

said, he ventured to place the other beyond the line in that free land of speculation discovered by the Idealists, he immediately drew it back again into its former position; he never crossed the Rubicon and settled in the transcendental philosophy, which was loudly proclaimed at that time as the new and promised land in which the dilemmas of former systems of thought and of common-sense were to disappear. His writings had a great influence, and did much to stem the tide of abstract speculation; his language also was that of the best literature of his age, and he did not indulge in that novel and uncouth terminology introduced by Kant and further developed by some of his successors.¹

¹ The position of Jacobi in the history of philosophical, and especially of religious, thought is extremely interesting and well worth studying in the present day when the subject of religious experience is so much discussed. Although in systematic philosophy Jacobi's writings are of subordinate and mostly only of critical importance, he himself was, as Goethe said, one of the most interesting figures in an extraordinary age. Talking to Jäckermann ('Conversations with Goethe,' 11th April 1827), Goethe said that he had been reading the Letters of Jacobi and his friends and found it a most remarkable book, not because one could learn something from it, but in order to get an insight into the culture and literature of the time, of which even then one had no conception. "One sees a number, as it were, of important persons, but not a trace of the same direction or of a common interest, rather every one self-contained and marching his own way, without in the least taking any part in the endeavours

of the others. They appear to me like billiard balls which run blindly about on the green cloth without knowing anything of each other, and which, as soon as they touch, only diverge so much more." Goethe then proceeds to explain that Jacobi loved him personally without taking any part in his endeavours or perhaps even approving of them; that it required friendship to keep them together whereas it was just the opposite between him and Schiller. And, confirming this, Jacobi had written about Goethe, whom he first met in the year 1774: "Goethe is like a man possessed, to whom it is in no case permitted to act arbitrarily. It is only necessary to be an hour with him in order to find it in the highest degree ludicrous to expect from him that he should think and act otherwise than he really thinks and acts. Hereby I do not wish to suggest that no change for the more beautiful and better is possible to him; but it is not otherwise possible than as the flower unfolds itself, the seed