

21.
Fichte.

portant suggestions contained in Kant's 'Critiques' and set himself to follow out the trains of reasoning which they indicated was Fichte. He did not propose merely to criticise Kant's doctrine or to take up single points, as had been done by others; he proposed to think out the Kantian scheme to its completion and to bring together the different lines of reasoning. But in addition to the Kantian philosophy there was another and distinct philosophical influence which made itself felt in Fichte's system. This influence came through the renewed study of Spinoza's works, which had been cultivated outside and before the appearance of the Kantian philosophy by many prominent and original thinkers in Germany. It formed the subject of an interesting conversation which Jacobi had with Lessing shortly before the death of the latter and before the appearance, in the same year, of Kant's first 'Critique.' Jacobi himself published later an account of this conversation, and also an exposition of Spinoza's system as well as of that of Hume; and there is no doubt that through these writings, which interested a much larger circle than did the writings of Kant, the philosophical horizon was greatly widened.

Since that time three distinct philosophical aspects have exerted a changing and recurrent influence upon all the most important Continental thought. These three aspects are identified with the names of Kant, Spinoza, and Leibniz. It may be said that Kant and Spinoza dominate the earlier, Kant and Leibniz the later, philosophy of the century.

Still more than was the case with Kant and Jacobi