

the latter on the subject of Spinoza, drew attention to the works of that remarkable man, and introduced him to the notice of such original minds as Herder, Goethe, Fichte, and Schelling. In fact, it may be said that Spinoza was to the poetical mind of the great German classics a much more congenial thinker than Kant. The philosophy of Spinoza from that moment became and has remained one of the great agencies, not to say sources, of inspiration in the development of the idealistic systems which for fully thirty years pushed the critical philosophy of Kant into the background.

It has been truly said that Kant and Spinoza form the two poles around which the deeper thought of Germany at that time revolved.¹ This twofold attraction started about the same time, for Kant's 'First Critique' appeared in the year 1781 and Jacobi's 'Letters on the Doctrine of Spinoza' appeared four years after, in 1785. But the very different ways in which Kantism and Spinozism made their appearance—the former in a strictly philosophical treatise, the latter in a literary discussion²—correspond to the abstract logical character

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¹ "A momentous coincidence willed it that just at the time when the 'Critique' of the all-destroying man of Königsberg began to make headway, the most firmly jointed and effective of all metaphysical systems, the type itself of dogmatism, became known in Germany: namely, Spinozism. Through the controversy between Jacobi and Mendelssohn, which referred to Lessing's position with regard to Spinoza, the doctrine of the latter had become the subject of the most lively interest, and this through the deep

contrast that exists between them. Kant and Spinoza became the two poles around which the thought of the following generation revolved" (Windelband, 'Geschichte der Philosophie,' 4th ed., p. 475).

² It appears that Goethe during his Strassburg period became acquainted through Hamann and Herder first with the writings of Giordano Bruno, and was led from them to occupy himself with Spinoza, one side of whose doctrine, the mystical and pantheistic, attracted him. He could not agree with Bayle, who speaks of the