

IV. THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

PIETISTIC WAY OF LIFE AND SOPHIOLOGY: SPINOZA'S RECEPTION BY THE RADICAL PIETIST GOTTFRIED ARNOLD (1666-1714)

PICU OCOLEANU*

ABSTRACT. After the fierce polemic (1720-1740) between Joachim Lange and his Pietist companions from Halle, on one hand, and Christian Wolff as representative of the Enlightenment, on the other hand, the two sides have reached a common denominator: the refutation of the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza as “acosmism”/Pantheism with fatalist consequences. Spinoza and the Spinozism became the common enemy of both, Pietism and Enlightenment. Against such an interpretation, the German radical Pietist Gottfried Arnold proposes in the second volume of his work *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie* (1700/1741) another, very original Spinoza's reading. The Dutch philosopher thinks and actually lives as an authentic Pietist. He affirms and practices the unity between thinking and life and proposes a kind of metaphysics of the unity between God and nature, which should not be understood as pantheism, but as sophiology: all the things are included in God because their concepts are thought by the “Eternal Wisdom of God”.

Keywords: Spinoza, Pietism, Sophiology, acosmism, Pantheism, fatalism, philosophy as way of life

1. Spinozism as Pantheist Metaphysics. Spinoza's Refutation by the Halle Pietism and Christian Wolff (1737/1744)

The German version of Spinoza's *Ethics* was printed in 1744. It was the second translation of this treatise into a modern language after the Dutch edition of 1677, that was published the same year with his entire Latin *Opera posthuma*,

* Professor, University of Craiova, Faculty of Theology. Email: ocoleanu@yahoo.de.

previously published in Amsterdam by Jarrig Jelles and Johann Rieuwertsz. On the title page of the German edition, it was written: *B. v. S. Sittenlehre widerlegt von dem berühmten Weltweisen unserer Zeit Herrn Christian Wolff. Aus dem Lateinischen übersetzt. Frankfurt und Leipzig 1744*. The identity of the author was hidden behind three initials ("B. v. S."). That had to do with the fact that shortly before the end of his treatise the Dutch philosopher himself expressed the wish, that his name not be mentioned on the title page, as shown in the *Opera posthuma* reprinted preface of Jarrig Jelles¹. On the contrary, the German publisher stressed the name of "the famous philosopher of our time, Mr. Christian Wolff", the author of the 128-page of a Spinoza's refutation placed at the end of the book with the title *Herrn Christian Wolfs Widerlegung der Sittenlehre B. v. S. aus dem andern Theile seiner natürlichen Gottesgelahrtheit genommen*.

Trying to explain this oddness, the German translator of Spinoza's work, Johann Lorenz Schmidt, a disciple Christian Wolff's², affirms in a short but very polemical preface that the intention of his translation as well as of the adding of a *Widerlegung* to this treatise was to defend the being and the freedom God's ("das Daseyn Gottes und die Freyheit desselben")³ against the Dutch philosopher, who is described as "dangerous enemy" ("gefährlicher Feind"), "the most terrible of all enemies of this genus" ("der erschrecklichsten unter allen [Feinden] von dieser Gattung")⁴, "fearful enemy" ("fürchterlicher Feind"), "defeated enemy" ("überwundener Feind"), "spook" ("Gespenst")⁵, "god denier" ("Gottesleugner")⁶, etc.

¹ [Jarrig Jelles], "Vorrede vor des Verfassers nachgelassenen Werken. Geneigter Leser", in *B. v. S. Sittenlehre widerlegt von dem berühmten Weltweisen unserer Zeit Herrn Christian Wolff*, aus dem Lateinischen übersetzt, (Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1744), 7-56, here: p. 14.

² The name of Johann Lorenz Schmidt was already linked to Wolff's rationalism because of the controversial edition of the «Wertheim Bible» (1735). See J. Thomas Cook, *Spinoza's Ethics. A Reader's Guide* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), 156: "In the midst of the controversy surrounding Wolff's exile, a translation of the first five books of the Bible was published (1735) – a work that came to be known as the «Wertheim Bible». The translator was a young man named Johann Lorenz Schmidt, and his translation was carefully crafted to remove all mention of the supernatural or miraculous from the text, as well as all mention of the ostensible Old Testament foretelling of the coming of Jesus. Wolff had been supportive of Schmidt, personally and professionally, and so suspicion was rife that the Werheim Bible was a natural result of the Wolfian philosophy".

³[Johann Lorenz Schmidt], "Vorrede zu dieser Übersetzung", in *B. v. S. Sittenlehre...*, 3-6, here: p. 5.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁶ Ibid, 6.

Schmidt seems to actually be concerned rather to defend his mentor Christian Wolff against the allegation of his «cruel opponents» (“grausame Widersacher”) that he would be a follower of Spinoza⁷.

Johann Lorenz Schmidt does not name these «cruel opponents», but they were well known at the middle of the eighteenth century. In the year 20s of the eighteenth century a fierce polemic between Pietistic members of the Halle Theological Faculty, led by Joachim Lange, and Christian Wolff broke at the University of Halle. The controversy arose from the publication by the German philosopher of two works, *Ratio praelectionum Wolffianarum in Mathesin et Philosophiam universam* (1718) and *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, den liebhabern der Wahrheit mitgeteilt* (1720) and was focused on the alleged Spinozistic nature of the Wolffian philosophy⁸. Lange and his Pietistic companions suspected Wolff to be a rationalist and determinist. “Rationalism and determinism were thought to imply that all things were necessary, i.e., fatalism, which was commonly equated with Spinozism”⁹. This way, Joachim Lange, the main Wolff’s opponent in Halle, claimed the mechanical vision of his metaphysics. “He set one of Wolff’s big errors in his mechanization of the world and the reduction of humans to automata. (...) Lange said Wolff had committed the particular error of Spinoza, by believing «in absolutely mechanical fate»”¹⁰. Like Spinoza, he conceives the world as clockwork, «a spiritual automaton». That means mechanical necessity and, from an ethical point of view, fatalism¹¹.

⁷ Ibid, 4-5: “Die Ehre einer ordentlichen und gründlichen Widerlegung war unserm großen deutschen Weltweisen, dem Herrn geheimen Rathe Wolf, vorbehalten. Seine grausamen Widersacher gaben ihm die Veranlassung dazu. Sie wußten in ihrem Grimme nichts Heftigeres gegen ihn zu erdenken, als daß sie ihn zu Spinozas Partey zähleten, und vorgaben, er wollte mit demselben das verworfene blinde Schicksal nebst der Nothwendigkeit aller Dinge wieder hervorziehen. Aller Stützschriften ungeachtet, verharreten sie so hartnäckig bey dieser Beschuldigung, daß sie sich dieselbe nicht wollten ausreden lassen. Allein, wie sehr wurden sie beschähmet, als sie endlich aus dessen größeren Werken ersahen, daß er seinen Feind ohne Verstellung angriff, und denselben mit unumstößlichen Gründen von dem angemaßten Throne der Wahrheit herabstützte. Wie herrlich war nicht dieser Sieg der Wahrheit!”

⁸ J. Thomas Cook, *Spinoza’s Ethics. A Reader’s Guide*, 156. In this way the Pietistic “accusations against Wolff called attention to the positions of Spinoza and led to a more serious study of the texts” of the Dutch philosopher.

⁹ J.C. Morisson, “Christian Wolff’s Criticisms of Spinoza,” *Journal of History of Philosophy*, 31 (1993): 405-420; reprinted in *Spinoza. Critical Assessments*, ed. Genevieve Lloyd, vol. IV: *The Reception and Influence of Spinoza’s Philosophy* (London-New York: Routledge, 2001), 122-137, here: p. 122.

¹⁰ William Clark, “The Death of Metaphysics in Enlightened Prussia”, in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, by William Clark, Jan Golinski and Simon Schaffer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 423-426; here: p. 427.

¹¹ Ibid., 428.

Facing such accusations, Christian Wolff tried to defend himself and began to publish criticisms of Spinoza's philosophy, culminating in a systematic refutation of Spinoza's *Ethics*. "His basic strategy was to confirm the widely held view that Spinoza was a universal fatalist and to prove that he himself was not by showing that his own philosophical principles provided the basis for a decisive refutation of Spinoza's principles. More precisely, his strategy was to prove that the Principle of Sufficient Reason does not have the harmful consequences alleged by the Pietist critics by showing that it could be used to refute the very doctrines, especially fatalism, from which these consequences followed"¹².

In the first phase of the controversy Wolff's attempts failed. The Pietistic «cruel opponents» in Halle urged the king Frederick William I to dismiss and banish Christian Wolff, who they denounced as an atheist¹³. In the year 1723¹⁴ the German philosopher had to pass into Saxony, where he had received a call from the University of Marburg.

But Wolff does not give up. During his stay in Marburg he further tried to distance himself from Spinoza and to show how different are his philosophy and the Pantheistic metaphysics of the Dutch thinker. Therefore, Wolff developed a critique of Spinoza that originally formed the section half of his *Theologia Naturalis* (1737). This is actually the text that will be translated in German and reprinted alongside the first German edition of Spinoza's *Ethics* in 1744, four years after Wolff's return in Halle. It played an important role in the decision from 1740 to call back the rationalist philosopher at the University of Halle and in his reconciliation with the Pietist Joachim Lange the day after returning as professor in Halle¹⁵.

Actually Wolff does not refute the philosophy of Spinoza as such, but the "Spinozism" (*Spinozisterei*), i.e. his influence and the movement that the author of the *Ethics* causes or, as Adorno would say, "the jargon of the acosmism (or Pantheism)". Wolff defines Spinozism as "an opinion according to which is supposed one unique existing thing, which possesses infinite attributes, of which

¹² Morisson: "Christian Wolff's Criticisms of Spinoza", 122-123.

¹³ Benjamin Marschke, "From Heretics to Hypocrites. Anti-Pietist Rhetoric in the Eighteenth Century", in *Kinship, Community, and Self: Essays in Honor of David Warren Sabean*, by Jason Coy et al., Spektrum: Publications of German Studies Association, vol. 9 (Berghahn Books, 2015), 122-31; p. 122: "Pietism was initially targeted by the establishment; later, it was targeted as the establishment"; p. 126: "In this way, the terms of the controversy regarding Pietism had inverted – the Pietists had gone from the persecuted to being the persecutors".

¹⁴ The outbreak of the polemic between Wolff and Lange was occasioned by Wolff's *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica* (1721). In this text, Wolff argued that the Chinese people are the role model for the virtuous atheists and a successful state although "they do not know the creator of the world". See Christian Wolff, *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica* [1721]: lat.-dt. Aufl.: *Rede über die praktische Philosophie der Chinesen*, übers., eingel. und hg. von M. Albrecht, Philosophische Bibliothek, Bd. 374 (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1985), 27.

¹⁵ Clark, "The Death of Metaphysics in Enlightened Prussia", 426, 436-37; 458-60.

two are infinite thought and infinite extension and which express each an eternal and infinite essence: finite things emerge out the necessary diversification of the modes in the attributes of this existing thing"¹⁶.

So described, the *Spinozisterey* presents itself as a reduction of the Spinoza's philosophy to a few aspects of his metaphysics, of which the most important is the acosmism¹⁷. "Since *acosmism* becomes the primary *topos* for Spinozism, it becomes clear how the metaphysical component of the Ethics remained primary in understanding it"¹⁸.

Wolff does not criticize this reduction. On the contrary, he takes it as such and operates in its framework. In uncritical agreement with the criticized Spinozism he focuses his lecture of Spinoza on the posthumously published *Ethics* (1677) and particularly on its *metaphysical* part. Both the *Spinozisterey*, and the Spinoza's *Widerlegung* (1737/1744) by Christian Wolff contributed significantly to the understanding of the Dutch philosopher as a metaphysician¹⁹. The immediate consequence of this attempt was that "the ethical concerns of Spinozism fall out as secondary constructions without a solid foundation"²⁰. Not so much the Wolff's critique on the *Spinozisterey*²¹ but the establishment of this reduction of Spinozism to the metaphysical dimension of Spinoza's thinking and the ranking of the ethical reflection of the Dutch philosopher *after* his metaphysics and in dependence on this found a strong echo in the later European philosophical consciousness.

¹⁶Herrn Christian Wolfs *Widerlegung der Sittenlehre B. v. S. aus dem andern Theile seiner natürlichen Gottesgelahrtheit genommen* [1744], § 671, pp. 3-4: "Die Spinozisterey ist eine meinung, nach welcher nicht mehr, als ein einziges bestehendes Ding, welches unendliche Eigenschaften besitzt, angenommen wird, wovon ihrer zwo das unendliche Denken und die unendliche Ausdehnung sind, und deren jede ein ewiges und unendliches Wesen ausdrucket: die endlichen Dinge aber entstehen nach derselben aus der nothwendigen Abwechselung der Weisen in den Eigenschaften dieses bestehenden Dinges; zum Beyspiele die Seelen, aus Abwechselung der Weisen in dem unendlichen Denken, und die Körper, aus Abwechselung der Weisen in der unendlichen Ausdehnung."

¹⁷ Regarding the history of this term, see Cook, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 154-55: "A few freethinkers in Great Britain, usually identified as deists, seem to have been influenced by the doctrines of the *Ethics*. One of these, John Toland, coined the term «Pantheism» (in 1705) to refer to a doctrine, like that espoused in the *Ethics*, that identifies God with all nature. The term became a shorthand way of referring to Spinoza's metaphysical views, though like «Spinozism» it was a term of dismissal and in common mind, hardly distinguishable from atheism".

¹⁸ Ashley Underwood Vaught, *The Specter of Spinoza in Schelling's «Freiheitsschrift»*. A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the department of Philosophy, Villanova University, UMI 2008, 67.

¹⁹ Ibid, 68: "Perhaps this is why Spinoza was so universally understood as a metaphysician". See also: Günter Gawlick, "Einige Bemerkungen über Christian Wolffs Verhältnis zu Spinoza", in *Spinoza im Deutschland des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Zur Erinnerung an Hans-Christian Lucas*, by Eva Schürmann, Norbert Waszek and Frank Weinreich (Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt, 2002), 110.

²⁰ Underwood Vaught, *The Specter of Spinoza...*, 67.

²¹ Ibid, 72: "Despite the fact it was published with the first translation and that intellectual figures such as Lessing, Mendelssohn and Goethe would read this edition of Spinoza's work, there is little evidence that Wolff's critique had a resounding effect."

This was also the meeting point between Pietism and Enlightenment, the two different and often antagonistic main spiritual movements of the eighteenth century. The Pietistic opponents of Christian Wolff and Johann Lorenz Schmidt felt vindicated because of the annex with the Wolff's *Widerlegung*, which the German edition of the Spinoza's *Ethics* contained, although critics suspected that the introduction of the refutation was "just a smokescreen in order to get the *Ethics* published"²².

Anyway, after a long and fierce polemic with the Halle Pietists the representatives of the Enlightenment learned to develop a new kind of discourse, that avoids the confrontation with these «cruel opponents» and looks for a common denominator even in the refutation of Spinoza's pantheistic metaphysics. Pietism and Enlightenment meet each other in the common suspicion against the *Spinozistery* and in a common understanding of the Spinoza's philosophy.

2. Philosophy as a Way of Life. Gottfried Arnold and Spinoza's Pietistic Agreement Between Life and Philosophy

A few years before the publishing of the *Sittenlehre* (1744) was printed the third edition of a famous Pietistic theological work, the *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments biß auf das Jahr Christi 1688* by the radical Pietist Gottfried Arnold. The first edition of this work was published in Frankfurt am Main in the years 1698-1700. This edition was significantly supplemented in 1703 with "Supplementa, Illustrationes und Emendationes zur Verbesserung der Kirchen=historie", that will be included in the second edition (Frankfurt, 1729) as an annex alongside the main text of the treatise. A much better edition, the third, appeared in 1740 [vol. II, 1741; vol. III, 1742] in Schaffhausen²³. It is due to Johann Friedrich Cotta (1701-1779), Professor at the University of Tübingen, who became later the head of the «Confessionals», which was opposite to the Pietists and therefore to Arnold himself. Especially the second (and the third) volume of this edition bears the mark of Johann Friedrich Cotta²⁴.

²² Cook, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 156.

²³ Franz Dibelius, *Gottfried Arnold. Sein Leben und seine Bedeutung für die Kirche und Theologie. Eine kirchenhistorische Monographie* (Berlin: Verlag von Wilhelm Hertz, 1873), 240-41.

²⁴ Dibelius cites the results of the investigations of Christian Sepp, *Geschiedkundige Nasporingen* (Leyden: De Breuk & Smits, 1872-75), *apud* Dibelius, *Gottfried Arnold*, 241: "Der Herausgeber des ersten Bandes ist nach dem Zeugnis Edelmann's einer seiner pietistischen Freunde, dessen unwesentliche Zusätze übrigens meist aus Salig's Historie der Ausburger Confession entnommen sind. Als Herausgeber der beiden folgenden Bände erscheint der Tübinger Professor Cotta, der späterhin als Haupt im Lager der Confessionellen gewiß nicht zu Arnold's Freunden zählt und schon deßhalb seine 'Jugendsünde' geheim hielt, ganz abgesehen von dem würtembergischen Edikt des Jahres 1703, das allem Lesen und verbreiten der Werke Arnold's zu steuern suchte. Seine Bearbeitung ist viel viel umfangreicher und bedeutender als die des ersten Bandes; die Schaffhauser Ausgabe verdankt also ihm den Ruhm, die beste zu sein".

In this second volume (1741) Gottfried Arnold devotes several pages from the chapter 16 to the “atheists”, “naturalists”, “deists” and “latitudinarians”, among which Benedict Spinoza occupies an important place²⁵. In contrast to Spinoza’s reading in the circles of the Halle Pietism and Enlightenment in the first half of the eighteenth century (especially between 1720-1750), which was focused on the refutation of his metaphysical ideas as they are articulated particularly in the *Ethics* (1677), Gottfried Arnold offers here another, completely different perspective on the life and the thinking of the Dutch thinker. He addresses this topic based first on the *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670) and not on the *Ethics* (1677) that however he does not ignore. He mentions the *Ethics* among the works of Spinoza²⁶ and cites it twice²⁷, respectively the propositions 11 from the part I and 4 from the part IV.

That could have to do with the fact that “in the early eighteenth century the *Theological-Political Treatise* continued to be much better known than the *Ethics*. The *Treatise* had been translated into Dutch, French and English, and had provoked innumerable refutations from all over. The *Ethics*, by contrast, existed only in Latin and Dutch, and though the original *Opera Posthuma* could be found in libraries in all parts of Europe, most people with knowledge of the content of *Ethics* had garnered that knowledge from secondary sources, especially Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*”.²⁸

But actually Gottfried Arnold, like many other interpreters until today²⁹, appreciates in special way Spinoza’s exemplary unity of thought and life. Spinoza places the concept of the philosophical way of life, like the Stoics and the Epicureans in antiquity, in the middle of his philosophical considerations³⁰. Michael Czelinski-Uesbeck³¹ showed how exemplary are the input words of Spinoza’s treatise *On the Improvement of the Understanding (Tractatus de intellectus emendatione)* for the putting of his whole thought into the service of a good life: “After experience had taught me all the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile; seeing that

²⁵ Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments biß auf das Jahr Christi 1688*. [1699-1700], bey dieser neuen Auflage an vielen Orten verbessert, und in bequemere Ordnung bgebracht, wie auch mit verschiedenen nützlichen Anmerckungen und einem weitläuffigem Anhang vermehert, Schaffhausen, 1741, Bd. II, 16. Kap. “Von deen Atheisten, wie auch denen so genannten *Naturalisten*, *Deisten* und *Latitudinariis* in diesem *saeculo*”, 209-22; about Spinoza: § 37-§ 45, pp. 219-22.

²⁶ *Ibid*, §37, p. 219.

²⁷ *Ibid*, §39, p. 220.

²⁸ Cook, *Spinoza’s Ethics*, 154.

²⁹ Helmut Seidel, *Spinoza zur Einführung* (Hamburg, 1994), 17: “Seit Sokrates und einigen seiner Schüler (Kyniker) ist die Übereinstimmung von philosophischer Denkweise und existentieller Lebensform nirgends so überzeugend demonstriert worden wie von Spinoza”.

³⁰ Michael Czelinski-Uesbeck, *Der Tugendhafte Atheist. Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Spinoza-Renaissance in Deutschland* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 13.

³¹ *Ibid*.

none of the objects of my fears contained in themselves anything either good or bad, except in so far as the mind is affected by them, I finally resolved to inquire whether there might be some real good having power to communicate itself, which would affect the mind singly, to the exclusion of all else; whether, in fact, there might be anything of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme, and unending happiness”³². Philosophy is for Spinoza, above all, ethics, practical philosophy³³. In a paradoxical way, this unity of thought and life, respectively this practical character of the philosophy is less stressed in Spinoza’s work entitled *Ethics* than in his other treatises (especially in *Tractatus teologico-politicus*, in *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, and in his *Epistles*).

This is the reason because Gottfried Arnold gives more attention to these works of the Dutch philosopher, especially to the *Theological-Political Treatise* and to the *Epistles*, than to Spinoza’s *Ethics*. After he mentions all the works of Spinoza in § 37, the radical Pietist cites on this line the *Theological-Political Treatise* 13 times (3x the Preface; 2x Chapter I – p. 7; 2x Chapter IV – pp. 46, 47, 1x Chapter V – p. 65; 1x Chapter VII – p. 85; 2x Chapter XI – pp. 139, 143; 2x Chapter XV – p. 170 and *fine*), the *Epistles* 8 times (Ep. II; Ep. XIX, 2x Ep. XXI. ad Oldenburgium; Ep. XXIII, Ep. XXIV, Ep. XLIX, Ep. LXXIV) and the *Ethics* only twice (part I, propos. 11 and part IV, propos. 4 – p. 169). Arnold pays the same attention to Spinoza’s *Ethics* as to the *Preface* of Jarrig Jelles to the *Opera posthuma* (1677) that he cites also twice³⁴. He uses the *Ethics* only to show that Spinoza is not an Atheist³⁵. Although the author of the *Ethics* was accused of being an atheist, nobody could prove these allegations. On the contrary Spinoza founded all his principles on the idea of God’s existence and rejected the atheism as a *horrendum facinus*³⁶. On this line Arnold quotes the following text from the demonstration of

³² Benedict de Spinoza, “On the Improvement of the Understanding [Tractatus de intellectus emendatione]”, in *On the Improvement of the Understanding, Ethics and Correspondence*, by Benedict de Spinoza, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006), 1-38, here: p. 1.

³³ Czelinski-Uesbeck: *Der Tugendhafte Atheist*, 13-14.

³⁴ Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §37, footnote i), 220; §44, footnote l), 222.

³⁵ Ibid, §38, 220: “Man hätte von ihm ausgesprengt/ als wolte er ein buch schreiben/ darinne bewiesen würde/ es sey kein Gott/ und deßwegen hätten ihn auch etliche *Theologi*, welche diß geschrey wol selbstn erst erdacht gehabt/ bey der hohen obrigkeit angegeben. (...) Nach seinem tode aber ist er durchgehends als ein *formaler* Atheiste beschrieben und angegeben worden, wie mehr als zu bekannt ist. Nun kan eben niemand einige ausdrückliche worte in seinen schrifften, darinnen er Gottes *existentz* gelegnet hätte, wie die scribenten die seiner sonst nicht schonen freywillig bekennen”.

³⁶ Ibid, §38, p. 220: Vielmehr hat er selbst seine *principia* auf die *existentz* Gottes und dessen vornehmste eigenschafften nach der natürlichen erkänntniß gegründet, wie es seine schrifften deutlich ausweisen, und der *auctor* der *praefation* über seine *opera posthuma* nennet den *atheismus* einen *horrendum facinus*, das keinem weisen mann anstehe, noch bey ihm gefunden werden könne.” See Czelinski-Uesbeck: *Der Tugendhafte Atheist*, 26-27.

the proposition 4 from the part IV of the *Ethics*³⁷: “The power, whereby each particular thing, and consequently man, preserves his being, is the power of God or of Nature (I. xxiv. Coroll.); not in so far as it is infinite, but in so far as it can be explained by the actual human essence (III. Vii).

Thus the power of man, in so far as it is explained through his own actual essence, is a part of the infinite power of God or Nature, in other words, of the essence thereof (I. xxxiv)”³⁸. Arnold insists: the Dutch thinker described God in part I, proposition 11 of the *Ethics* as a “substance, consisting of infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality”³⁹.

But these two quotations from the *Ethics* remain isolated in the economy of his reasoning. The main arguments of Gottfried Arnold against Spinoza’s atheism incrimination have other sources, especially the *Theological-Political Treatise*⁴⁰ and the *Correspondence*. In the Letter XXI [LXXIII] to Oldenburg⁴¹, the German radical Pietist believes he found a proof of Spinoza’s adherence to Christianity. Actually Arnold claimed from the beginning of his short text about the life and the doctrine of the Dutch thinker, that Spinoza was baptized⁴².

³⁷ Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, in *On the Improvement of the Understanding. The Ethics. Correspondence*, by Benedict de Spinoza, trans. from the Latin, with an Introduction by R.H. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955), part IV, propos. 4, p. 193: “It is impossible, that man should not be a part of Nature, or that he should be capable of undergoing no changes, save such as can be understood through his nature only as their adequate cause.”

³⁸ Ibid. See Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §39, p. 220: “Die *potentia* oder kraft, wodurch die einzelen creaturen/ und also auch der mensch/ ihr wesen erhalten/ ist selbst die kraft Gottes oder der natur; nicht zwar so fern diese unendlich ist/ sondern so fern sie durch die würrkliche *essentz* des menschen kan *expliciret* werden/ deßwegen die kraft des menschen/ so fern sie durch sein würrkliches wesen ausgedrucket wird/ ein theil der unendlichen krafft Gottes oder der natur/ das ist/ des wesens ist“.

³⁹ Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, part I, propos. 11, p. 51. Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §39, p. 220: “Wie er denn auch Gott beschreibet als eine *substantz*/ die aus unendlichen *attributis* bestehe/ deren ein jedweddes das ewige und unendliche wesen ausdrücke.”

⁴⁰ Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §40, p. 220: Tractat. Theologico-Polit. C.IV., 46-47.

⁴¹ “Letter XXI [LXXIII] to H. Oldenburg”, in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, vol. II, trans. from the Latin by R.H.M. Elwes (London: G. Bell, 1884), 298-299, here: p. 298: “I say that all things are in God and move, thus agreeing with Paul, and perhaps with all the ancient philosophers of antiquity, though the phraseology may be different”. See Arnold: *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §40, p. 220: “Ich sage mit Paulo/ daß alles in Gott sey/ und in Gott bewegt werde (Act. 17,28) und vielleicht auch mit allen *Philosophis*, obgleich auf eine andere weise.”

⁴² Ibid, §37, p. 219: “Denn er [Benedictus Spinosa] war ein gebohrner Jude, und hatte in seiner jugend aus natürlicher begierde etwas zu wissen, sich gar sehr in den büchern umgesehen, auch seinen Rabbinen so viel händel gemacht daß sie ihn von sich angestossen hatten. Hierauf gab er sich bey den Christen an, und weil denen, welche ihn aufnahmen, der geist der prüffung mangeln mochte, wurde er von ihnen getauft und vor einen Christen gehalten.”

At the beginning of the 18th century this issue was highly controversial⁴³. Spinoza himself speaks depending on the audience in different ways⁴⁴. Arnold does not overlook this problem, but he is concerned to emphasize rather the Pietistic way of life of Spinoza than his adherence to Christianity. This is because the formal adherence to the Church has no importance for Gottfried Arnold as Pietistic Theologian.

Pietism was a spiritual movement which has appeared as reaction to the reduction of the Christianity to a few dogmatic or metaphysical contents without regard for life⁴⁵. The first signs of this movement appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Britain, and later in the Low Countries and Germany. Named "Puritanism"⁴⁶ in the English speaking countries or "Pietism" in the rest of

⁴³ See Czelinski-Uesbeck, *Der Tugendhafte Atheist*, 26-27; 74-75: Chr. Kortholt Sr. [*De tribus impostoribus magnus liber*, Kiloni, 1680, p. 75] affirms already in 1680 that Spinoza became a Christian after his excommunication from the Jewish community. According to Friedrich Kettner [*De Duobus Impostoribus, benedicto Spinosa et Balthasare Bekkero*, Dissertatio Historica, Lipsiae, 1694, p. 4], Spinoza's conversion to Christianity would have followed after his flagellation in the Jewish Synagogue from Amsterdam. *Der Criticus* [*Der gelehrte Criticus über curieuse Dubia und Fragen aus der Kirchen- und Profan-Historie, wie nicht weniger aus der geographie, Philologie, Moralité und Politic. Abgefasset von dem Autore des wohl-informirten Redners*, Gleditsch, Leipzig 1704-1706, p. 1094] takes over this information. Henrich Ludolff Benthem [*P.C. und S. Holländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat*, Hannover 1698, 350ff.] affirms too that Spinoza was a disreputable contemporary although he became Christian. Gottfried Arnold [*Unpartheyischen kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, 1700] does nothing more than to continue this direction. In 1706 Seckendorff still supports that it is obviously that a Jew or a Portuguese in Netherland, who is called B. Spinoza, became Christian. On the contrary Johann Christoph Sturm und Christoph Sand jun., who knew Spinoza personally, and Johannes Colerus in 1705 [first engl. edition: John Colerus, minister of the Lutheran Church at the Hague: *The Life of Benedict de Spinosa*, done out of French, London, 1706] contradict this information. According to Johann Wolfgang Jäger [*De Bened. Spinozae vita et doctrina*, Dissertatio, 1710, p. 32], Spinoza "was neither Jew nor Christian". Sigismund Hosmann [*Das schwer zu bekehrende Juden-Hertz. Nebst einigen Vorbereitungs-mitteln zu der Juden Bekehrung*, Zelle, 1699, p. 166] emphasize that the most important atheists and naturalists who fight against the Christian faith are Jews, for example: B. Spinoza. In principle, they who doubt Spinoza's adherence to Christianity are either people who knew Spinoza personally or suspicious theologians regarding Spinoza and the Jews.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁵ See Martin H. Jung, *Pietismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 8; Picu Ocoleanu: *Sophia Parthenos. Etica sofianică a vieții contemplative în pietismul german și în sofologia ortodoxă rusă* (Craiova: Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, 2014), 10.

⁴⁶ Andrew Cooper Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 19: "Beginning of the sixteenth century a systematic attempt was made on the part of the educated classes of Europe, and in particular the clergy, to reform or change the attitudes and values of the rest of the population. Protestant and Catholic reformers endeavored to spread their religious ideas and practices among the lower classes, and in the process they attempted to suppress many aspects of traditional popular culture. Peter Burke has suggested that these religious reformers can be seen as "puritans" because they sought to purify the beliefs of the lower classes from popular superstitions and pagan survivals. This clerical campaign against popular culture made swiftest progress in urban areas and in Protestant regions of Europe, although Catholic areas also affected, if somewhat later."

Europe, this movement overcame the confessional boundaries and emphasized how important leading a really Christian way of life actually is. This is the reason why Gottfried Arnold retains especially Spinoza's ascetic endeavors⁴⁷ and his inclination to lead a quiet life. Arnold mentions on this line the retreat of Spinoza among the Rijnsburg Collegiants, a kind of Dutch Pietists, who lead a quiet philosophical life and the rejection of the call at the University of Heidelberg. Both of them correspond to the Pietistic ideal of life for which he pleads. In the same Pietistic logic, Arnold records with satisfaction the negative reaction of Spinoza to the Scholastic and Aristotelian theology which he considers a form of alienation and an abuse against the word of God⁴⁸. According to Spinoza, the consequence of this alienation is the rift between discourse and practical life. Thereby Spinoza meets again the Pietism in its main theological topic⁴⁹.

Arnold concludes regarding the issue of the supposed Spinoza's atheism: Christianity has nothing to do with an intellectual confession of faith, but with a way of life ("lebensart"), with a "praxis"⁵⁰. From this point of view, Gottfried Arnold suggests that Spinoza's life and thinking correspond completely to the Pietistic (i.e. authentic Christian) life ideal.

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §37, p. 219: "Er soll daselbsten auf seine dinge so gar erpicht gewesen seyn, daß er kaum in einem viertaljahr einmal vor die thür heraus gekommen".

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, §40-§41, p. 220: "Wenn wir aber ferner nach seinem begriff von der Christlichen religion fragen, so finden wir, daß er sich an *scholastischen* und *Aristotelischen theologie* am meisten geärgert, und darüber ohne zweiffel auf seine eigene meynungen gerathen sey.

Er schreibet von denen *Theologis* unter andern also: "Ich bekenne, daß sie sich über die tiefen geheimnisse der schrift verwundert haben: jedoch sehe ich, daß sie nichts als *Aristotelische* und *Platonische speculationes* vorgetragen, darauff sie die schrift *appliciret*, damit es nicht schiene, als folgten sie den Heyden nach. Es ist ihnen nicht gnug gewesen, der Griechen ihrer thorheit zu folgen, sondern sie haben auch die Propheten nach derselben *accomodiret*, woraus man siehet, daß sie die göttlichkeit der schrift niemals recht erkannt, und je mehr sie sich über die geheimnisse verwundern, e mehr weisen sie, daß sie nicht so wol der schrift glauben, als nur schmeicheln". s) Allein über der betrachtung dieses mißbrauchs der heiligen schrift, ist er hingegen auf das andere *extremum* verfallen".

⁴⁹ Martin Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe und Spinoza. Studien zur geschichte des Spinozismus in der Epoche des Sturms und Drangs*, Studien zur deutschen Literatur, hg. Richard Brinkmann, Friedrich Sengle und Klaus Ziegler, Bd. 18 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), 55-56. Bollacher highlights the common points between Spinoza and Arnold. The most important among these is the necessity of an agreement between the doctrine and the practical life.

⁵⁰ Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §45, p. 222: "Ein verständiger leser wird nach untersuchung dieser angeführten historien wohl von selbst ernstlich wünschen, daß diejenigen grossen ärgernisse aus der Christenheit abgethan werden möchten, woraus so wohl alle ruchlosigkeit als der *atheismus* selbst bey den leuten entstehet; nemlich die verkehrte lehre und *praxis* bey so vielen, die sich lehrer, und zwar rechtgläubige zu seyn unterwinden, und dann die ungerechtigkeit bey allen andern lebens=arten."

3. Spinoza's Metaphysics as Sophiology. Gottfried Arnold's Interpretation of the alleged Panteism of Benedict Spinoza

The main suspicion against Spinoza's thinking regards at the beginning of the eighteenth century his "acosmism", namely the identification between God and the nature and its determinist and fatalist consequences in the practical life. Joachim Lange and his Pietistic companions in Halle but representatives of the Enlightenment like Christian Wolff focused their polemic against Spinoza on his pantheist metaphysics too. Their Spinoza's reading starts at the *Ethics* and is limited to its metaphysical parts.

On the contrary, Gottfried Arnold proposes a Spinoza's reading beginning at his practical philosophy, namely at the unity between thinking and life that he requests above all. Nevertheless, the question concerning the alleged pantheism of the Dutch philosopher remains open. Arnold provides an original answer to this question which opposes to the Spinoza's interpretation of the Pietistic mainstream.

Based on the rational method of the mathematics, Spinoza aimed to show that God is a single substance and all the things are contained in him. But according to the German radical Pietist this does not necessary mean that Spinoza is an "acosmist" or a "Pantheist". Following Jarring Jelles's ideas from the preface to the *Ethics* printed in *Opera posthuma* and translated later into the German by J.L. Schmidt, Gottfried Arnold argues that Spinoza and the Disciples of Christ, Apostle Paul and Apostle John, agree completely in the doctrine about God⁵¹. Like Jelles, he "juxtaposed Spinoza's statements with quotations from the Acts (17:28) which have it that «in him [God] we live, and move, and have our being»" and "emphasized the unselfish love of God and neighbor constituted the ethical ideal of both Spinoza and John the Evangelist"⁵².

Thus Arnold interprets the Spinoza's identification between God and the nature not in an acosmist/pantheistic sense but as sophiology. Spinoza himself confessed to H. Oldenburg that he understands the identification between God and the nature in the sense of Apostle Paul (Acts 17,28): "I say that all things are

⁵¹ Ibid., §39, p. 220: "Anderswo saget er: Ich halte Gott vor die *causam* aller dinge/ aber *immanentem* nicht *transeuntem*. Ich sage mit Paulo/ daß alles in Gott sey/ und in Gott bewegt werde (Act. 17, 28) und vielleicht auch mit allen *Philosophis*, obgleich auf eine andere weise."

⁵²Honorata Jakuszko, "The Spinoza Inspiration in the Late German Enlightenment (Spätaufklärung)", *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric*, 15, 28 (2009): 173-88; here: 175-176. H. Jakuszko cites here the following titles: H. Timm, *Gott und Freiheit. Studien zur Religionsphilosophie der Goethezeit, Die Spinozarenaissance*, (Frankfurt am Main), pp. 162-163; on the spiritual affinity between Spinoza and Paul the Apostle: J.Ch. Edelmann, "Abgenötigtes jedoch Andern nicht wieder aufgenötigtes Glaubens-Bekenntnis", in *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, by W. Barnikol (Jena, 1927), 167-168 (the quoted text was authored in 1745); on the affinity between Spinoza and John the Apostle: G. Herder, "Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele (1778)", in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. B. Suphan, Bd. VIII (Berlin, 1877), 202.

in God and move, thus agreeing with Paul, and perhaps with all the ancient philosophers of antiquity, though the phraseology may be different"⁵³. That means that all the things in nature are actually included in the mind of God as divine concepts, ideas and decrees⁵⁴, respectively that everything in nature brings with itself a divine concept (*einen begriff von Gott*) according to the mode of every being and its perfection⁵⁵. The knowledge of nature leads therefore to the knowledge of God. This is the reason why this knowledge of nature is not an exterior, a physical knowledge (*äusserliche erkenntniß*), but a kind of inspiration, of contemplation, of God's revelation in our souls⁵⁶.

Arnold's interpretation of the unity between God and nature in Spinoza's thinking has nothing to do with their Pantheist identification. The nature (or rather: the logic of the nature) is contained in God, in the collector of all the divine meanings (*rationes divinae*) that God himself contemplates. This is actually the wisdom of God (*die weisheit Gottes*⁵⁷), *Sophia*, about which Spinoza says, it has taken in Christ human nature. "The Eternal Son of God, that is the Eternal Wisdom of God (...) has manifested itself in all things and especially in the human mind, and above all in Christ Jesus" affirms Spinoza in Letter XXI [LXXIII] to H. Oldenburg⁵⁸.

⁵³ See note 41 in this text.

⁵⁴ Arnold: *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, §39, p. 220: "In diesem göttlichen wesen, sagt er nun, wären die creaturen als göttliche *conceptus, ideen und decreta*, deren würckung selbst das wesen aller dinge mit seye, die in Gott enthalten wären, und was er mehr vor solgereyen aus dieser meynung ziehet."

⁵⁵ Arnold quotes here a text from the *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter IV. Ibid., §39, p. 220: "Er ziehet aber aus dieser meynung, daß Gott die natur selbst sey, und daß alles aus ihm und zu ihm geschaffen, unter andern folgendes heraus: «Weil ohne Gott nichts weder seyn noch begriffen werden kan, so ists gewiß, daß alles, was in der natur ist, einen begriff von Gott nach der art eines jeden wesens und seiner vollkommenheit mit sich bringe, und ausdrücke, und daß wir dahero eine desto grössere und vollkommener erkänntniß Gottes erlangen, je mehr wir die natürlichen dinge erkennen» q) [*Tractat. Theologico-Polit. C.IV.*, p. 47]."

⁵⁶ Ibid, §40, p. 220: "Dabey will er beweisen, daß er nicht auf dieser äusserlichen erkänntniß Gottes eben stehen blieben, sondern redet wider die fleischlichen menschen, "die deswegen die erkänntniß und liebe Gottes vor nichtig hielten, weil sie an diesem höchsten gut nichts finden, daß sie greiffen oder essen, oder damit sie sonst ihr fleisch belustigen könnten. Hingegen schreibt er, dieses *dictire* die *idea* oder der begriff von Gott in der seelen, daß Gott unser höchstes gut sey/ oder daß die erkänntniß und liebe Gottes der letzte zweck sey/ dahin alle unsere verrichtungen zielen sollen. Und wer da wise, daß er nichts edlers als seinen verstand habe, der werde dieses vor mehr als zu *solid* halten. r) [*Tractat. Theologico-Polit. C.IV.*, p. 46]."

⁵⁷ Ibid, §43, p. 221 (quotation of *Tract. Theol. Polit. C.I.*, p. 7).

⁵⁸ "Letter XXI [LXXIII] to H. Oldenburg", in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, vol. II, 299. Arnold quotes this letter too (§43, p. 221): "Ohne den ewigen Sohn Gottes, das ist, ohne die ewige weisheit Gottes, die sich in allen dingen, und sonderlich in dem menschlichen gemüth, am allermeisten aber in Christo Jesu offenbahret hat, kan niemand zum stande der seligkeit kommen, als welche allein lehret, was wahr oder falsch, böse oder gut sey". f) [*Epist. XXI*].

When referring expressly to the texts of the Dutch thinker, where he talks about the Wisdom of God, Arnold suggests a sophiological understanding of Spinoza's doctrine about the unity between God and nature. In the same year of the appearance of the second volume of the *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie* (1700), he published the sophiological treatise *Das Geheimniss de Göttlichen Sophia oder Weißheit/ Beschrieben und Besungen von Gottfried Arnold* (Leipzig, 1700). The Biography of the German radical Pietist goes in this time a sophiological period through: he reflects about Sophia and lives according to the ascetic principles of Sophia⁵⁹. This is the reason why Gottfried Arnold recognizes in Spinoza's metaphysical reflections rather a kind of sophiology than an "acosmism" or Pantheism.

Of course, compared to the sophiological doctrine of Jacob Böhme or to Arnold's own very complex sophiological reflections, Spinoza offers only a few considerations about the Wisdom of God. For example, he does not receive the unusual doctrine of Böhme⁶⁰ about Sophia as the fourth hypostasis of the Holy Trinity. For him, as for the Fathers of the Church in antiquity, the Wisdom of God is actually the Son of God. But the logic is the same: the ideas of the things are collected in the Wisdom of God and thereby all the beings exist and move in God.

Gottfried Arnold does not develop enough his considerations about Spinoza's metaphysics as sophiology, but suggests that this is the key of its understanding. The completions about this topic at the end of the second volume of *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie* (ed. 1741)⁶¹, which are due to Johann Friedrich Cotta (1701-1779), do nothing other than to contradict Spinoza's original interpretation by Gottfried Arnold in the name of his usual reading imposed by the bizarre philosophical tandem Joachim Lange-Christian Wolff.

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⁵⁹ See Ocoleanu, *Sophia Parthenos*, 121-27; 138-45.

⁶⁰ See Jacob Böhme, *De triplici vita hominis, oder vom Dreyfachen leben des Menschen*, ed. Amsterdam, 1682, V, 9-81, pp. 73-86.

⁶¹ Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, Num. XXIII. Von *Benedicto Spinoza*. Zum II. Th. XVII. Buch, XVI. Cap. § 36-45, pp. 1152-1154.

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