

Spinoza as an Expounder, Critic, and ‘Reformer’, of Descartes

In the literature on Spinoza, accounts of why he wrote his first book - the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* (1663), and of its intellectual impact, are usually rather brief and straightforward. Spinoza’s *Principia philosophiae cartesianae* (1663) or the [*Beginselen van de cartesische wijsgeerte*] as the expanded Dutch version of 1664 is entitled - the only book to appear openly under his own name during his life-time – was at first, in the mid and later 1660s, invariably taken as being an authentically Cartesian work, and in this way it is usually also interpreted by scholars in recent times. Especially during the interval between 1663 and the appearance of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in 1670, it counted, particularly in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia, as one of the most authoritative and important commentaries on Descartes’s philosophy. Likewise, it is again usually considered in recent times a work which simultaneously sets out to expound and defend Descartes’ system while at the same time endeavouring to resolve difficulties which Descartes left to one side.¹ It is conceived as ‘basically a textbook in the Cartesian philosophy’, as Nadler calls it,² and a tool for teaching Cartesianism to advanced students. Following on from remarks in Spinoza’s correspondence, it is also sometimes presented as a book ‘that [Spinoza] had not planned to publish’ as Richard Popkin puts it.³

The most emphatic - and also, in my view the most incorrect – instance of this book being represented as something essentially extraneous to Spinoza’s thought are the remarks on this topic of Margaret Gullan-Whur who often ascribes Spinoza’s motivation to the peculiar forms of pride to which she believes he was subject. In the winter of 1662, she writes, Spinoza

‘knew he must keep himself materially, through the winter, while he produced the explanation of Cartesian principles that [his Amsterdam] study group needed. He must also find a way of forcing himself to explicate Descartes’ philosophy, without deviation, albeit in the face of that Maxim of Descartes which says ‘that nothing ought to be admitted as true, but what has been proved by good and solid reasons.’ To expound, without exposing his disapproval at what he believed was in large

measure false, would be no small test of his self-esteem.’⁴

Most commentators, then, tend to conceive of the book as a by-product of Spinoza's philosophical career, something essentially incidental and extraneous to his own philosophy, although this conventional picture has now been somewhat modified by Steven Barbone and Lee Rice in their 'introduction' to the 1998 edition of Samuel Shirley's translation of the book where they argue that in fact this text marks an important and integral stage in the development of Spinoza's thought. However, if one sticks only to Spinoza's own letters and texts it is perhaps not possible to get very much further than a fairly brief and speculative account; nor, on that basis, is there much with which effectively to contest the impression that the *Principia philosophiae cartesianae* is, from a purely philosophical standpoint, unimportant for understanding Spinoza's philosophy. Yet even a few moments careful reflection on certain passages of the *Principia* suffice to suggest that there may be a substantial and complex philosophico-historical problem entailed here despite the assumption of Barbone and Rice that 'Spinoza fully explains the circumstances leading to the publication' in his letter to Oldenburg, of July 1663, and that 'because its publication was under Spinoza's own direction, it is one of his few works that does not present difficulties of a textual nature'.⁵

In their introduction, Barbone and Rice say that Spinoza 'stipulated that his friends should edit his Latin manuscript for style and that they should also add a brief preface explaining that he did not accept all of Descartes's views and had written in [this work] many things contrary to his own views.'⁶ Despite this, they add, 'it is clear that Spinoza's main purpose in preparing the PPC was expository, [though] he makes it no less clear that he is not simply repeating Descartes' arguments, but attempting to reorder them in a more satisfactory manner and to clarify their meaning.'⁷

What Meyer actually says in his preface to the book – largely echoing the points that Spinoza had detailed in his letter to him of August 1663⁸ – is that the book was hurriedly prepared for the press and that 'being engaged in more important affairs, [Spinoza] had only the space of two weeks to complete this work, and this is why he could not satisfy his own wishes and ours [as regards proving all Descartes's key axioms as theorems].'⁹ To this Meyer adds that Spinoza felt 'compelled to prove many things that Descartes propounded without proof, and to add others that he completely omitted' and also that Spinoza frequently diverges from Descartes in explaining his axioms and proving his propositions but that no-one should 'take this to mean that he intended to correct the illustrious Descartes in these matters, [...] our author's sole purpose in so doing is to enable him the better to retain his already established order and to avoid increasing unduly the number of axioms'.⁹ Above all, Meyer

emphasizes that in the *Principia* and also in the supplementary section of the book, entitled *Cogitata Metaphysica*,

‘our Author has simply given Descartes’ opinions and their demonstrations just as they are found in his writings, or such as should validly be deduced from the foundations laid by him. For having undertaken to teach his pupil [Casearius?] Descartes’s philosophy, his scruples forbade him to depart in the slightest degree from Descartes’s views or to dictate anything that did not correspond with, or was contrary to, his doctrines. Therefore no-one should conclude that he here teaches either his own views or only those of which he approves. For although he holds some of the doctrines to be true, and admits that some are his own additions, there are many he rejects as false, holding a very different opinion.’

To write in any such way is assuredly an extremely odd procedure for a serious philosopher. Meyer claims, on the one hand, that Spinoza’s system at this juncture is very different from that of Descartes and that he fundamentally disagrees with much that is in Descartes while simultaneously asserting that in his exposition Spinoza goes firmly against his own convictions and remains scrupulously loyal to Descartes. Were this to prove fully accurate it would indeed be an extremely odd though, admittedly, not totally implausible procedure. However, it seems clear that Meyer’s account is not an accurate representation of the text as he published it. In the *De Principiis Cartesianae* and by no means only in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, as both Ed Curley, on the one hand, and Barbone and Rice, on the other, remark, ‘there is a good deal of thinly veiled criticism in Spinoza’s exposition of [Descartes’] principles’.¹⁰ Curley points out five places in the text prior to its metaphysical appendix, the *Cogitata metaphysica*, where Spinoza confidently observes that Descartes’ reasoning ‘will not satisfy some people’ and subtly invites ‘the reader to put his own critical faculties to work’, calling in question Descartes’ views.¹¹ But if the book is neither a straightforward exposition of either Descartes’s or Spinoza’s philosophy what exactly is it? Curiously, while modern scholars concur that Spinoza departs substantially from Descartes’ intentions in his only book to be published under his name during his life-time, it is hardly ever suggested that this might have been a deliberate strategy or subversion of ideas, something designed to advance his own philosophical priorities covertly. Even Ed Curley who has been more robust than other commentators in pointing to the anti-Cartesian undercurrent in Spinoza’s *Principia* tends to speak of ‘a good deal of (mainly implicit)

criticism' and even of Spinoza's failure 'submerge his own thought and allow his subject to speak for himself'.¹²

It seems to me that this is simultaneously a philosophical and historical puzzle that can only be elucidated by what I like to call a historico-philosophical approach. Even the most cursory glance at the 'thick context' of Spinoza's life and work, the debates about him in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost immediately reveals that the book is vastly more problematic than emerges from the sort of accounts one finds in Gullan-Whur or Barbone and Rice. In the encounter between Moses Mendelssohn and Jacobi, for instance, Mendelssohn at one point demanded to know, as it was put to Jacobi in a letter from their mutual lady friend Elise Reimarus, in September 1783, 'which system [of Spinoza] Lessing was talking about when he admitted to being a 'Spinozist' – 'the one put forward in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* or the one in *De Principiis Cartesianae*; or the one that Ludovicus Meyer circulated under Spinoza's name after his death?' The implication was that Spinoza went through different stages and in the early 1660s can be described as more or less a Cartesian but with a distinctive undercurrent. Jacobi, however, who considered himself more expert on the question of Spinoza and Spinozism than Mendelssohn would have none of this, replying: 'anyone who knows even the slightest thing about Spinoza knows the story of his demonstration of Descartes' doctrine and knows, moreover, that it has nothing to do with Spinozism.'¹³ Thus, Mendelssohn and Jacobi at this juncture held opposite views of Spinoza's 'textbook', one deeming it wholly extraneous and the other as one, at any rate, of Spinoza's own 'systems'.

But by the later eighteenth century, philosophical debate had lost touch with the immediate intellectual context, and for this reason both standpoints are probably too simple and therefore should be rejected. More in touch with earlier sources, and more nuanced and complex, and therefore to be preferred, is the account we find in Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten's *Geschichte der Religionspartheyen* published at Halle in 1766 in a form edited by Johann Salomon Semler but consisting of lectures given in 1754-5.

'Er hat darin den Schein geben wollen', affirms Baumgarten of Spinoza's *De Principiis Cartesianae*, 'dass er nur des Cartesii Lehrbegriff genauere verknüpfen und scharfsinniger einrichten wolle; worin aber schon der Grund gelegen worden, seine eigenthümliche Irrthümer zu behaupten; die denn sonderlich darin bestanden, dass er alle Dinge für blosser Bildungen und Theilungen des einigen Grundwesens oder der einigen Substanz angesehen, so dass Gott, der vom

Spinoza behauptet wird, das allerzusammengesetzte Ding in der ganzen Welt ist, indem alle andere Dinge eigentliche Theile desselben ausmachen .'¹⁴

This assessment does indeed afford a substantially different reading of Spinoza's first book from that found in the present-day literature. If justified, as I believe it is, it would mean that *De Principiis Cartesianae* is in some sense an act of deliberate philosophical subversion of Cartesianism and, moreover, integrally part of Spinoza's effort, and that of collaborators like Lodewijk Meyer and others of his circle, to establish his own philosophy in some sense by covert strategy. However, we only have some prospect of exploring the potential validity any such interpretation by going deeper into the historical context of early Spinozism and, even then,, it will doubtless be a difficult task to persuade many philosophers of either the necessity of such a procedure, or the value of any such a reinterpretation. This is not just because the claim that we are dealing with a complex case of deliberate subversion runs counter to nearly all recent assumptions about the *De Principiis Cartesianae* but also due to the continued prestige, especially in English-speaking countries, of the notion that general historical context is, in any case, not basic or even irrelevant to understanding any philosopher's system. (By 'general' here I mean to imply a contrast with the method of stressing textual and 'discourse' context alone advocated by Pocock and Skinner.) The view that 'general historical context' is not essential, especially favoured, of course, by the analytical school, received classic expression recently in a well-known work on Kant. 'Beginning a book about a philosopher' by looking at his life and times, confidently asserts this author, is 'highly questionable'. Doing so, may possibly 'help us', he grants (not altogether coherently), 'understand why he thought and said some of the things he did, and therefore aid us in interpreting his ideas. Beyond that', he continues, 'our interest in his life may be historical, or antiquarian, or it may be idle curiosity. But it has nothing at all to do with his philosophy.'¹⁵ This paper is written from the conviction that this sort of reasoning is totally wrong and even wholly disastrous philosophically as well as historically and that ignoring 'general historical context', whether we are speaking of Kant, Spinoza, or whichever great philosopher, is as apt a recipe as one can find to get us to a state of maximum non-comprehension and superficiality.

Many will disagree. But even those unwilling to countenance any such view might be willing to make an exception in Spinoza's case and accept that there might be philosophically crucial points which can *only* be explored and understood by approaching the *De Principiis Cartesianae* historically. For never, as the German scholar and Hegel and Spinoza expert, Hans-Christian Lucas (1942-97), observed shortly before his death, was any philosophy's

genesis, reception and legacy more clearly and crucially intertwined with historical circumstances than Spinoza's.¹⁶ A philosopher faced with developing his ideas against a wall of widespread hostility, Spinoza had to contend with an exceptionally highly fraught intellectual, religious and political milieu - the faction-ridden, politically precarious, theologically-divided Dutch Republic of the late seventeenth-century.

As an initial step towards entering into the 'general historical context' of Spinoza's book on Cartesianism, we should note the similarity between Baumgarten's interpretation to other and earlier assessments including that put forward in his open letter to Spinoza, rejecting the latter's philosophy, written at some point prior to November 1671¹⁷ and published at Florence, in 1675, by the great Danish anatomist, geologist and ex-Cartesian, Nicholas Steno (1638-87). This is of undeniable direct relevance here since Steno unquestionably knew Spinoza well in the early 1660s, both in Amsterdam and in Leiden, and the two undoubtedly discussed many aspects of Cartesian philosophy as well as of experimental science. Steno himself describes Spinoza in his long epistle as 'virum mihi quondam admodum familiarem [a man once rather familiar to me] and explicitly acknowledges their former personal and intellectual companionship [consuetudinis antiquae]. In his letter, Steno is at pains to deny that 'the entire philosophy of Descartes, however diligently examined and reformed by you' can explain 'in a demonstrative form even this single phenomenon, how the impact of matter on matter is perceived by a soul united to the matter'.¹⁸ Steno is here partly rejecting his own earlier allegiance to Cartesianism during the years 1660-4 when he studied at Leiden under Franciscus de Boe Sylvius and other eminent Dutch professors and partly seeking to undercut Spinoza's efforts as the would-be arch-reformer of Descartes.¹⁹

The letter's significance is further enhanced by the fact that, in 1671, Steno who by then had been living for some years as a Catholic in Florence, could have known very little about the *Ethics* other, perhaps, than that such a manuscript actually existed. Nevertheless, it is plain that Steno is perfectly aware, doubtless chiefly on the basis of conversation, that Spinoza was not just an innovative and highly controversial Bible critic and political thinker, as well as champion of toleration, but also a fundamental and bold innovator in pure philosophy and theoretical physics, and what is more a materialist, whose concern was fundamentally to 'reform' Descartes' philosophy and, as Steno saw it, destroy spirituality and 'soul'.²⁰ The bulk of Steno's letter is an outspoken attack on the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the content of Spinoza's Bible criticism. But his text also contains some sharp words about the latter's scientific empiricism and basic metaphysical principles, accusing

him of lacking all understanding of soul: ‘probe into your own self’, he urges, ‘and scrutinize your soul; for a thorough investigation will show you that it is dead. You concern yourself with matter in motion as if the moving cause were absent or non-existent. For it is a religion of bodies, not of souls, that you are advocating; and in the love of one’s neighbour you discern actions necessary for the preservation of the individual and the propagation of the species, whereas you pay very little or no regard to those actions whereby we acquire knowledge and love of our author.’²¹ ‘As for that demonstrative certainty of yours, within what narrow bounds is it enclosed! Scrutinize, I pray, all those demonstrations of yours and bring me just one which shows how the thinking thing and the extended thing are united, how the moving principle is united with the body that is moved.’ It seemed clear to Steno that Spinoza’s experiments and system had emerged from an attempt to reform Descartes’s – in his own view – failed analysis of body, soul and motion. Very likely Spinoza had always presented himself to Steno during the years in which they knew each other in and around Leiden as a would-be reformer of, as well as expert in, Cartesianism though this, of course, was not at all how Spinoza chose to style himself, or let Meyer style him, in print.

The historico-philosophical problem raised here concerns the entire trajectory of Spinoza’s philosophical career. For in the current literature and historiography, Spinoza is still customarily portrayed as a largely isolated and eventually solitary figure who only reluctantly published his book on Descartes at the prodding of his friends. On the basis of the most plausible contemporary reports, however, this entire construction becomes rather difficult to sustain both with regard to Spinoza’s basic aims as a philosopher and with respect to his somewhat unusual methods of disseminating his ideas. Should the argument put forward here prove even partly correct, it would further underline the need to discard the old notion that Spinoza was hardly ever understood or had any impact in his own time, or subsequently, and recast him as a thinker who, in reality, was actively engaged in a highly ambitious social, cultural and political project, and one which was far more effective as well as deliberately subversive than the conventionally accepted picture allows.

The issue at stake concerns Spinoza’s ‘friends’ scarcely less than it concerns his own intentions and philosophical objectives. In 1680, Steno whilst at Hanover, referred to the *Spinosistas* as a group who were ‘many’; moreover, whilst in Holland, he says he had known a number of these men rather well.²² The suggestion that there were many ‘Spinozists’ in late seventeenth-century Holland, will doubtless seem surprising to readers who rely for their image of Spinoza on the nineteenth and twentieth-century secondary literature about him. But there is nothing surprising about the proposition when we consider it on the basis of the late

seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century reports. In 1695, for instance, introducing the Dutch rendering of Wittichius' *Anti-Spinoza*, the Cocceian minister David Hassel exclaimed 'who Spinoza was and what heresy he followed, I do not believe can be unknown to anybody. His books are to be found everywhere and are, in this restless age, owing to their novelty sold in nearly all book-shops'.²³ Still more striking is Hassel's comment about the general cultural penetration of Spinozism: 'and Spinoza left behind a no smaller and no less prolific crowd of followers than the best Greek Sophist, adherents who, with their wanton nature and character, and driven only by the itching of their restless intellects and thirst for fame, strive single-mindedly at inculcating the ruinous doctrines of their new master into everyone, spreading them far and wide. Moreover, they succeeded, for within a short time this venom has spread almost through most parts of the Christian world and daily it grows and creeps further and further'.²⁴

Spinoza lived and worked in a society which, to judge by its vehement controversies over toleration, demonology, the status of philosophy and the place of religion was poised on the very threshold of the Western Enlightenment. Circumstances, and especially the unprecedented impact of Cartesianism, had created a highly volatile situation in which large social and cultural effects could be expected to follow from a 'revolution' in philosophy which was already plainly underway. Against this backcloth, three factors, in particular, seem to have strongly affected the way Spinoza framed his philosophical terminology and discourse and his method of dissemination. First and foremost, he lived in a republic which, though relatively liberal with regard to freedom of the press and expression, nevertheless had and enforced strict laws with regard to what one could and could not say concerning God, Christ, the public Church, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Bible, miracles, the immortality of the soul and human salvation, indeed was prone to hand out harsh punishments for infringement of those laws. The formulation and operation of these edicts in Spinoza's time, and the official suppression of books and imprisonment of offending authors and publishers that resulted, in turn, as one would expect, materially affected the formulation of those of Spinoza's propositions which touched, or were deemed to touch, on those topics.

Secondly, Spinoza had to tailor his philosophy to fit his immediate working milieu. Having been expelled from the Jewish community of Amsterdam in 1656, after his clash with the rabbis and community elders, he was rather heavily dependent, in his personal relationships and other ways, especially at first, on members of an extreme and sporadically harassed, liberal Christian sect, the Socinian faction of the Amsterdam Collegiants. For a

time, at least, the more philosophically-inclined of this pious group were his mainstay – though, if Richard Popkin is right, he also gave the English Quaker exiles and their Dutch converts in Amsterdam a try for while²⁵ - and since the more philosophically-inclined among the Collegiants represented virtually the only allies he was likely to find in Dutch society, at least at first, it seems impossible to grasp his views on churches, Christ, Christianity, Bible criticism and morality in any way realistically or accurately without reference to this particular milieu. Stuart Hampshire is doubtless right in his final essay on Spinoza, of 2004, that ‘Spinoza’s naturalism, the insistence that human beings are completely immersed in the natural order and are not to be understood outside it, is the most uncompromising naturalism that can be imagined.’²⁶ Nevertheless, Collegiants like Pieter Balling (d.1669) and Jarig Jelles (c.1620-83), author of the *Belydenisse des Algemeenen en Chrystelyke Geloofs* (1673), a work of intense Christian piety sent to Spinoza in manuscript, though not published until 1684, were among Spinoza’s closest friends and allies and, as a German theological journal noted, not without astonishment, in 1705,²⁷ Jelles firmly maintains in his ‘Preface’ to Spinoza’s *Opera Posthuma* (1677) that Spinozism is in essence a ‘Christian philosophy’. How could Spinoza’s Collegiant allies reach such a view?

Undoubtedly, the strongly positive portrayal of the ‘authentic’ Christ, and of the ‘true’ Christian morality in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* owes much to tactical positioning and especially to Spinoza’s need to appeal to Jelles, Balling and other Collegiants, even if Jelles could never have agreed with Spinoza’s view that what makes the moral teachings of Jesus Christ and the Biblical prophets true, ‘their ground’, as Hampshire put it, rests not on divine authority as the churches claim ‘but in the structure of reality and the place of human beings within it.’²⁸ A remarkable instance of how crucial such Christ-centered phraseology was among Spinoza’s circle, as part of an established group discourse so to say, even during the last years of Spinoza’s short life, is his stinging reply to Albert Burgh, a former disciple belonging to an influential Amsterdam regent family who (swayed by Steno) had subsequently converted to Catholicism in Italy. Burgh came to reject Spinoza’s teaching and following, using similar arguments to those of Steno, but in angrier more condemnatory tones, accusing him of gross impiety and arrogance.²⁹ Spinoza’s rather emotional reply, of December 1675, was written, he says in the letter, at the urging of ‘some of my friends who with me had formed great hopes for you from your excellent natural abilities’. These friends had ‘strenuously urged’ Spinoza (whose initial intention had been to leave Burgh’s epistle from Italy unanswered) ‘not to fail in the duties of a friend and to reflect on what you lately were rather than what you are now’. Spinoza then proceeds to assert that it is not in

Catholicism, or in any church, but only where ‘justice and charity’ prevail that one can find the true spirit of Christ: ‘solo namque Christi spiritu duci possumus in amorem iustitiae et caritatis’, a pre-eminently Socinian sentiment.

Yet by far the most important ingredient shaping Spinoza’s language, terminology, and way of formulating his ideas, undoubtedly, was the third - his tangled relationship with Cartesianism. By the 1670s, critics of Descartes, like the reactionary physician, Johann Friedrich Helvetius, at The Hague, were publicly accusing the Dutch Cartesians in the universities, colleges and in the Church, as well as in the medical profession, of having prepared the intellectual seed-bed in which Spinozism could flourish. This, of course, in turn obliged the Cartesians to distance the thought of their master as much as possible from that of Spinoza. Cartesianism, held Helvetius, undermines all legitimate authority, abolishing theology’s pre-eminence and everything supernatural, producing only chaos in religion, morality, scholarship and indeed society itself. For if one embraces Cartesian notions of truth then belief in the Immaculate Conception, Incarnation, Holy Ghost, Trinity, and the Resurrection indeed in everything miraculous, wonderful, magical, and alchemical—including Creation, resurrection of the dead, Satan, Heaven and Hell – becomes impossible and a breeding-ground, a rhetoric of reason, is created in which Spinozism can spread and become rife.³⁰

Among those expressly targeted in this way, was the medical reformer, Cornelis Bontekoe (c.1644-1685), in the late 1670s a local opponent of Helvetius at The Hague, a fervent Cartesian who reputedly would accept nothing which is incompatible with philosophical reason as defined by Descartes.³¹ In Bontekoe’s eyes, charged Helvetius, Holy Scripture is no authority, for he himself affirms that he accepts neither Scripture nor angels with respect to ‘alle het geen dat strijdig is tegen de reden’ [all that conflicts with reason].³² Even plague epidemics, complained Helvetius, are classed by Bontekoe, in disregard of Providence and divine punishment of the wicked, as part of the ordinary course of nature.³³ The height of impiety, ‘dese Bontekoedistische Position’ [Bontekoeist position], merges or confuses soul with ‘thought’, closely linking the latter with body.³⁴ Those that think like that, held Helvetius, are ‘ambassadeurs des antichristendoms Cartesii’ [ambassadors of Descartes’ anti-Christendom] and still worse ‘Vanninische Bontekoedistens en Spinosistische Beverlandistens, ja een schuim van Aretinische Machiavellistens’ [Vanninian Bontekoeists and Spinozist Beverlandists, yes a scum of Aretinian Machiavellians].³⁵

To such verbal and printed attacks, Cartesians like Bontekoe had little choice but respond loudly and strenuously.³⁶ Replying to Helvetius, in 1680, Bontekoe answered that

Spinoza's philosophy, contrary to what Helvetius was asserting, diverges fundamentally from Cartesianism. 'Wat Cartesiaan heeft oyt geseget, dat de boeken van Moses leugen-schriften, en de mirakulen natuurlijk sijn? Noyt heeft iemand van de Cartesianen sulck een blasphemie uit sijn mond laten gaan; en gij vuile lasteraar sult 'er noit een enig exempel van aanwysen.' [‘What Cartesian’, asks Bontekoe, ‘has ever said the Books of Moses are fabrications and that miracles are merely natural occurrences?’ No Cartesian ever uttered such blasphemy ‘and you foul slanderer’, he admonishes Helvetius, ‘will never provide even a single example’]. Furthermore, held Bontekoe, Spinoza's ‘abominable’ teaching had been effectively refuted exclusively by Cartesians, his system having been crushed ‘namely by Professor Mansvelt, and Blyenburg, two well-known Cartesians, so much so that there has not been among all the other philosophers or theologians, however much they shriek against atheists, anyone who dared or were willing to enter into combat with that monster. But despite all this you claim the Cartesians are Spinozists even though they, and only they, I say, have refuted Spinoza’ [met name door den Professor Mansvelt, en Blyenburg, twee bekende Cartesianen, in soo verre, dat ‘er niet een onder all d’andere filosofhen of theologanten, hoe seer sy altijd tegens de Atheisten schreeuwen, geweest is, die sich tegens dat Monster in den strijd begeven of dorst of wilde. Maar desniet tegenstaende wild gy, dat de Cartesianen Spinosisten zijn, alshoon zy, zy alleen seg ik, Spinoza verslagen hebben].³⁷

Although it was obvious to everyone that the impact of Cartesianism on Dutch culture had been dramatic, far-reaching and fundamentally de-stabilizing, Bontekoe nevertheless showed considerable ingenuity in comparing the rise of Cartesianism to the Reformation which most Dutchmen then considered the greatest moral, scholarly and spiritual renewal since early Christian times. For he suggests that, precisely to ruin ‘the new reformation of the Cartesians’, the Devil (in which opponents suspected he did not believe) had, with artful malice, brought Spinoza into play and ‘even als in de tijd der Reformatie Ian van Leyen, Knipperdolling, en andere, op de been bragt, [Spinoza] verwekt heeft, om ‘t goede werk der Cartesianen te verhinderen, en als vuyl uyt te maken, gelijk dat den grote Luther in die tijd gevraagd sijnde, wat hem van dat Munsters-volkje dagt, seer wel begreep, zeggende de Duyvel verwekt dese, om de Reformatie by vele verdagt te maken. Op gelijke wyse arbeid den Duyvel noch, sich tegen alle waarheid aankantende, en ‘t was daarom dat hij sijne Spinosa op ‘t theater introduceerde, als een Cartesiaan, om daar door de Cartesianen te verraden, gelijk ons de uytkomst betoond heft.’ [and aroused him to discredit the good work of the Cartesians just as at the time of the Reformation, [the devil] brought Ian van Leyden,

Knipperdolling, and others into action and so, exactly as at that time, the great Luther when asked what he thought of all that crowd at Münster, grasped what had happened, replying that the Devil had brought them into play so as to render the Reformation suspect to many',³⁸ so, in the same way, Satan had 'brought his Spinoza onto the scene, disguised as a Cartesian, in order to betray the Cartesians, as the outcome has shown].³⁹ Doubtless this self-serving literary parallel struck anti-Cartesian adversaries like Helvetius as the very acme of effrontery and hypocrisy.⁴⁰

Especially relevant in our present context is a section of Bontekoe's reply to Helvetius presenting what was perhaps the most detailed attempt of the period to depict Spinoza as an effective philosophical subversive. Spinoza began to philosophize, held Bontekoe (who knew several prominent 'Spinozists', including Petrus van Balen, well and is recorded as having attended the auction of Spinoza's belongings, at The Hague, after the latter's death, in 1677, in the hope of buying his books), 'sijnde een man, die wat diep in de Mathematique en Hebreeuwse taal gestudeert had (twee studien, die een mensch dikwils de reden verbuysteren, en stupide maken)' [being a man who had gone rather deeply into mathematics as well as the Hebrew language (two subjects which often ruin a person's reason, and make him stupid)],⁴¹ by preoccupying himself with the philosophy of Descartes which at that time [ie. the late 1640s and early 1650s] first began to break through the 'navel of the old School Philosophy'. Since Cartesianism rests on mathematics, 'soo was het Spinosa ligt daar van een gedeelte begrypen, gelijk hij als een Geometer ondernam ten dienste van jonge discipulen, die hem van de Leidse Academia, alwaer in die tijd de ware Philosophie nog onder 't kruys geleerd wierd, dikwils op Reinsburg kwamen bezoeken, een stuk van de Physica op een Geometrike order in geschrifte te stellen, en te doen drukken, gelijk dat boek nog in de wereld is en by veele maar al te wel bekend.' [it was easy for Spinoza having grasped part of it - just as it was likewise easy for him as a geometry teacher in the service of the young disciples from Leiden University where the true philosophy [ie. of Descartes] was at that time under the cross [ie. banned and persecuted precisely as Protestantism had been in the Netherlands before the Reformation], students who frequently came to visit him in Rijnsburg - to formulate a part of [Descartes'] *Physica* in geometric order in textual form and publish it, a book that is still to be found and by many all too well known'.⁴²

This testimony by someone who himself was a student at Leiden in the years 1665-7,⁴³ asserts something only minimally mentioned elsewhere, namely that students from the university gravitated to Spinoza whilst he lived in Rijnsburg, 'often' coming to consult with him and take lessons in geometry as well as Cartesianism and that it was in this connection

that Spinoza wrote his *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae* of 1663.⁴⁴ Hitherto, scholars have assumed that Spinoza had only one such student, the Joannes Casarius mentioned in his surviving correspondence (who may, or may not be the same student mentioned by Meyer in his preface). But Bontekoe was certainly in a position to know that Leiden students visited Spinoza ‘often’ and this possibility has to be considered. It is not impossible that Bontekoe himself was among those students. While historians have mostly stressed the Collegiant associations of Rijnsburg, and concurred with Jarig Jelles in interpreting Spinoza’s move there, from Amsterdam, as motivated by a desire to enjoy the quiet of the countryside and avoid being too frequently interrupted by his friends so as to devote himself single-mindedly to the ‘investigation into the truth’ and be ‘less disturbed in his meditations’,⁴⁵ Bontekoe’s comments, imply Spinoza’s move to Rijnsburg, in the summer of 1661, was motivated more by a desire for proximity to the university, and the stormy Cartesian debates in progress there and that that the young philosopher deliberately positioned himself near the epicenter of the philosophical agitation gripping the Netherlands.

Bontekoe, like Steno and later Baumgarten, claimed that Spinoza had in subtle but fundamental ways insidiously perverted Descartes’ thought in the very text where he claims to be expounding his system for students and academics and that ‘de samenstel van dat werk is gemaakt tegens d’expresse meining van Descartes’ [the composition of that work is done against the express meaning of Descartes]. It is a thesis worth considering more closely. For instance, in the set of Definitions central to the first part of the text, Spinoza defines ‘*substantia*’ partly in terms of mind, adding in the Dutch version that Descartes is singularly unclear here and that, moreover, there is no way of translating the Latin *mens* [mind] into Dutch ‘daar wij geen sulk woort, dat niet te gelijk iet dat lichamelijk is betekent, vinden’ [where we find no such word that does not at the same time signify something bodily]⁴⁶ and then in terms of the immediate subject of extension and of accidents which presuppose extension, like figure, position, local motion, etc. which is called a body.’ He then adds: ‘an vero una et eadem substantia sit, quae vocatur mens, et corpus, an duae diversae, postea erit inquirendum’ [But whether in truth it is one and the same substance what is called mind and body, or two different ones, will be inquired into later],⁴⁷ hardly a Cartesian gloss on Descartes’ formulation; the entire passage can with considerable justification be deemed, from a Cartesian standpoint, distinctly insinuating and subversive. Spinoza’s real aim in using his seemingly highly cogent geometric method throughout, in this text, avers Bontekoe, was

‘sijn verduyvelde concepten onder die van Descartes te vermengen, en den Cartesianen in te boesemen; die ’t hert wat minder gebonden hebbende als andere, ligter so hy waande de selve zoude aannemen, en hem houdende voor een goed Cartesiaan, dikwils voor Cartesiaanse concepten erkennen welke inderdaad de selve niet en sijn; en die in ‘t tegendeel die philosophie besmolden, verduysteren, verbasteren, en sonder dat het dikwils gemerkt word, om verre werpen. Men kan dat sien uyt de vuyle voor-reden, en uyt de *Cogitata Metaphysica*, die hy er agter geset heeft. Ja in die voor-reden schaamd hy sig niet te seggen dat hy in dat boek de dingen wel naar de meining van Descartes verhandeld had, maar dat hy nog hoger principien wist, waar door hy anderen hogere explication van dingen, als Descartes, wist te geven.’ [to mix his diabolical concepts among those of Descartes and coax the Cartesians to accept them the more easily, and they, taking him to be a true Cartesian, often acknowledge these as being authentic Cartesian ideas when in fact they are not, being concepts which on the contrary besmirch that philosophy, obscure and destroy it and often without anyone noticing, overthrow it. One sees all this from the work’s foul preface, and from the *Cogitata Metaphysica* which he appended to it. Indeed, in the preface, Spinoza has the effrontery to assert not only that he had had to deal with things in that book according to Descartes’ opinion, but that he had gained insight into still higher *principia* whereby he can provide other and better explanations of things than does Descartes].⁴⁸

The manner in which Spinoza mostly follows the order, and often the wording,⁴⁹ of Descartes’ argumentation gives the impression of reverent adherence and loyal discipleship which, however, is every so often deftly undermined by subtle differences of wording in the way arguments are developed. The manner in which Spinoza expounds Descartes’ fundamental proposition in the second part of his *Principia* that ‘God is the primary cause of motion; and he always preserves the same quantity of motion in the universe’ is a noteworthy case in point. Descartes, in his explanation of this principle, seems to say on the one hand, that ‘God’s perfection involves not only His being immutable in Himself, but also his operating in a manner that is always utterly constant and immutable’.⁵⁰ At the same time, however, Descartes qualifies this by conceding that there are also ‘changes whose occurrence is guaranteed either by our own plain experience or by divine revelation, and either our perception or our faith shows us that these take place without any change in the creator.’

Spinoza, by contrast, makes no such accommodation, removing all reference to experience testifying to changes or actions against the universal laws of nature, stipulating instead that while ‘it may be said in theology that God does many things from his good pleasure and to demonstrate his power to men, nevertheless, since those things which depend

only on his good pleasure do not become known except by divine revelation, they are not to be admitted in philosophy where we inquire only into what reason tells us, lest philosophy be confused with theology', a typically Spinozist admonition completely incompatible with authentic Cartesianism. Curley rightly remarks here that 'we must read this scholium as a muted criticism of [Descartes]. The implication', he remarks, 'is that, if we conceive of God's power as being like that of a king, as Descartes did [...], we destroy the foundation of our physics.'⁵¹

As we have seen, the general tendency in explaining Spinoza's intentions in his *Principia philosophiae cartesianae*, seemingly based on what Spinoza himself says, in a letter to Oldenburg, of July 1663, has been to see the book as something which he had not in the least planned to publish and which his friends in Amsterdam, especially Meyer, urged him to do, rather than a project directly ensuing from his own aims and ambitions.⁵² But it is possible to ask whether this letter has not perhaps been too simplistically interpreted. For Spinoza also mentions, in the same letter to Oldenburg, referring to Cassearius, that he had composed this text to instruct 'a certain young man to whom I did not want to teach my opinions openly',⁵³ effectively admitting that the book's purpose was to instill his own concepts in a covert fashion, masked as Cartesian ideas. This letter itself, then, can be construed as part of a wider design leading Spinoza to represent the book to Oldenburg as not being his own brain-child not because he had really not conceived of publishing it but rather because saying he had done so would have been tantamount to announcing that he was designedly subverting Descartes' philosophy.'

Such an interpretation of the letter to Oldenburg arguably fits considerably better than does the conventional one with Spinoza's eloquent admonition, in his letter to Meyer, of August 1663, that all polemics should be avoided in this text and that he, Spinoza, would like 'ut omnes sibi facile persuadere possint, haec in omnium hominum gratiam evulgari, teque in hoc libello edendo solo veritatis propagandae desiderio teneri, teque adeo maxime curare, ut hoc opusculum omnibus gratum sit, hominesque ad verae philosophiae studium benevole, atque benigne invitare omniumque utilitati studere' [everyone to be able readily to accept that this is published for the benefit of all men and that in publishing this book you [ie Meyer] are motivated solely by the desire to spread the truth, and so you are chiefly concerned to make this little work welcome to everyone, to invite men in a spirit of goodwill to take up the study of the true philosophy, and benevolently to further the good of all',⁵⁴ a powerfully expressed even magnificent sentiment which surely makes little sense if Spinoza was really

painstakingly and yet also hurriedly publishing philosophical theses with which he fundamentally disagreed.

Neither need our interpretation necessarily contradict what is affirmed by Meyer in his preface to the *Principia philosophiae cartesianae* where he says that he had been

‘delighted to hear from our Author that, while teaching Descartes’s philosophy to a certain pupil

of his [ie. Casarius] , he had dictated to him the whole of Part II of [Descartes’] *Principia* and some of Part III, demonstrated in that geometric style, and also the principal and more difficult questions that arise in metaphysics and remain unresolved in Descartes, and that, at the urgent entreaties and pleadings of his friends, he has permitted these to be published as a single work, corrected and amplified by himself. So I also commended this same project, at the same time gladly offering my services, if needed,

to get this published.’

Though usually interpreted as evidence that Spinoza had not intended to publish his text, the passage might simply be a polite and embellished way of saying that Spinoza had brought the subject up and his friends and he had together colluded to devise the tone and general strategy of the piece. Furthermore, the fact that the decision to publish the work was the outcome of discussion among Spinoza’s circle and in some degree the result of a group decision serves to make it even more unlikely (than it would be in any case) that the intrusion of Spinoza’s own basic principles into his exposition of what were supposed to be Descartes’s fundamental theses was in any way extraneous, accidental or the result of what Curley called Spinoza’s failure to ‘submerge his own thought and allow his subject to speak for himself’.

Surviving documentary references to his reputation and status in the mid and later 1660s, as well as later, would seem to support the view that Spinoza’s book on Descartes led to his becoming a well-known name in Dutch intellectual and cultural life and to his holding an initially widely respected position which was later perceived, at least by some, as providing the launch-pad for his remarkably successful penetration of Dutch high culture and consciousness. Such reports also make it clear that it was precisely the huge impact of Cartesianism which cleared the way for the penetration of Spinozism. Wim Klever, for instance, has drawn attention to the comments of Johannes de Raey in two letters which he wrote many years later to Wittichius, at Leiden. In the first of these, dated August 1680, De

Raey speaks of the unsettling situation, in the years around 1667, when Spinoza ‘coepit inclarescere’ [began to become famous], linking him to the polemics surrounding Cartesianism engulfing Leiden at the time.⁵⁵ In the second, dated October 1687, De Raey claims to have foreseen the religiously fatal consequences of the abuse, or misinterpretation, of Cartesianism by some Cartesians whilst teaching at Leiden – he was professor there in the years from 1663 to 1668 - at an early stage and again mentions Spinoza as a kind of natural consequence of the huge impact of Cartesian philosophy ‘or, rather’, he says, ‘Cartesiomania’ gripping and unsettling the university as it did.⁵⁶

All this fits well with the remarks of Johannes van Neercassel, vicar-general of the Catholic Church in the United Provinces in the years 1661-86 in his report to Rome of September 1678 where he discusses the impact of Spinoza’s *Opera Posthuma*. What concerned Neercassel was the spread of Spinozism in society and how, precisely, it was spreading. Neercassel was able to reassure the papacy that ‘our Catholics’ were scrupulous custodians of faith and authority completely impervious to Spinoza’s teaching. The spread of the latter, he was convinced, was occurring exclusively among those Protestants who had gone over to Cartesianism and were now presuming to judge the most basic questions not on the basis of Christ’s teaching but by way ‘of philosophy and the inane fallacy of the method of the geometricians, following worldly principles and Euclid’, that is those who had opted to decide everything on the basis of worldly reason and material evidence.⁵⁷

Before 1670, Spinoza appeared then as the expositor – and to a few scientists like Steno as the ‘reformer’ - of the Cartesian philosophy, riding the crest of a great cultural wave, while at the same time, as Meyer stresses in his preface, the young philosopher was hard at work developing other principles which nothing to do with Descartes’s positions. Cartesianism, for Spinoza, was a medium by means of which he could surreptitiously and inconspicuously advance his own basic principles. It soon emerged, concluded Bontekoe, in his pamphlet of 1680 against Helvetius, ‘what these fine principles were’ when Spinoza published his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* with which, he asserts, Spinoza endeavoured finally to overthrow not only the ‘ware philosophie’ [true philosophy] of Descartes but ‘all religion and truth’.

‘En van die tijd af heeft hij zijn werk gemaakt, om in ‘t heymelijk zijn kwaad saad te zayen; weshalven hij van Reinsburg na Voorburg, en eyndelijk van daar in ‘s Gravenhage met ter woon trok, mogelijk meinende dat hy daar voor zijn duyvelse politica, en andere Atheistice concepten, by de losse jeugd en andere werelds-kinderen, dikwils seer tot sulk een kwaad geneigd, ruymmer ingang sou vinden gelijk hem dat gelukt is, en men heeft er nog van zijn creaturen op desen dag in dese

plaats. [‘And from that time onwards he made it his task to sow his perverse seed clandestinely; for which reason he left Rijnsburg for Voorburg, and finally moved to The Hague, possibly thinking that he would find more scope there among the frivolous youth and other men of the world who are often much inclined towards such evil, for his diabolical *politica* and other atheistic ideas; as indeed he succeeded in doing and still today one finds his creatures in that place.]⁵⁸

This further fragment of Bontekoe’s reply to Helvetius may well contain a grain or two of additional information, being the first contemporary source to be found which claims Spinoza purposely moved from Leiden to Voorburg, and then The Hague, so as more easily to penetrate society by propagating his philosophy among the cosmopolitan, libertine, courtly and military personnel to be found there than he could among the university students at Leiden. Taken together, Bontekoe’s remarks about Spinoza’s moves, first to Rijnsburg, and then to Voorburg, notably strengthen the circumstantial evidence that Spinoza was indeed far more actively and deliberately subversive in the philosophical world of his day than he is commonly reputed to have been and a thinker who devoted much of his energies not just to winning over potential disciples, first using Cartesianism to orientate them in his desired direction, but also to establishing entire clandestine intellectual networks.

To sum up, we can agree with the conclusion of Barbone and Rice that ‘there is far more in the [*Principia philosophiae cartesianae* and *Cogitata metaphysica*] than a simple summary of Cartesian philosophy, and that these works are of considerable value for understanding Spinoza’s own development’.⁵⁹ But to this it seems necessary to add that the carefully judged mix of exposition of Descartes’s philosophy and partly concealed but fundamental revision of Descartes’s thought which the work contains far from being the result of a failure sufficiently to stick to the task in hand, or an unintended result, appears to have been part of a deliberate strategy on the part not just of Spinoza himself but also of Meyer and others of their circle. Their evident purpose was simultaneously to build on and yet subvert Descartes, a design they sought to carry out inconspicuously and in a way that would not just minimize protest but carry the generality of the Cartesians a good part of the distance with them, seeing this as the most effective way of taking advantage of the great progress Cartesianism had made in Dutch society. Their aim was to do all this covertly but, as Spinoza expressed it, ‘for the good of all’. It is almost universally assumed in nineteenth and twentieth-century accounts of Spinoza, that he was a thoroughly isolated figure whose immediate legacy was very meager. But the grounds for this view, however strongly entrenched it continues to be, do not seem to be at all substantial. A much stronger argument on the basis of contemporary sources is that

the centrality of Cartesianism in Dutch society, education and church politics in the 1660s and 1670s was such, that a clandestine strategy harnessing some of the momentum of the Cartesians to Spinoza's cause was apt to entail nothing less than a rapid and fundamental 'revolution' in Dutch, Dutch Huguenot and soon also other segments of European cultural and intellectual life.

¹ Gunther Coppens, 'Descartes, Spinoza en het Nederlands cartesianisme' in '*Spinoza en het Nederlands cartesianisme* (ed.) Gunther Coppens (Louvain; 2004) p.pp7-13, here p.10

² Steven Nadler, *Spinoza. A life* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 197

³ W. Meijer, 'De Ioanne Caseario', in *Chronicum Spinozanum* iii (the Hague, 1923), p. 234; Richard Popkin, *Spinoza* (Oxford, 2004), p.49

⁴ M. Gullan-Whur, *Within Reason. A Life of Spinoza* (London, 1998) pp. 139-40

⁵ Steven Barbone and Lee Rice, 'Introduction and Notes' to Baruch Spinoza, *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy and Metaphysical Thoughts* translated by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, 1998), p. xiii

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. xiv-xv

⁸ the text of which is reproduced in *ibid.*, p.xiv

⁹ Lodewijk Meyer, 'Preface to the Honest Reader' in Barbone and Rice (eds.) Spinoza, *Principles*, p.5; Spinoza's own wording, in his letter to Meyer (*ibid.*, p. xiv) , reads: 'I should like you to mention that many of my demonstrations are arranged in a way different from that of Descartes, not to correct Descartes, but only the better to preserve my order of exposition and thus to avoid increasing the number of axioms. And it is also for the same reason that I have had to prove many things that Descartes merely asserts without proof, and to add other things that Descartes omitted.'

¹⁰ Edwin Curley, second 'Editorial Preface' in *The Collected Works of Spinoza* volume 1 edited and translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton, 1985) p. 221; Barbone and Rice, 'Introduction', p. xviii; see also Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza. An Essay on Philosophy in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), p. 108

¹¹ Curley, second 'Editorial preface', p.221

¹² E. Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method* (Princeton, 1988), p. 4; E. Curley, 'Spinoza – as an expositor of Descartes', in Genevieve Lloyd (ed.): *Spinoza. Critical assessments*, (London, 2001, vol. I, part iii, pp. 133-9

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- ¹³ Gerard Vallée (ed.) *The Spinoza Conversations between Lessing and Jacobi. Texts with excerpts from the ensuing Controversy*, pp. 81,103
- ¹⁴ Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, *Geschichte der Religionsparthyen* (1754) (ed.) Johann Salomon Semler (Halle, 1766), p. 38
- ¹⁵ Allen W. Wood, *Kant* (Oxford, 2005), preface, p. ix
- ¹⁶ Hans-Christian Lucas, 'Baruch de Spinoza als Dorn im Fleisch der Orthodoxie' in *Spinoza in Deutschland des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Zur Erinnerung an Hans-Christian Lucas* (eds.) E. Schürmann, N. Waszek and F. Weinreich (Stuttgart, 2002), p. 21
- ¹⁷ on the important matter of the dating of this open letter, see Wim Klever, 'Steno's Statements on Spinoza and Spinozism', *Studia Spinozana* vi (1990), p. 304; and G. Totaro, 'Niels Stensen (1638-1686) e la prima diffusione della filosofia di Spinoza nella Firenze di Cosimo III', in Paolo Cristofolini (ed.), *L'Héresie spinoziste. La discussion sur le Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, 1670-1677* (Amsterdam, 1995) pp.147
- ¹⁸ 'A Letter of Nicholas Steno to the Reformer of the New Philosophy, concerning the True Philosophy', in Spinoza, *The Letters* translated by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, 1995), 313-20; Olli Koistinen, 'On Steno's Letter to Spinoza' in Vesa Oittinen (ed.) *Spinoza in Nordic Countries* (Helsinki, 2004), 12-14
- ¹⁹ Totaro, 'Niels Stensen', 148, 157
- ²⁰ Klever, 'Steno's Statements', 304-5
- ²¹ Steno, 'A Letter', 318
- ²² Totaro, 'Niels Stensen', 157
- ²³ David Hassel, 'Voorreden' to Christopher Wittichius, *Ondersoek van de Zede-konst van Benedictus de Spinoza* (Amsterdam, 1695) p. i; J.J.V.M., De Vet, 'Spinoza en Spinozisme en enkele 'Journaux de Hollande' *Mededelingen van het Spinozahuis* 83 (2002) pp. 3-32 here, 13
- ²⁴ Hassel, 'Voorreden' p. i
- ²⁵ Popkin, *Spinoza*, pp. 31-2, 40-2
- ²⁶ Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza and Spinozism* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005), p. xxv
- ²⁷ L. Spruit, 'Introduzione' to Jarig Jelles, *Belydenisse des algemeenen en Christelyken geloofs* (1684) (Macerata, 2004), p. xiv; M. Lauermann and M.B. Schröder, 'Textgrundlagen der deutschen Spinoza-Rezeption im 18. Jahrhundert' in Schürmann, Waszek and Weinreich (eds.) *Spinoza im Deutschland*, pp. 48-9
- ²⁸ Hampshire, *Spinoza*, p lxii and p.19; Klever, *Spinoza Classicus*, 269-84
- ²⁹ Spinoza, *The Letters* trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, 1995), pp. 303-12

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- ³⁰ *ibid.*, 104-7, 116; Johan Frederik Helvetius, *Dauids Slinger-Steen Geworpen op het Voorhoofd van den Goliathistischen Veld-oversten* (The Hague, 1682), 112, 194-5
- ³¹ Johan Frederik Helvetius, *Adams oud Graft, Opgevult met jonge Coccei Cartesiaenschen* (The Hague, 1687), pp. 40-1, 99, 216, 251
- ³² *ibid.*, 81-2, 125, 253
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 255;
- ³⁴ Helvetius, *Adams oud Graft Opgevuld*, 254-5
- ³⁵ Helvetius, *Dauids Slinger-steen*, 251
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, 4; Cornelis Bontekoe, *Een Brief Aan Jan Fredrik Swetsertje, Gesworen Vyand van alle Reden en Verstand, Hoofdlasteraar van de twee groote mannen Coccejus en Descartes* (n.p.n.d. [1681?], p.13
- ³⁷ Cornelis Bontekoe, *Brief Aen Johan Frederik Swetzer, Gesegt Dr Helvetius, Geschreven en Uytgegeven: Tot een Korte Apologie voor den Grote Philosoph Renatus Descartes en sijne regtsinnige navolgers* (The Hague, 1680) p., 38 (I am indebted to Annette Munt for drawing my attention to this rare tract in the Library at Wolfenbüttel)
- ³⁸ *ibid.*, 45 20
- ³⁹ *ibid.*, .p. 20
- ⁴⁰ *Dialogue Van een Groote Thee en Tobacq Suyper, over het wonderlijk hart Gevecht voorgevallen in Den Haag tusschen Twee moedige Hanen en Schermers, Johan Fredericq Swetser alias Doctor Helvetius en Mennoniste Kees alias Dr Cornelis Bontekoe in 't Jaar 1680* (n.p. n.d. [The Hague ? 1681?], I am grateful to Annette Munt for drawing my attention to this exceedingly rare pamphlet preserved at The Hague, Gemeentearchief), p.45
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*
- ⁴² Bontekoe, *Brief Aen Johan Frederik Swetzer*, 21
- ⁴³ C.L.Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme* (1954; repr. Utrecht, 1989) , p.280 ; Ottespeer, *Groepsportret met Dame II. De vesting van de macht de Leidse Universiteit, 1673-1775*, (Amsterdam, 2002) p.58
- ⁴⁴ Willem Meijer, 'De Ioanne Caseario', *Chronicum Spinozanum* iii (1923), pp. 232-3; Nadler, *Spinoza*, 180-1;
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*;
- ⁴⁶ Spinoza, *Opera* (ed.) Carl Gebhardt (1925; 5 vols repr. Heidelberg, 1972) i, p. 150;

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- ⁴⁷ *ibid.*; Spinoza, *Collected Works* (ed.) Curley 1, p. 239-40
- ³⁴ Bontekoe, *Brief Aen Johan Frederik Swetzer*, 22
- ⁴⁹ Gunther Coppens, ‘Spinoza’s beginselen van de Cartesiaanse Wijsgegeerte. Vernieuwing of oude wijn in nieuwe zakken?’ in G.Coppens (ed.) *Spinoza en de scholastiek* (Leuven, 2003), pp.79, 81
- ⁵⁰ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* vol.1 translated by J.Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (Cambridge, 1985), pp.177-291, here p. 240
- ⁵¹ Spinoza, *Collected Works*, p. 276-7; for Curley’s note see *ibid* p. 277 n. 38
- ⁵² Hampshire, *Spinoza*, 171; Nadler, *Spinoza*, 204-5; Popkin, *Spinoza*, pp. 49-50; Klever, *Spinoza Classicus*, 100
- ⁵³ Spinoza *Collected Works* i, 207; Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme*, 390-1
- ⁵⁴ Meijer, ‘De Ioanne Caseario’, p. 235; Spinoza, *Principles*, p. xiv
- ⁵⁵ Thijssen-Scoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme*, 130; Wim Klever, ‘Spinoza’s Fame in 1667’, *Studia Spinozana* v (1989), p, 361
- ⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 362
- ⁵⁷ Neercassel to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, 13 September 1678 published in Jean Orcibal, ‘Les Jansénistes face à Spinoza’, *Revue de littérature comparée* xxiii (1949), pp.293-4
- ³⁷ Bontekoe, *Brief Aen Johan Frederik Swetzer*, p. 23
- ⁵⁹ Barbone and Rice, ‘Introduction’, p. xxi