M. Joël's learned *Examination of the Theol.-Polit. Tractatus* (Breslau, 1870).

munication asserts, Spinoza was accused and sentenced. But this assumption is without foundation. Neither this nor any other work of Spinoza which is known to us was composed before 1656¹: it must therefore have been oral utterances, for which Spinoza was brought to account, and for this assertion, indeed, we have the testimony of the philosopher's biographers.

III.

With the publication of the *Theologico-political Tractate* begins a second period of heresy-hunting and calumny. This phase is not introduced by a single event taking deep hold of Spinoza's life, like the decreeing of the ban in the year 1656, but it is filled with a long series of violent, often savage and malicious, attacks upon the candid opponent of the orthodox doctrine of the church.

Spinoza had in this work expressed the freest and boldest views concerning God and nature, liberty and necessity, the Bible and revelation, church and state. His opinions contradicted, with great asperity, all theological and philosophic systems prevailing in the seventeenth century. Religion appeared to be threatened in her deepest foundations. Christianity and Judaism, Scholasticism and Cartesianism were attacked in equal measure. What wonder that all sects and schools united in condemnation of the dangerous book? Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, disciples of the later scholasticism and of Descartes, theologians, philologists, and physicians, Dutch, Germans, French, and English, vied with each other in the rejection and repudiation of the *Tractate* as of a mischievous, heretical, unscrupulous work, which denied the Deity, destroyed the true faith, uprooted morality, and hence undermined the stability and welfare of the state.

¹ Spinoza would hardly have used christological terminology before his expulsion from the Jewish community, as he does in *Tract. Brev.*, I, c. 9. II, c. 22.

Scarcely had a few months elapsed since the *Tractate* had appeared—without mention of the author, and with a false place of issue—when two German professors, Jacob Thomasius (the teacher of Leibniz) and Friedrich Rappolt, thundered against the anonymous author of the “blasphemous Tractate” and his “insane love of innovation.” So quickly did the news of this interesting, infamous book, as well as the book itself, penetrate into the very heart of Germany. But Rappolt and Thomasius were not antagonists of equal standing with Spinoza; their works were without effect. The States-General¹ promulgated an order which attached Spinoza’s work, and forbade its further propagation. But in vain. For there appeared three further impressions of the *Tractate*, which, however, did not purport to be new editions, but faithfully copied the first edition, and all exhibited the date 1670. These testify to the tremendous sensation which the book created, and this is further shown by the fact that in the years 1673–74 four new editions could be prepared in Amsterdam and Leyden. Only one of them, however, is printed with the proper title; the three others are smuggled through under a false flag as innocent historical or medical works. It is from this time that the real battle against Spinoza begins. If Thomasius, Rappolt, and some other opponents had in the years 1670–71 attacked the author of the *Tractate* in tractlets, noisy speeches, and letters, the fighting was now carried on by means of weighty treatises and huge, learned books. In the single year 1674 no fewer than five scholars published refutations of the *Tractate*: Jacob Vatelers, the preacher of the Remonstrants in the Hague, Regner von Mansfeld, Professor of Theology, Musaeus, Professor of

¹ According to epist. 47 (44, ed. Hag.) not before Feb., 1671. But in April, 1671, the prohibition had already been promulgated, as Graevius’ letter to Leibniz (Leibniz’s *Phil. Writings*, I, p. 115) shows. This prohibition is also mentioned by Stoupe, *Relig. des Holland.* (in Jenichen, *Hist. Spin.*, Leenhof, p. 51), and J. Braun, *Vera Belgarum Relig.* (in Jenichen, *ibid.*). Comp. also Spinoza, *Opp.* II, p. 184, ed. Hag.

Theology in Jena, Spitzelius, Lutheran preacher in Rotterdam, and William Blyenbergh, a merchant who dabbled in philosophy, and who, at an earlier period, had put Spinoza's patience to the severest test by his importunate questions. During the succeeding three years Johann Bredenberg, Franciscus Cuper, Pierre Poiret, Lambert Velthuysen, appear upon the arena, the last-named, an opponent whom even Spinoza held in respect, and whose arguments he thought alone worthy of refutation¹. What the other opponents lacked in argument, most of them made up in severity, even barbarity, of judgment upon the "most godless of all writers," and his "absurd, pernicious, and poisonous book." One of the best of these hostile works is a treatise by Musaeus, the Jena professor. In this book Spinoza is described as "a man of bold countenance, fanatical and estranged from all religion." The following judgment is passed upon the *Tractate*: "He (Spinoza) has left no mental faculty, no cunning, no art untried, in order to conceal his fabrication beneath a brilliant veil, so that we may with good reason doubt whether among the great number of those whom the devil himself has hired for the destruction of all human and divine right, there is one to be found who has been more zealous in the work of corruption than this traitor who was born to the great injury of the church and to the harm of the state²."

All these outbreaks of religious fanaticism failed to rob Spinoza of the cheerful composure which seldom left him throughout his life. When he met with Mansfeld's libel in a bookshop, and had cursorily glanced at it, he wrote to his friend Jarrig Jellis: "I have seen in a bookseller's window the book which the Professor of Utrecht has written against my work, and from the little I read of it through that opportunity, I perceived that it does not deserve to be read, still less to be answered. Therefore I pay no regard to the book and its author. But I said

¹ Ep. 48, 49, 75 (42, 43, 69).

² Musaeus, *Tract. Theol.-Polit. ad veritatis lanceam examinatus*, pp. 1, 2.

to myself with a smile, how precisely the most ignorant are usually also the most impudent, and the most ready to rush into print¹."

Spinoza, indeed, could not be an impartial judge in his own cause, yet the majority of those who have given an account of his life are still at the present time no less severe than he in their judgment. The authors of these attacks are declared to be ignorant, narrow-minded, malicious fanatics, who were incapable of estimating the greatness of their opponent, and who did not even make the attempt to understand his teaching. These verdicts, however, are not just. There were some very learned, clear-sighted, and well-intentioned men among Spinoza's opponents. Most of them were unquestionably most profoundly convinced of the pernicious tendency of Spinoza's *Tractate*, and believed that they served religion and the good of the state, by attacking the dangerous book with the sharpest weapons at their disposal, and by bringing about, if possible, its suppression. Religiously biassed, as they almost all were, they did not know that the spirit of a great modern epoch spoke to them out of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the spirit of unprejudiced research, of scientific independence, of sober criticism, the spirit which quakes before no authority, not even before Bible and dogma, and which recognizes no higher tribunal than clear, impartial, self-consistent thought. To the children of the nineteenth century, to whom freedom of thought and belief, the independence of knowledge, and even the toleration of religious error have become current notions, Spinoza appears as one of the most conspicuous among those intellectual champions, who saw the value of religion not in unintelligible dogmas and meaningless ceremonies, but in its purifying and hallowing influence upon our will and action, who sought to free political life from the interference of priestly power, and who claimed the free use of reason as an inalienable

¹ Epist. 50.

human right. It would be unfair to demand of Spinoza's contemporaries a similar estimation of the man and of his life's work. For the seventeenth century still lay entirely beneath the fetters of religious and scientific bondage. Dogmas still governed every department of theoretical and practical life; "holy theology," to use Bacon's language, "was still regarded as the acme of all human intellectual activity, as its haven and resting-place." The Reformation had won back one of the rights of which the Middle Ages had robbed research, the right of free study of the Bible. But before the word of the Bible the reformers had made a halt, and even this right was insecure amid the strife of wrangling churches. It is true that through the action of some of the numerous Protestant sects, the Quakers, Arminians, Socinians, &c., some milder elements had been engrafted upon the stern system of traditional church doctrine; true that the philosophy of a Descartes, a Hobbes, and a Herbert of Cherbury came into collision with this or that religious conviction; nevertheless in spite of all the attacks of philosophic doubters and heterodox sects, the rock of Catholic and Protestant theology remained unshaken; unshaken stood the belief in the divinity of the Bible, the truth of prophecy, the correctness of the doctrines concerning God and man which are contained in Holy Writ. And now came an anonymous writer, who later on emerged to view as a spectacle-grinder expelled from the Jewish community, and attacked all these fundamental articles of the prevailing faith, partly in open words, partly with ill-concealed hostility. He regarded and explained the Bible as a profane work. He looked upon the prophets as ordinary men, and their predictions as lively pictures of the imagination. A suspension of the order of nature by means of a miracle he declared to be inconceivable, and on the doctrines which relate to the existence of Christ he was altogether silent. He conceived of God himself, not as the Creator and Ruler of the world, but as an essence inhering in and inseparable from it. He took

no heed of any doctrine of the Synagogue or of any dogma of the Church ; no decisions of Councils and Synods bound him ; he was bold enough and self-convinced enough to set his reason above a sacred tradition of more than a thousand years. And even the state, whose power he raised far above that of the Church, was to possess no right over the thought and belief of the citizen, so long as he did not act contrary to its laws.—Such were the teachings of this dangerous man ; people perceived in them the most audacious speculations of a reason that overrated itself. They saw in Spinoza only the atheist and despiser of religion, who jeopardized the state and morality. Who could honestly blame pious men, if, as the Jewish congregation of Amsterdam had already done, they brought forth the sharpest weapons from their theological armoury in defence of their threatened faith, and essayed to protect religion, morality, and the state with all the strength at their disposal. It is true that the tone in which they spoke was ignoble. The violence of the abuse which they heaped upon Spinoza is obnoxious to us. Yet we must remember that a period degenerate with the religious strifes of many years, felt and fought differently from ourselves ; we must understand that the opponents of Spinoza wielded the weapons which the custom of their time offered them, and that they were not conscious of doing anything blameworthy, if in the heat of the battle they made use of more violent expressions than politeness and propriety allowed.

All these men appear to us in comparison with Spinoza unspeakably little. They do not approach him either in depth of perception, or in breadth of view, or in historical importance. But it is inevitable that they adhered with much greater firmness to their standpoint than he to his, and that in many of their objections they had right on their side. Spinoza, who had broken with so many inherited religious views, saw himself opposed to a world filled with superstitions and prejudices, rooted in the views which he rejected and furnished with the most terrible

instruments of power. He knew that he could not with impunity defy it, wound its deepest feelings, and declare its deepest convictions to be void. He wished, however, not to wound but to reconcile, not to provoke but to explain. He wanted to bring peace to a world torn by sad religious wars, not to bring fresh struggles to it. He wished to find peace for himself in this turbulent, strife-seeking world, for he needed peace for the accomplishment of his life's work. Hence, like Descartes and Leibniz, he always displayed a certain cautiousness in the expression of his opinions, sought for compromises, and seldom spoke his last word. He never indeed denied the truth, but he often forbore to speak his true meaning. He submitted the Bible to critical examination, but in order to please his contemporaries, often enough tried to establish an agreement between it and his views where the most decided opposition is to be found. This is not cowardice, neither is it hypocrisy, but a precaution which the circumstances of the time seem to force upon him. But it could not be difficult for his opponents to hunt up such weak points in his work. Musaeus is entirely right when, in the course of his attack on Spinoza, he emphasizes the statement, that religion demands something more from man than obedience and love; that it is by no means a matter of indifference in respect to faith whether we conceive of God as fire, spirit, light, or thought; that the Holy Scriptures do certainly not declare the will of God and the law of nature to be identical; and that the ceremonies of the Israelites were not given solely for the promotion of their temporal happiness and the welfare of the State¹. The remark of Thomasius is alike appropriate and spiteful when he observes that Spinoza, who esteemed himself fortunate that he lived under a state which granted its citizens full liberty of thought and belief, could yet not be so very happy, since he did not even dare to acknowledge himself

¹ Joh. Musaeus, *Tractatus Theol.-Polit. ad veritatis luncem examinatus*, pp. 24, 29, 65.

openly as the author of the *Tractate*¹. That Spinoza moreover misunderstood or falsely explained numerous passages of the Bible was pointed out by several of his opponents, and especially by Franz Cuper².

If the facts which have thus been adduced are considered, we shall judge the opponents of Spinoza more leniently than has been usually the case, and we shall understand how it was that men so insignificant as all those who have been mentioned were able to direct the judgment of contemporaries and of posterity concerning Spinoza for quite a century. With rare unanimity they declared Spinoza to be an Atheist devoid of all religion and his teaching to be an absurdity. Sentence of death was thereby passed upon his philosophy, and his influence upon the development of the mental sciences was for a long time crippled. He was thrown aside "like a dead dog": one who denied God deserved no better fate. Many of the whilom friends of Spinoza were embarrassed by the cry raised by his antagonists and shaken in their friendly sentiments. Oldenburg, who since 1661 had been in very active correspondence with Spinoza, and to whom as early as that year the most important passages from the first book of the *Ethics* had been communicated, sorrowfully calls attention to the fact that *so very many* are of opinion that he, Spinoza, confounds God with nature, abolishes the veneration paid to miracles, and suppresses his true opinion of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. He begs him to express himself openly on this point, and to do so in a manner that would satisfy orthodox Christians. Spinoza replies frankly and honestly, as he was bound to do to a friend of so many years' standing. But Oldenburg writes to his still greatly esteemed friend, that confronted as he was with the choice between Spinoza's heretical views and the faith of the Bible, he did not hesitate to decide for the latter, and with this discordant note their

¹ Jac. Thomasius, *Dissertationes*, LXIII, p. 573.

² Franciscus Cuperus, *Arcana Atheismi Revelata*, Roterod., 1676.

correspondence ends.—About the same time a creature like Albert Burgh ventured to appear as vindicator of the divine revelation “against the bold and deplorable presumption” of his former teacher, dared to pronounce his philosophy mere illusion and chimera and to invite him to abandon his “foolish wisdom” and to enter the haven of the Roman Catholic Church, which alone brings salvation. The answer which Spinoza vouchsafed to his former pupil belongs to his severest, frankest, most pregnant letters. Anger at the importunity of the bold fanatic, and pain at the aberration of the infatuated man, made Spinoza emerge from the reserve which he usually imposed on himself. Relentlessly he lays bare the weakness into which the proselytizing zeal of the youthful convert had betrayed him into, and while he heaps upon him biting scorn, he at the same time annihilates him with sober argument: never has the folly of an unreasoning zealot been more thoroughly refuted or more severely castigated.

But Albert Burgh had only stated concerning Spinoza’s philosophy that which in consequence of the constant charges brought against him was universally accepted. So inimical to Spinoza was public opinion at this time, that he did not venture to send his *Ethics* to the Press, as he had intended. Theologians and Cartesians had spread the report that he was about to prove in a new work that there is no God; they laid an information against him with the magistrates, and he determined not to publish the book, though it was his favourite work. We know that it was only printed after his death, together with his other posthumous works, and then only with the bare initials of the author, and without the name of publisher, printer, or place of printing: an indication how dangerous it still was to circulate the works of the decried atheist.

IV.

The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the heretical contents of which had raised this storm of indignation against

Spinoza, contains, side by side with theological expositions, many of the important ideas of his philosophy, but without the strong foundation and without the mathematically close connexion which the *Ethics* gave them. In this work, which before its publication in 1677 had only been entrusted to a few friends in manuscript, the whole of Spinoza's theoretical and practical philosophy is for the first time set forth in its comprehensive entirety. The passages, which in the *Tractate* only hover in the air, appear now as indispensable components of an admirable fabric of thought, which brings into combination Plato and Aristotle, Stoa and Neo-Platonism, Christian scholasticism and Jewish religious philosophy, and which exhibits the frigidity of French rationalism together with the emotional warmth of German mysticism, and the rigidity of mathematics together with the mystical extravagances of the Kabbala. People might reject, dispute, refute this grandiose work; but no one could deny its logical sequence of thought, depth of subject-matter, clearness of presentation. The publication of the *Ethics*, one would have thought, would have necessarily made an epoch in the history of Spinozism. This, however, was not the case. The *Ethics* did not correct the opinions about Spinoza and his teaching, which had been established by seven years' violent polemics, and it modified them but little. Nevertheless, immediately after its appearance the accusers were suddenly silenced for several years — perhaps because on June 25, 1678, the States of Holland and West Friesland had forbidden all men to sell, print, and translate "the profane and atheistic work," and ordered it in every way to be suppressed¹. Possibly, too, the sudden death of Spinoza, which had taken place just before, won his opponents to a more conciliatory frame of mind. But from the end of the seventh decade the flood of attacks swells to unlimited dimensions. The old charges are repeated

¹ The Placet of the States of Holland and West Friesland is copied in A. v. d. Linde, *Bened. Spinoza, Bibliogr.*, p. 7.

and increased by new accusations. In Holland, France, Germany, England appear ever new enemies of the Spinozistic doctrines; ever again the statement is made that Spinoza is an enemy of religion, of morality, of civil order; that he teaches atheism, acknowledges no God and no devil, no good and no bad spirits, denies the immortality of the soul, and will not hear of revelation any more than he will of Christ's work of salvation. Not less offensive seems to be the fact that he subordinates religion to the civil law, the church to the state; and indignation is excited by the discovery that, in spite of all his heterodoxy, he sometimes assumes the mien of a genuine believer, and pretends to defend reverence for the Holy Scriptures, whose teachings he nevertheless disdains and deprecates.

Other critics examined more keenly the philosophical ideas of Spinoza. They denounced Spinoza's doctrine of Sole existence and its corollaries; the immanence of the Deity, the unity of substance, and the abolition of all individual existence. They tried to demonstrate the error of his psychological monism, censured his rejection of the conception of design, his fixed Determinism, his denial of free human action, which puts an end to all distinction between good and evil, between right and wrong.

The tone of the works written to refute these theories was unchanged. As in the life-time of Spinoza, gross invectives, unworthy aspersions and maledictions are hurled at him. Theologians and philosophers do not yet fight for or against scientific theories with arguments pertinent to the subject. They think themselves compelled to find and refute dangerous heresies in Spinoza's works: hence their pens are dipped, as at the time of Spitzelius and Musaeus, in poison and gall.

It is by no means necessary to wade through the quagmire of animosities, of groundless and repulsive charges, of which Spinoza was the object towards the end of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It will suffice to give a few specimens of this controversy.

One of the most extensively read and quoted controversial works is Christian Kortholt's book *On the Three Great Traitors*, viz. Herbert of Cherbury, Thomas Hobbes, and Spinoza. The dissertation directed against Spinoza is introduced by the following barbarisms¹: "May the last-named be attacked by the itch! But who is he? It is *Benedictus* (The Blessed) *Spinoza*, who should rather be called *Maledictus* (the Cursed), because that earth which by divine curse is filled with thorns (*terra spinosa*), has produced no more accursed man, no man more thorny in his works. He was at first a Jew, but was then expelled from the synagogue because of the monstrous opinions which he uttered concerning Judaism, and finally he has confessed himself to belong to the Christians, I know not through what artifices and deceptions." "One can see here," says Kortholt in another place, "the extremely infamous teachings of the wicked man—teachings that deserve the flames of hell. . . . And yet this accursed hypocrite is so shameless, so audacious, that he dares assert that he has taught nothing which can injure piety, good morals, and the orthodox training of youth²."

Among the numerous theologians of France who opposed Spinoza, Huet, Bishop of Avranches, was one of the most learned and respected. But he too speaks of him in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* and in the work *De Concordia Rationis et Fidei*, with unspeakable disrespect. "When I found him on my way," he says, "I did not spare him, this foolish and infamous man, who deserved to be fettered with chains and to be scourged with rods."

A laudable exception to the books in this controversy which abound so greatly in insults and calumniations, is presented by the biography of Spinoza, which Joh. Colerus published in 1705 in Dutch, and then in the following year in French. Colerus is an ardent opponent of the

¹ Chr. Kortholt, *De Tribus Impostoribus Magnis*, p. 75, ed. 1700.

² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Spinozistic philosophy; but the character of Spinoza fills him with admiration. Hence the more emphatically he expresses his abhorrence of the doctrines of the heretic, the profounder is the impression produced by his description of this quiet, pure life of a thinker.

We should, however, be very much mistaken if we should think that Spinoza's teachings could give offence only to orthodox persons. Spinozism seemed terrible, nay, absurd, also to sceptics and freethinkers, to those who, estranged from orthodox Church doctrine, embraced deistic views, or tried to combine philosophic doubts with a simple devoutness that assumed no special form. Of these opponents of Spinoza Bayle has become the standard instance.

Bayle and Spinoza are far apart as the antipodes in their views, and in the methods and objects of their research. Bayle, starting from Descartes but never estranged from the beliefs of the Church, ever restless, ever doubting, ever criticizing, holds human perception in high esteem and depreciates it at the same time, regards the contents of the creeds as irrational and yet acknowledges allegiance to them—because he looks upon them as the inviolable foundations of human life. Hateful to him indeed must have been the teaching of the man, who wished to be a philosopher pure and simple, who did not understand that thought could contradict itself, who declared an irrational faith to be folly, and who made all faith and hope, all belief and feeling, subject to the dictates of clear and definite thought. Bayle endeavours to show that precisely this reliance on one's own reason led Spinoza astray¹. He admits that Spinoza led an honourable and virtuous life, but his teaching does not appear to him to gain in value on that account. He reproaches Spinoza with having involved himself in much greater difficulties in order to escape the difficulties of Theism. Spinoza, he says, disputes the dogmas and is himself the worst dogmatist. He denies

¹ P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, s.v. Spinoza, Rotterdam, 1697.

the God of the Bible, and cuts up his God into a million portions. If one says: the Germans have killed ten thousand Turks, this, according to Spinoza, means that God, modified as German, has killed God, modified as Turk. And similarly, we must assume, according to Spinoza, that God hates himself, persecutes himself, eats himself, slanders himself, and sends himself to the scaffold.

These objections are excessively stupid. They rest upon a complete misunderstanding of the Spinozistic system, which never assimilates the temporal to the eternal, as Bayle presupposes. But the witty way in which the clever sceptic presented his arguments, and the great popularity of his works, won approval for this polemic, and caused it to be widely diffused. It may be asserted that the greater portion of the attacks directed against Spinoza in the eighteenth century go back to Bayle's superficial criticisms.

Voltaire speaks of Spinoza in exactly the same way as Bayle¹. No doubt can be entertained, he says, of the honesty of his sentiments and the purity of his character, but much of the correctness of his views and the validity of his proofs. He found his writings obscure and confused and the Latin he wrote very bad. It is perfectly clear to him, that Spinoza acknowledged no God, and only used the word God in order not to shock the reader. He adds that there were not ten persons in the whole of Europe who had read Spinoza's works from beginning to end. Voltaire also expressed this opinion of Spinoza in some sarcastic verses which have often been quoted. They run as follows:

Alors un petit Juif au long nez, au teint blême,
 Pauvre, mais satisfait, pensif et retiré,
 Esprit subtil et creux, moins lu que célébré,
 Caché sous le manteau de Descartes, son maître,
 Marchant à pas comptés, s'approcha du grand être.
 Pardonnez-moi, dit-il, en lui parlant tout bas,
 Mais je pense entre nous, que vous n'existez pas.

¹ Voltaire, *Le philosophe ignorant*, p. 24.

A sounder judgment might be expected from Diderot, learned, unprejudiced, acute thinker as he was. But he, too—in the article “Spinoza” in the *Encyclopædia*—contented himself with repeating, and in part copying literally, Bayle’s superficialities.

Condillac did not derive his knowledge of Spinoza from Bayle. He read Spinoza’s *Ethics*, the first book of which he submits to severe criticism in the *Traité des Systèmes*. It cannot, however, be affirmed that this criticism is more thorough than that of Bayle and Voltaire.

We find likewise in numerous German and Dutch works of the eighteenth century Bayle’s criticism reproduced, being often, indeed, plagiarized word for word. The learned Mosheim states plainly that “the precision with which Bayle drew shocking and absurd inferences from Spinoza’s teaching cannot be surpassed¹.”

If, then, we hear the cry of murder against the wicked heretic on the one hand, and sarcasms on the foolish philosopher on the other, we must fairly wonder that the teachings of this man were regarded as at all worthy of correction and refutation. And yet no other philosophy was so much discussed as Spinoza’s, and in spite of the rareness of his works, which never once went through a new edition during the eighteenth century, the most important of his ideas passed from mouth to mouth, though in variously distorted forms. Nothing, therefore, can be falser than the statement which has been sometimes made, that during the first eighty years of the last century Spinoza “was forgotten, and was not deemed worthy of esteem².” Spinoza was never less forgotten than during the time when his name was covered with insult and disgrace, and when the majority of people had nothing for his teaching but ridicule and contempt. The large number of hostile works directed against him would alone testify how much attention

¹ Mosheim on Cudworth, *Syst. int.*, p. 1140.

² Täsche, *Pantheism*, Preface to vol. III; Horn, *The Political Doctrines of Spinoza*, p. 14; *Ben. de Spinoza Opp.* ed. Bruder, Praef. vol. I, p. xviii.

was paid to him. But how little Spinoza had been forgotten can be proved by the express testimony of widely different authors.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century the publisher of Wittich's *Anti-Spinoza* writes: "Everywhere Spinoza's works are offered for sale; to an age thirsting for innovation they are recommended by their folly; they allure the reader by their godlessness; they lead one on to admiration through their obscurity. . . . Also Spinoza has left behind no less abundant a crop of disciples than some Greek sophist or disputant. But these, with a wantonness peculiar to them, labour with the sole object of making known and diffusing far and wide the pernicious doctrines of the new master. In this rash enterprise they have succeeded. For in a brief space of time this poison has spread through all parts of the Christian world, and it advances and steals on further from day to day¹." Similar statements emanated from authors of the eighteenth century.

In Holland, Roellius says, they run after Spinoza by shoals².

In the year 1707, Jenichen complains that his age is so extremely fruitful in Spinozistic literature³. And in 1767 Brucker, the learned historian, writes: "As the injurious tare thrives more luxuriously than the fruitful ears, and sends forth its roots afar, so too does it happen in the mind of man. No event testifies more conspicuously to this truth than the shameful result which the godlessness of Spinoza has had⁴." So widely prevalent must Spinoza's teaching have been at this time, that more than one famous theologian felt it imperative on him to preach against it publicly. On Easter Sunday, 1704, Johann Colerus, minister of the Lutheran congregation in the Hague, preached against Spinoza's allegorical interpretation of the resurrection of

¹ Christoph Wittichii *Anti-Spinoza Praef.*, 1690.

² Roellius, *De relig. natur.*, p. 166.

³ Jenichen, *Hist. Spinozismi Leenhofiani*, Praef.

⁴ Brucker, *Hist. Philos.*, tom. IV, pars 2, p. 696.

Christ, and he had his sermon printed next year together with his biography of the philosopher. In France, the moderate Massillon warned the orthodox from the pulpit against the "monster" Spinoza, "who, after having embraced various religions, finished by having no religion at all, who fashioned out of his own head an impenetrable chaos of godlessness, a confused and obscure work, the perusal of which can only engender the wish not to believe in God¹." In Germany, Mosheim preached against "the wretched nonsense of the revilers of religion," as he called the teaching of Spinoza. "Is there anything more absurd," he says, "than seriously to say that this world is God? That hares, dogs, and gnats are limbs of God? Is anything more ridiculous?²"

We see that the opposite of Spinoza's wishes had been realized: his teaching was, if not forgotten, yet distorted and misunderstood; but his name was in every one's mouth.

V.

But where are the followers of Spinoza to be found against whom such violent attacks are directed? Who had the courage in the seventeenth and eighteenth century to declare himself a Spinozist in spite of the flood of insults and imprecations which was poured at this time upon Spinoza and his system? We find the followers of Spinoza first of all in his native land. Even in his life-time, as has been already observed, Spinoza saw a circle of pupils and devotees flocking around him. They studied eagerly the works of their master; they looked after the publication and translation of his books; one or another sought also to do him some service by means of biographies and other works. But there it had stopped; these men did not possess any great influence. Similarly destitute of result

¹ Massillon in Nourrisson, *Spinoza et le naturalisme*, Paris, 1866.

² Mosheim, *Heilige Reden*, v. II: "The wretched nonsense of the reviler of religion"; in Krakauer, *On the History of Spinozism*, p. 22.

were the works which Abraham Johann Cuffeler¹ and Hendrik Weyermars² wrote after Spinoza's death in the spirit of his teaching. Of greater importance is the fact that a scholar and freethinker, well known in the literary circles of Holland and France, viz. the Count of Boullainvilliers, gave, in the guise of an opponent, a luminous description and explanation of the Spinozistic philosophy³.

But the influence of the Spinozistic philosophy penetrated far deeper. The spirit of his Pantheism seized hold of numerous men who moved and laboured in the midst of the people: clergymen of the reformed church and simple handicraftsmen. With these there began a movement, which keenly aroused the dullness of the Dutch, powerfully stirred up the church, and, in its final after-effects, reached down into the nineteenth century⁴.

One of the first of the Dutch divines who became attached to Spinozism was Pontian van Hattem. Born in the year 1641, he studied in Leyden and Saumur, and while still a student he was suspected of a leaning to Spinoza. Appointed minister in Philipsland in Zeeland, he openly showed his heretical Spinozistic views in a work on the Heidelberg Catechism. In consequence of this book he was in 1683 deposed from his post, his writings were prohibited and burnt, and his opinions most warmly combated by highly-esteemed theologians. Nevertheless he continued to advance his doctrines in various addresses and writings, and attracted a large number of followers. Of these the most worthy of mention are: (1) Jacob Bril of Leyden, first weaver, then lecturer of the reformed church, (2) Marinus Adriansz Booms, according to his sign an honourable shoemaker of Middleburg, who in 1714 was declared guilty of "horrible Spinozistic and Hattemistic

¹ Cuffeler is the author of an anonymous work full of Spinozistic ideas, *Specimen artis ratiocinandi*, Hamb. 1684.

² Weyermars, *Den ingebeelde Chaos*, &c., Amst. 1710.

³ *Réfutation des erreurs de Benoît de Spinoza*, p. 151 s. Bruxelles, 1731. The work of Boullainvilliers was composed shortly after 1704.

⁴ For the Dutch Spinozists, cf. A. v. d. Linde, *Spinoza*, p. 134.

errors." For this reason he was excommunicated by the church council and banished from the town by the magistrate. His "vexatious and soul-destroying books" were ordered to be torn to pieces and burnt on the gallows by the hands of the executioner. (3) A faithful pupil of Hattem was his servant-maid Dina Jans, nicknamed Pastor Dina on account of her successful zeal for the propagation of his doctrines. She boasted of having confirmed no fewer than 7,000 persons in the right faith, i.e. in the Spinozistic-mystical teaching of her lord and master, and she was excommunicated in 1726. (4) Grosvinus von Buitendyk, preacher at Schore and Vlakte, in Zeeland, was removed from his post in 1712 on account of his Hattemistic views. He then studied medicine, and, when a physician, held numerous religious meetings in concert with Booms, at which he sought to win souls to Hattem's doctrines. He was expelled from Breda in 1726, and from Amsterdam in 1728.

To show how closely these men were connected with Spinozism, a few sentences may be quoted from the works of Jacob Bril: "God is one, and all is one in him. For he is the essence of all temporal things, which in him are nothing. The whole world is only his shadow, and we are his modes, figures, pictures. He is the sole essence and being With respect to the Holy Scriptures, men speak of a fallible and infallible spirit; we say that the prophets and apostles possessed an infallible spirit. But have we, then, a fallible spirit? Have we not the spirit of Christ? If then we are fallible, then God himself is fallible. Scripture and reason are the same; hence the Holy Scriptures cannot be distinguished from reason . . . Scripture rests on nature, nature on reason, reason on the mind, but the mind upon God, who is the foundation of everything. Hence we can better understand Scripture from nature, than nature from Scripture. Nature is the vesture in which God has clad himself, and Scripture is only a shadow of the light, with which God illumines us. . . . We must not accommodate ourselves to Scripture, but Scripture must accommodate

itself to us. But when I say 'us,' I do not understand us, but God who resides in us. . . . Some one might ask: does God also desire sin? But do you not perceive that all things are good with God, and that this distinction between good and evil takes place only in our soul?"

While von Hattem, Booms, Bril, and Buitendyk¹ appropriated especially some passages from Spinoza's theoretical philosophy and fused them with Christian ideas, Friedrich von Leenhof² starts from the Ethics of Spinoza. He was born in 1647, became preacher of the reformed congregation at Zwolle in 1681, was excommunicated for his heresies in 1708, and died in 1712. In his famous, or rather notorious, book, *Den Hemel op Aarden*, we find that if we disregard all the peculiar non-essential parts of his writing, his teaching amounts to the following, which in the main follows precedents in Spinoza: There is a necessary order of nature to which everything which happens in the world is subject, and which God himself cannot abrogate; for it is identical with God's own being. God is therefore neither the lawgiver nor king nor judge of the world, and when Holy Scripture gives him these names, it does so because it accommodates itself to the understanding of the people. Its object, in fact, is not to instruct us philosophically, but to lead us to true happiness by means of love and obedience. Happiness is only to be found in joy. For all events are effects of an eternal divine order, which we must therefore accept with a glad heart. To let oneself be led astray into sadness by them is to rebel against the laws of nature, or, which is the same thing, against God. Joy is a transition to greater perfection, sadness a transition to less perfection. It follows from this

¹ A. v. d. Linde in his *Dissertation on Spinoza* has also mentioned William Deurhoff as a follower of Spinoza (p. 142 f.). But this is incorrect. A. v. d. Linde now himself acknowledges, in accordance with numerous older authorities, that Deurhoff "was only slightly affected by Spinozistic speculations," and is rather to be regarded as an opponent of Spinoza (*Bibliografie*, p. 55).

² Concerning him and the fate of his teaching, v. G. F. Jenichen, *Historia Spinozismi Leenhofiani*, Lips. 1707.

that as we must strive after perfection so we must after joy, and that we must shun all sadness. Regret also is a kind of sadness, therefore an evil, a weakness which will keep far away from the truly wise. The wise man never grieves—not even at the loss of father and mother, of children and friends, for no one can live for ever, and what can tears avail?

Such are the most important of the moral tenets of Leenhof, which adhere closely to Spinoza's ethical doctrines. And in a letter at the end of Wittich's *Anti-Spinoza*, which was published anonymously, he explains and defends Spinoza's metaphysics.

As may be easily imagined, his *Heaven upon Earth* did not pass without contradiction. Divines of note undertook the task of refuting it; and a year after the appearance of the work the authorities brought him to account. Its author, however, had no ambition for a martyr's crown. He signed a declaration drawn up by the consistory of Zwolle, according to which he repented of and condemned the Spinozistic teachings in his work, renounced the wicked opinions of Spinoza, and vowed humbly that he desired in future to conform to all the doctrines of the reformed church. But this declaration, plain and adequate as it appears to us, did not satisfy the authorities of the Church. Hence, in 1708, Leenhof was excommunicated and removed from his post. Yet his influence on the people was not thereby destroyed, as is proved by the fact that down to the end of the last century a warning was publicly issued to beware of his followers. So, too, the teaching of Hattem and his pupils found friends in Holland until far into the nineteenth century. "Even at the present day," says V. d. Linde, "there exist in Holland secluded circles where the Spinozistic-Brillie mysticism is the only comfort of the soul¹." Of such powerful and lasting effect was Spinoza's profound teaching even in the obscurity and distortion of a gloomy mysticism.

¹ A. v. d. Linde, *Spinoza*, pp. 141, 142, 158.

VI.

As regards the German people, no evidence of a similarly far-reaching influence of Spinoza is forthcoming from the seventeenth century or from the first seven decades of the eighteenth. But even here he did not entirely lack followers. That Tschirnhausen stands on Spinozistic ground with his doctrine of Cognition has already been mentioned. And it has also been shown above that Leibniz passed through Spinozism in order to arrive at his own philosophy. But even when he seemed in his doctrine of Monads to present a complete antithesis to Spinoza's Pantheism, his system stood, in important points, very near to that of Spinoza. If we consider his definition of the relation of the monads to the Deity, his Determinism, his view of action and passion, of the aim of religion, of evil, and of the miracles, we shall find that this assertion is justified. It is true that the exterior form of his system has been carefully kept from all contamination from Spinozism. For Leibniz was, as Mendelssohn says ¹, not only one of the greatest, but also one of the most cautious philosophers. Hence he avoided the name of Spinoza as much as possible, for in the mere name people would have discovered a refutation of all the doctrines which were borrowed from the atheist.

Leibniz and his disciple Wolff dominated the German philosophy of the eighteenth century. With their works numerous Spinozistic tenets passed unperceived into the otherwise absolutely anti-Spinozistic, because anti-pantheistic circle of theologians and philosophers. To what strange results this led is shown by one instance, viz. that of the Wolffian Reimarus, who in his dissertations fights bravely against Spinoza's doctrine of Substance and is much praised for this onslaught against the heretic, but in other respects is carried by his freethinking ideas exactly along the path which Spinoza had carved out.

¹ Mendelssohn, *Works*, I, p. 202, ed. 1843.

Neither were there wanting in Germany harebrained persons who, like the Dutch visionaries of whom mention has just been made, either used half-understood or entirely misunderstood Spinozistic doctrines as battering-rams against Church doctrine, or combined them with biblical Christian ideas, producing a curious mixture. J. C. Dippel and J. C. Edelmann¹ are the most noted of these venturesome persons. John Conr. Dippel was born in 1673 and died, after an unsettled, roving life, in 1734. He was a wild, scatter-brained fellow, a notorious brawler and freethinker, and at the same time a penitent and a mystic, first theologian, then physician, and later, as he himself relates, jurist, mathematician, logician, metaphysician, and ontologist. As a philosopher he is not to be taken seriously. He sets the most contradictory opinions side by side with each other; to-day he recognizes Spinoza as his teacher, only to pelt him with dirt to-morrow as a "clever buffoon and faddist," as a "thorn and a bull-head." He would, like Spinoza, reject all incarnation of God, yet he regards as necessary the propitiation of the angry God. He denies the inspiration of the Scriptures, but he regards himself as illumined by a supernatural spirit. With Spinoza he would reduce the existence of all things to God. With him he maintains that God as "the material basis of all creatures" carries them in himself and animates them. Agreeing with the essential contents of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, he declares that the orthodox faith is wrong on the subjects of revelation and prophecy, and that it here needs much correction. But he also maintains that Spinoza confounded God and creature with each other. This misinterpretation of Spinoza, which was borrowed from Bayle, furnishes him with an opportunity for the most offensive attacks. And in a manner no less obnoxious, he inveighs against the fatalism, which he imputes to Spinoza. Yet Spinoza's reputation could not be damaged by the calumnies of a harebrained

¹ On their relations to Spinoza, Krakauer has written a small treatise *Zur Geschichte des Spinozismus in Deutschland* (Breslau, 1881).

fellow like Dippel; that end would indeed be better attained by the praises and recommendations of such a man.

Dippel's pupil, Johann Christian Edelmann (b. 1698, d. 1767), though more estimable as a man, was scarcely less confused and obscure. Like his master, he rages against orthodox ecclesiasticism, against Bible, dogmas, ceremonies, and clergymen. Like him, he professes a curious syncretism, the elements of which are furnished by (among others) Spinoza, Jacob Böhme, Toland, and that Christianity which he so severely attacked. The link which connects him with Spinoza is the well-known idea, which he is never tired of inculcating, that there is only one true Being, who is God; that the visible world is only a shadow of this incomparable Being; and that all created things are mere modifications of it. This world has therefore not been created within the limits of time; it has no beginning and no end; God must have changed himself, if he had at any time begun to make a world. Edelmann denies the inspiration and the composition of the Holy Scriptures by the divine spirit. He does not admit, however, that morality is thereby shaken: for the spirit of God dwells in ourselves, and his voice, the conscience, speaks more clearly to us than the text of the Bible, which, being obscure and ambiguous, has been the cause of the most useless disputes and the most terrible wars. It is not difficult to find the Spinozistic passages which are the source of these conclusions. Indeed, he acknowledges that he read Spinoza often and diligently, and he is indignant with "the Christians of the present day, who have made the honourable Spinoza an atheist." For "since he distinctly makes God the cause of all things, not only in the sense in which he has produced them as an artist produces his work, who afterwards goes away and leaves it to the capricious treatment of others, but since he plainly acknowledges that God is always really present in the things and by his very presence brings about their existence, our present-day lip-

Christianity could not better betray the fact that it has no thorough knowledge of God whatever, than by venturing to make this man an atheist¹."

But although he comes forward so decidedly on Spinoza's side and even declares "that the title, Spinozist, has nothing of which an honest man need be ashamed," yet he will only allow that he borrowed a single principle from him, viz. the immanence of the Deity². The Spinozistic teaching was, in fact, just then in too bad repute for him to acknowledge that he had derived much from it. And why should we blame a caution in Edelmann, which even a Leibniz regarded as necessary?

Besides those named there were many other men in the eighteenth century who were Spinozists, or at least passed as such. But it was for the most part single doctrines of Spinoza's, torn from their connexion, to which they professed allegiance. His whole system of philosophy found scarcely a single adherent at this period. Indeed, most persons lacked the opportunity of becoming acquainted with it, as the works of Spinoza were exceedingly scarce. Thus a zealous opponent of Spinoza writes in 1737: "And how many secret Spinozists may there not be here and there? Many would gladly have read Spinoza, if they could only get his books, which are somewhat rare³." So rare were these books that even Schleiermacher was obliged to base his statement of the Spinozistic teaching not on the works which Spinoza left, and which he did not possess, but on the extracts of Jacobi⁴. Spinozistic ideas hovered about in the air as it were, whilst people were unable to seize them. Spinozism was scented everywhere, but people were wont to describe by it not the true teaching of the philosopher, but every false conception of the God-idea, the deification of nature,

¹ Edelmann, *Moses*, II, p. 120.

² Idem, *The First Epistle of St. Harenberg*, p. 65.

³ Eusebius Ulmigena, *Reflections on the Wolfian Philosophy*, § 14.

⁴ Schleiermacher, *Works*, Division III, vol. IV, part i, p. 11.

fatalism, every deviation from the orthodox faith¹. Indeed, to have been somewhat lax in attacking Spinoza, was a sufficient reason for being suspected of Spinozism. Malebranche, Toland, and Montesquieu were branded as Spinozists. Authors of adverse criticisms, like Johannes Bredenburg, Christopher Wittig, and Franciscus Cuper were declared to be disguised followers of Spinoza, either because they did not condemn all his teachings as wrong, or because in their criticism they were careful to adopt a moderate tone. Thus Spinoza became a phantom of terror, whose mere name excited hatred and abhorrence. Men made of him a scapegoat, on whose head were heaped all the iniquities of freethinking philosophers. And it is evident that they were in the habit of condemning Spinoza without understanding him, without knowing him, without having even read the smallest part of his works. Herder, in his colloquies on Spinoza's system, has most strikingly stigmatized the unparalleled injustice with which Spinoza was judged and sentenced. Philolaus has uttered a hard word against Spinoza. "Have you read Spinoza?" asks Theophrastus. And Philolaus answers: "I have not read him; who would indeed read every obscure book of a madman? But this I have heard from the mouth of many who have read him, viz. that he was an Atheist and Pantheist, a teacher of blind necessity, an enemy of revelation, a mocker of religion, therefore a destroyer of states and of all civil society, in fact a foe of the human race—and that he died as such. He deserves therefore the hatred and abhorrence of all friends of mankind and true philosophers²."

VII.

These contemptible words—the condemnation of a philosopher without knowledge of his philosophy—are an echo of the unfair judgments which were passed a thousand

¹ Cf. Chr. Wolff, *Theol. Natur.*, § 678, p. 680, ed. 1741; Lotterus, *Philosophema de causis*, &c., c. ii. § 2.

² Herder, *God. Some Colloquies*, p. 103, ed. 1828.

times upon Spinoza in the seventeenth and the first part of the eighteenth century. That men learnt to judge more justly of him, that in the second half of the last century they valued, admired, and venerated him as much as they had previously despised, derided, and calumniated him, is usually ascribed to the influence of Lessing. He is said to have been the man who first rescued Spinoza's memory from the rust of time, just as it was he who saved so many others who were innocently condemned. This is, however, an exaggeration. Lessing's merit in regard to Spinoza is great; but he is not the first who appeared in his defence in the eighteenth century. It was not Lessing, but the spirit of his time, that rehabilitated Spinoza and repelled the unjust, preposterous, and malicious judgments of him.

When Spinoza appeared on the scene with his new ideas, he stood, as has been shown above, in presence of a world whose mind was steeped in theology. But in the course of the eighteenth century, the religious view of God and nature began to totter at its foundation. The need of faith receded, and theology no longer claimed the interest of the cultured, but its place was taken by nature, science, and philosophy. As a mighty storm, moving on tumultuously from all quarters, shatters a decayed building, so the tide of freethinking philosophy, swelling with even greater force, convulsed the effete system of ecclesiastical teaching. Deistic and pantheistic ideas, sensualistic and materialistic doctrines were put forth with ever greater boldness and assurance. The claims of universal conformity to reason were asserted in opposition to religious dogmas, and Rationalism raised its head in the midst of a theology hitherto regarded as unassailable: one stone after another gave way in the firm fabric of ecclesiastical doctrine. At this epoch, when men were striving in all the departments of science and practical life to extricate themselves from the fetters of a nonage of many hundreds of years; when the English freethinkers were relentlessly exposing the antiquated conditions prevailing in state, Church, and school, and French Deism was subjecting

the dogmas of all positive religions to the most scathing criticism; when, too, in Germany a Rationalism, everywhere demanding the explanation of things, was pressing forward victoriously into the domains of philosophy and theology; at the time when Voltaire mocked at the creed of the Church, when Rousseau was crying out passionately for a religion of the heart, when Lamettrie was transforming the mechanical natural philosophy of Descartes into an atheistic materialism, and Condillac perverted Locke's Empiricism to Sensualism; at this time, the ban which had rested for so long upon Spinoza's name and teaching began to be removed. Since the middle of the eighteenth century the flood of hostile and abusive literature directed against Spinoza gradually receded, and the number of critics who were favourably disposed towards him steadily increased. We find Spinozistic ideas penetrating into the philosophy of France and Germany and making way for a pronounced Pantheism; the term, Spinozism, ceases to be the nightmare of free research, it soon becomes an honourable name for a deeply-penetrating philosophic insight.

The first in Germany who defended Spinoza eagerly, was — if we leave out of account harebrains like Dippel, Edelmann, Wachter—a young follower of Leibniz, at that time quite unknown to the learned world, viz. Moses Mendelssohn. He is, indeed, very far from approving of the system of Spinoza in its entirety. On the contrary, in his first work, belonging to the year 1755¹, he rather attaches himself to the earlier opinions, when he declares that "Spinoza's views are, according to the judgment of the whole world, very absurd."

But he nevertheless treats Spinoza as an erring philosopher, not, like nearly all his opponents, as a wicked man. He asserts that "many of his views are consistent with true philosophy and with religion," that "we have much to thank Spinoza's errors for," and that the charges of

¹ M. Mendelssohn's *Dialogues*, Works, I, p. 201, ed. 1843.

many of his antagonists, especially those of Bayle, are "strokes in the air." Very beautiful are the words in which Mendelssohn shows that Spinoza's system "was the necessary transition from the Cartesian to the Leibnizian philosophy¹." "Of course! Leibniz, Wolff, and several of their successors, to what perfection they brought philosophy! How proud may Germany be of them! Yet of what use is it to attribute greater merit to oneself than is just? Let us always acknowledge that another than a German, and I add further, another than a Christian—that Spinoza, in fact, takes a great share in the improvement of philosophy. Before the transition from the Cartesian to the Leibnizian philosophy could be accomplished, it was necessary for some one to fall into the vast intervening abyss. This unhappy lot befell Spinoza. How much is his fate to be pitied! He was a victim of human understanding; but a victim *that deserves to be adorned with flowers*. Without him, philosophy would never have been able to extend its boundaries so far."

Nevertheless, how far was even Mendelssohn from a just estimation of the Spinozistic philosophy! He might eagerly repel the scorn and derision which it had encountered, recognize the significance of Spinoza for the history of philosophy, and show the connexion of some of his principles with those of Leibniz—yet the whole doctrine of a mechanically-working, immanent Deity was repugnant to him; and even in the most brilliant presentation of it, it remained to him, as he expressed it thirty years later, "a dead skeleton around which a cloak is hung: the more horrible, the more magnificent the garment²." Hence he rose up like an enraged lion against Jacobi when the latter maintained that Lessing—Lessing so tenderly beloved by Mendelssohn—was a Spinozist. One might, indeed, let various single principles of Spinoza pass, but,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

² Mendelssohn, *Letter to Elise Reimarus in the year 1783*, in his *Works*, V, p. 703.

in Mendelssohn's view, it was sheer folly to adopt his fundamental ideas of his Pantheism, and from this folly he thought he was bound to clear Lessing's memory.

In the same year in which Mendelssohn, the faithful follower of the older metaphysics, appeared in Spinoza's defence, the father of the new critical philosophy employed the fundamental idea of the Spinozistic philosophy in order to solve a problem which much occupied the natural philosophy of the eighteenth century. How do substances affect each other? To this question the most varied answers were given. Kant answers, in the spirit of Spinozism, that they affect each other only because they depend upon a common principle, the divine Intelligence, which maintains their mutual relations¹. This thought, which recurs also in the "only possible argument²," shows us that the monism of Spinoza was at this time no longer regarded in German philosophy with the abhorrence which it had previously caused to piously-disposed minds. This is also evident from several other works which appeared at this time. A. E. Renthe proved, in 1766³, that Spinoza was not an atheist, as had been universally assumed in the earlier controversy. Aug. Wilh. Rehberg, in a treatise on the nature of forces, laid before the Royal Academy of Sciences at Berlin in 1779, spoke of "the great Spinoza," whose system it is not at all impossible to reconcile with religion⁴. But a pronouncement of the truly pious Lavater, emanating from the seventies, shows more emphatically than all these facts with what astonishing rapidity the change in the judgment of Spinoza must have been accomplished. In his *Physiognomical Fragments* he describes a portrait of Spinoza in the following words⁵: "Not the

¹ Kant's *Works*, I, p. 40, ed. Rosenkranz.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 216.

³ Renthe, *Probalio quod B. de Spinoza graviter errans non fuerit atheus*, Coethen, 1766.

⁴ A. W. Rehberg, *Treatise on the Nature of Forces*, pp. 51 and 75.

⁵ Lavater, *Physiognomical Fragments*, Third Essay, p. 277. Leipzig and Winterthur, 1777.

best portrait that I have seen of Spinoza. There are not in it the strong eyebrows of the profound thinker, not the mature sagacity in the lower outline of the nose, nor in the mouth the moderation and melancholy of the original. Yet, taking it as it is, what a speaking head! How the man stands in himself and for himself alone! How he goes his own way regardless of calumniators or followers! How he accomplished his culture and growth in deep stillness! What quiet firmness in the forehead! What astonishing intelligence lies between the eyebrows down to the root of the nose! How widely and deeply observant the glance! How quick to trace the weak spots of every system he meets with! How wearied with thinking, searching, doubting! In the mouth—though surely only half true to nature—how much wisdom and quiet nobility, humour and salt.”

At the same time a change in the estimation of Spinoza takes place also in France. In 1760, the Abbé de Lignac declares that Spinoza was no atheist but a spiritualist. “He knows God only,” says de Lignac; “the world and material things are dreams of the Deity¹.” The Abbé Sabatier de Castres places himself still more definitely on Spinoza’s side. He tries to clear Spinoza from the blot of atheism which had rested upon him for a whole century. He calls him the most pious and holiest of men. “O thou most vilely misjudged sage,” he addresses him, “modest and virtuous Spinoza, forgive me for having shared the error of all concerning thy books before I had read them, and receive to-day the tribute of gratitude due to thee. If in an age of corruption and madness, and in the capital famed for its talent and its pleasures, I have remained true to the faith of my fathers, it is thou whom I have to thank for it².” There are two other French divines, more famous than de Lignac and de Castres, who came forward as fol-

¹ De Lignac in Janet, *Rev. Philos.*, vol. XIII, p. 119.

² Sabatier de Castres, *Apologie de Spinoza*, Paris, 1766. This little-known work was referred to by Nourrisson in his work on Spinoza, Paris, 1866.

lowers of Spinoza: Jean Baptiste Robinet in his book *De la Nature* which appeared in 1761-1766, and Dam. Deschamps in his work *Réfutation de Spinoza*, a work which was written in 1770, but which has only become known in very recent times. Although the title of this book would lead us to expect rather an opponent than a friend of Spinoza's in Deschamps, yet the contents show that, like Robinet, he was, in spite of numerous divergences, a disguised Spinozist. Both teach us, with Spinoza, to recognize God as the absolute primal foundation of the world, the modifications of which are individual existences. Both, on the model of Spinoza, depart widely from the orthodox conception of God and his attributes.

VIII.

It is a matter of course that even since the middle of last century there has been no lack of determined opponents of Spinoza. In works by M. Laurent François in France, Bernard Nieuwentyt in Holland, Balthasar Münter in Germany, the old, hateful judgments of Spinoza, which had gradually become more and more silent, are re-echoed. They were for a long time wholly to cease, after a greater man than Mendelssohn had appeared as a champion of Spinoza, viz. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. In a conversation with Jacobi, which, to Mendelssohn's regret, the latter published, Lessing asserted: "*There is no other philosophy than the philosophy of Spinoza*¹." And Jacobi, who wholly rejects this philosophy of Spinoza, and indeed all philosophy, as infidel, atheistical science, does not hesitate to declare: "*I love Spinoza. Such tranquillity of spirit, such a heaven in the domain of intellect, as this bright, pure mind has created, few can have tasted.*" And in another passage: "Be thou blessed of me, great, aye holy Benedictus! though thou mightest philosophize on the nature of the highest Being and mightest go astray in words, yet his truth was in thy soul and his love was in thy life²."

¹ F. H. Jacobi, *Works*, IV, 1, p. 55.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

The work in which Jacobi gives an account of his conversation with Lessing, and the wearisome quarrel with Mendelssohn and his friends which has its origin in this account, created an epoch in the history of Spinozism. Followers and opponents of the Spinozistic philosophy were at one in their veneration of the great man, the profound thinker, the noble ornament of humanity: who could have henceforth spoken of him as "of a dead dog"? A confidential communication of Jacobi's regarding Lessing's utterances led Goethe, in the winter of 1785-1786, "to read and re-read" Spinoza's works. How honestly he endeavoured to penetrate the sense of the obscure philosophy of Spinoza, is shown by an essay only lately discovered in the Goethe-Archive at Weimar, which Suphan published in the *Goethe Year-book* for the year 1891, and which Dilthey has elucidated in the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*¹. Goethe has here clearly shown what binds him to Spinoza, as well as what separates him from him. He is at one with him in the acknowledgment of a highest Reality, in which everything that is truth, life, and existence is united—at one with him also in the principle, that existence and perfection are one and the same: but his poetic mind could not bear the bright light in which the substance and its modifications appeared to Spinoza's cool thought. In the Eternal and in each individual there is, according to Goethe, something inscrutable; there is no rational connexion between God and the human mind. Goethe never got over this opposition to Spinoza, but he acknowledges often and joyfully how much he owes to the study of Spinoza. In 1784 he writes to Knebel: "I feel that I am very near to Spinoza, although his mind is much deeper and clearer than mine." And those are noble words in which he expressed his relation to Spinoza in his *Wahrheit und Dichtung*². But the most beautiful and noble results that sprang from that relation are some

¹ *Archiv für Gesch. der Philos.*, 1894, p. 317.

² Goethe, *Works*, vol. XII, p. 177, ed. 1867.

poems, which are filled with the spirit of Spinoza. For instance, the famous confession of faith in Faust, and a series of poems to which Goethe gave the common superscription, "God and the World."

Like Goethe, Schiller, too, yielded to the spell which proceeds from Spinoza's *Ethics*. One of the main themes which are treated by him in the *Philosophical Letters*, was suggested to him by Spinoza. "All perfections in the universe," it runs, "are united in God. God and nature are two quantities which are exactly equal to each other¹."

But Herder had, still earlier than Goethe, seized hold of the spirit of the Spinozistic teaching. About the time when Lavater wrote the above-quoted admiring tribute, provoked by Spinoza's likeness, Herder produced a work which was intended not merely as a vindication of Spinoza, but as "an oblation presented on the altar of his virtue²." Indeed at this time, long before Lessing and Jacobi had cast their eyes back upon Spinoza, Herder was already filled with enthusiastic love for him. A priest of the Christian religion could predicate nothing higher of a man than the words that Herder uttered in the year 1778: "Love is the highest reason, as well as the purest, most divinely willing; if we will not believe this from St. John, we may do so from the undoubtedly *still more godly Spinoza*, whose philosophy and morality move entirely round this axis³." It is, therefore, quite in the spirit of Herder when one of his friends sets Spinoza side by side with Christ. Von Dalberg writes to Herder: "Spinoza and Christ; only in these two lies pure knowledge of God. In Christ the secret higher way to the Godhead, in Spinoza the highest point which rational demonstration can reach⁴."

But it was not till much later that Herder gave

¹ Schiller, *Works*, vol. X, p. 237, ed. 1873.

² Herder, *God*. Preface to the first edition.

³ Idem, *On Perception and Feeling*, p. 53, ed. 1828.

⁴ V. Dalberg, in Herder's *Journey to Italy*, p. xxx.

a detailed exposition of his views regarding Spinoza. In 1787, incited by the Jacobi-Mendelssohn controversy, he published a book entitled *God. Some Dialogues on Spinoza's System*. In these dialogues he combats Jacobi in many points, and approaches the Mendelssohnian conception of Spinoza's doctrines. Spinozism is for him neither atheism nor fatalism. But he is at one with Jacobi in pure admiration of Spinoza's character and of the strict logical consistency of his system. "Do I dream, or have I been reading?" he makes his *Philolaus* ask. "I thought to find an insolent atheist, and I find almost a metaphysical-moral enthusiast. What an ideal of human effort, of science, of the knowledge of nature is in his soul!"¹ And further on², "The conception of God with Spinoza has become so present, so immediate, so intimate, that I should regard him rather as an enthusiast for the existence of God than as a doubter or denier."

The judgments of the great poets sank deep down into the heart of the German nation; so deep that a mocker like Heinrich Heine, the spoilt favourite of the muses, could not escape the tenacious impression produced by the Spinozistic works. He has passed judgment on Spinoza and his teaching in magnificent words³: "In reading Spinoza, a feeling seizes us as at the sight of great nature in that restfulness of hers so instinct with life. A forest of heaven-high thoughts, whose blossoming summits are in undulating motion, while the immovable trunks are rooted in the eternal earth. There is a certain breath in the writings of Spinoza which is inexplicable. One is fanned as by the breezes of the future; the spirit of the Hebrew prophets still rests perhaps on their far-off descendant. There is besides a seriousness in him, a self-conscious pride, a grandeur of thought which seems likewise to be a heritage, for Spinoza belongs to those martyr families who were expelled from Spain by the most Catholic king.

¹ Herder, *Works*, vol. IX, p. 123, ed. 1828.

² *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³ Heinrich Heine, *On Germany*, *Works*, V, p. 124, ed. 1861.

There is in addition the patience of the Dutchman, which is never discarded in his works just as it was ever present in his life. It is proved that Spinoza's path in life was free from all blame, and was as pure and spotless as the life of Jesus Christ. Like him, he too suffered for his teaching, like him he wore his crown of thorns: Golgotha is everywhere where a great spirit speaks out its thoughts."

IX.

While thus Spinoza was delivered from the grave through Mendelssohn, Lessing, Jacobi, Goethe, and Herder, and the thinker so often declared dead stood once more as a living being amongst the living, his teaching rose to a position of real importance in the world's history. The "impudent, miserable, godless Spinoza" became now the "sainted, the godly Spinoza." An absolute worship was carried on under his name. His philosophy became the soul of the great speculative systems which arose in Germany on the soil of the Kantian criticism. Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Hegel—all these were pupils of Spinoza. In their philosophies lives the monistic idea, which Spinoza first worked out with mathematical exactness and in systematic completeness. Similarly the systems of Schopenhauer, of Krause, of Lotze, of Fechner, and of Edward v. Hartmann are impregnated with Spinoza's spirit. But to pursue in detail the transitions which Spinoza's teaching has undergone in the philosophy of Germany from Fichte to Edward v. Hartmann, would mean to write a history of modern metaphysics. This cannot be undertaken here. But how the great German thinkers themselves regarded their relation to Spinoza, and what judgments they passed on him and his teaching, may be laid before the reader.

"There are," says Fichte, "only two entirely consistent systems, the Critical (Fichte's), which acknowledges the limit (of the Ego), and the Spinozistic, which transcends it."

. . . "The theoretical portion of our scientific teaching is really—systematic Spinozism¹." "No one," asserts Schelling, "can really hope to reach what is true and perfect in philosophy, who has not at least once in his life plunged into the abyss of Spinozism²." But this only conveys very imperfectly what an important part the teaching of Spinoza plays in Schelling's philosophy. Hegel speaks more plainly and frankly³: "It may be observed in general that thought must have arisen from the standpoint of Spinozism; that is the essential beginning at all attempts at philosophy. If one begins to philosophize, he must first be a Spinozist. The soul must bathe itself in this ether of one Substance, in which everything that men have looked upon as true has sunk!" . . .

And in another place⁴: "Spinoza is the chief point of modern philosophy; either Spinozism or no philosophy."

But no one has described in such trenchant words what the best men at the turn of this century thought of Spinoza, as the man who, distinguished alike as theologian, philosopher, and philologist, had the keenest understanding of the genius of Spinoza, viz. Schleiermacher. In his sermons on religion he utters these beautiful words⁵: "Offer respectfully with me a fillet to the manes of the sainted, outcast Spinoza! He was penetrated by the high world-spirit, the Eternal was his beginning and end, the Universe his one and everlasting love; in sacred innocence and deep humility he reflected himself in the eternal world, and saw, too, how he was its most lovable reflecting-glass. Full of religion was he, and full of the holy spirit; and thus here also he stands alone and unapproached, master in his art, but exalted above the profane vulgar, without followers and without rights of citizenship."

With these words, which were published for the first time

¹ Fichte, *Works*, I, pp. 101, 122.

² Schelling, *Works*, part I, vol. X, p. 33.

³ Hegel, *Works*, vol. XV, p. 376.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

⁵ Schleiermacher, *Works on Theology*, I, p. 190.

in the last year of the eighteenth century, Schleiermacher atoned for the sins committed by fanatics and blockheads against the genius of Spinoza. Never has more ardent veneration been evinced towards a philosopher than the great theologian Schleiermacher showed to the great heretic Spinoza.

But that this collection of sober judgments may not lack a bright ending, we may quote in conclusion what Schopenhauer, that always high-spirited, never quite real writer, asserts in his malicious way concerning the relation of Spinoza to the German and to his own philosophy¹: "Since in consequence of the Kantian criticism of all speculative philosophy, the philosophizers in Germany nearly all threw themselves back upon Spinoza, *so that the whole series of abortive attempts known under the name of post-Kantian philosophy is simply Spinozism trimmed up without taste, veiled in all manner of unintelligible language, and otherwise distorted*, I will, after I have set forth generally the relation of my teaching to Pantheism, indicate where it specially attaches itself to Spinozism. It is, in fact, related to it as the New Testament to the Old. For that which the Old Testament has in common with the New is the same God-Creator. And similarly, with me as with Spinoza, the world exists by reason of its own inner power and of its own accord. But with Spinoza, that *substantia aeterna* of his, the inner essence of the world, to which he gives the name of Deus, is also, by reason of its moral character and its worth, the Jehovah, the God-Creator, who applauds his own creation, and finds that everything has turned out admirably, *πάντα κατὰ λίκαν*. Spinoza has done nothing more than deny his personality. With him, therefore, the world and all in it is also quite admirable and as it should be: therefore man has nothing to do but *vivere, agere, suum Esse conservare, ex fundamento proprium utile quaerendi* (*Eth.* IV, par. 67): he is just to enjoy his life, as long as it lasts: exactly like Koheleth 9. 7-10.

¹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, vol. II. p. 738.

In short it is Optimism ; hence the ethical side is weak, as indeed in the Old Testament, it is even false and in part revolting."

It would produce a wrong picture of the relations which exist between Spinoza and modern philosophy, if his influence were sought only in metaphysics and not also in other departments of philosophy.

Johannes Müller, that original physiologist, desires at the end of his *Physiology* to give an exposition of human emotions and passions, and thinks he cannot do better than communicate to his readers in a faithful translation a large portion of the Spinozistic ethics.

Johannes Müller's view is shared by the English physiologist Maudsley. In his *Physiology and Pathology* we find the remarkable words: "Spinoza's admirable dissertation on the emotions has never been and probably never will be surpassed¹." That Spinoza, both in his life and teaching, is a great preacher of the genuine doctrine of truth, who does not hold out external things as ultimate goals, but seeks the centre of gravity of life in one's own inner being, has been brought prominently to view by Paulsen, the author of a work on *Ethics*, which has appeared lately².

Spinoza's influence has penetrated still more deeply into modern psychology. The darkest problem known to psychological research, the question of the relation of physical to psychical processes, has met with the most varied solutions, but neither the dualistic, nor the materialistic, nor the spiritualistic view has been able entirely to satisfy. Hence Spinoza's great idea of the parallelism of mental and physical processes offered itself as the one possible explanation. Body does not act on mind, mind does not act on body, but every psychical process corresponds to a movement, every movement to some psychical occurrence. The physical and the psychical are only two external, entirely harmonious phenomena of the one uni-

¹ Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, p. 147. ed. Carus.

² Paulsen, *Ethics*, p. 410.

versal substance. Thus what we call soul is only the inner existence of the same essence, which we, regarding it externally, know as its body. In this way the old riddle seems to be solved, and difficulties seem to be overcome, which the most acute psychologists had regarded as insuperable. On this common ground of Spinozistic psychology, philosophers like Fechner, Wundt, and Paulsen are united with sober naturalists like Nägeli and Hering, with the great English psychologist Bain, with the Danish Höffding, and with numerous French thinkers, who issued from the school of Cousin.

In our century Spinoza has not lacked admiration, recognition, and emulation. But men have not only admired and wondered at that which former times had depreciated and condemned; they have also directed serious criticism upon Spinoza's teachings.

The great post-Kantian thinkers of Germany, whose judgments of Spinoza, substantially agreeing, have been adduced above, stand upon the ground of a Spinozistically-coloured Pantheism. But in the nineteenth century not only has this theory of the universe reached its highest development, but also its antithesis, the individualistic and teleological theism of Leibniz, has found new adherents. And starting from the standpoint of this doctrine, a violent opposition to the Spinozistic philosophy has asserted itself. The first and most important opponent who appeared in our century is Herbart. The very fact that Spinozistic metaphysics had not died out in his time, but actively continued its work, made the task of combating it a duty for him. Thus he sets himself in opposition not only to the metaphysics of Spinoza, but also to his psychology and his ethics; he calls his conceptions unhealthy, his axioms and definitions incorrect, his deductions inconclusive, his results inadequate: the whole system he regards as a mere fabric of imagination, and his foundation as a groundless hypothesis¹.

¹ Herbart, *Metaphysics*, part I, pp. 122, 128, 169, ed. 1829.

Following the example of their master, the most distinguished of the pupils of Herbart also expressed themselves against the Spinozistic philosophy, for the most part indeed in measured language, but not seldom in bitter and even unjust terms. Thus Robert Zimmermann, Gustav Hartenstein, Volkmann v. Volkmar, C. A. Thilo. Also the ingenious Lotze, speaking from the point of view of his psychological spiritualism, has repeatedly shown his opposition to Spinoza, though he is in agreement with him in the fundamental ideas of his metaphysics. Still more important for forming a correct estimate of the Spinozistic teaching are the critical works of Trendelenburg, Camerer, Ueberweg, and Riehl.

Thus through the enthusiastic worship of the one party, as well as through the incisive criticism of the other, there arose a thorough study of Spinoza, which set itself the task of considering, elucidating, and expounding all sides of the Spinozistic teaching with loving diligence. In comprehensive works of history, as well as in special treatises, Spinoza's life has been described and his system explained, while particular points in his teaching have been made the subject of the most exhaustive examination. Thanks to the unceasing eagerness in research displayed by modern investigators, works of Spinoza long lost to knowledge have been rediscovered and rendered accessible to the general intelligence; and the old well-known works have been repeatedly published and excellently translated. The connexion of Spinoza with his predecessors and contemporaries has been ascertained, and his influence on later thinkers examined. Nearly all the nations of Europe have taken part in this earnest, exhaustive, and impartial investigation. What a long series of scholars, philosophers, jurists, philologists, and historians one would be obliged to enumerate, were one to mention all those who during the last few decades have gained distinction for their knowledge of the Spinozistic teaching. Let it suffice to mention only the most prominent. The Germans are—H. C. W. Sigwart, H. Ritter, L. Feuerbach, J. E. Erdmann, B. Auerbach,

C. Schaarschmidt, C. Hebler, Chr. Sigwart, K. Fischer, H. Böhmer, J. E. Horn, Rich. Avenarius, M. Joël, F. Tönnies; the Dutch—A. v. d. Linde, J. van Vloten, J. P. N. Land; the English—R. Willis, James Martineau, Frederick Pollock, John Caird; the French—V. Cousin Nourrisson, Am. Saintes, Jean Raynaud, P. Janet; the Italians—Turbiglio and Sarchi; the Swede—Forsberg; the Finlander—Bolin; the American—Fullerton.

Thus the *hundred years* of base depreciation and the *sixty years* of enthusiastic veneration have been followed by a period of just estimation. We no longer see in Spinoza a wicked atheist, but neither do we any longer proclaim him a saint. His teaching is for us no ridiculous illusion, but neither is it the only true philosophy. Free from the prejudices of former generations, from the blind hatred of the one side and the exuberant admiration of the other, we are in a position to probe his system to its depths, to measure his greatness and to become conscious of the limits of his mind. We recognize now the eternal truths that he revealed to us, but at the same time we do not overlook the errors from which he was as little free as were any of those who preceded and followed him.

J. FREUDENTHAL.

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