Blackwell Companions to Philosophy

A Companion to Spinoza

Edited by

YITZHAK Y. MELAMED

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A Companion to Spinoza

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List of Abbreviations

Descartes's Works

AT	Adam and Tannery (eds.), *Oeuvres de Descartes*
CSM	Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch (ed. and trans.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (third volume edited by A. Kenny also)

Hobbes' Works

EL	*Elements of Law*
DC	*De Cive* (cited by chapter and paragraph)
L	*Leviathan* (cited by chapter, page and line number in Malcolm's edition)
DCo	*De Corpore* (cited by part, chapter, paragraph)

Spinoza's Works

CM	*Cogitata Metaphysica* (an appendix to Spinoza's DPP)
DPP	*Renati des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae Pars I and II*| Descartes's Principles of Philosophy)
Ep.	*Epistolae*| Letters
G	*Spinoza Opera,* edited by Carl Gebhardt. 4 vols, 1925.
KV	*Korte Verhandeling van God de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand*| Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being)
TIE	*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*| Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect
E	*Ethica*| Ethics
TTP	*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*| *Theological Political Treatise*
CGH	*Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae*| Compendium of Hebrew Grammar
NS	*Nagelate Shriften* (1677 Dutch edition of Spinoza's Works)
Vat	*The Vatican Manuscript of Spinoza's Ethics,* edited by Leen Spruit and Pina Totaro, Leiden, NL: Brill, 2011.
E PUF	*Spinoza Oeuvres IV: Ethica*. Texte établi par Fokke Akkerman et Piet Steenbakkers. Traduction par Pierre-François Moreau. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2020.

Passages in Spinoza's *Ethics* are referred to by means of the following abbreviations: a-(xiom), c-(orollary), e-(xplanation), l-(emma), p-(roposition), pref- (ace), s-(cholium), and app-(endix); "d" stands for either "definition" (when it appears immediately to the right of the part of the book) or "demonstration" (in all other cases). The five parts of the Ethics are cited by Arabic numerals. Thus "E1d3" stands for the third definition of Part 1 and "E1p16d" for the demonstration of proposition 16 of Part 1. Passages from DPP are cited using the same system of abbreviations used for the *Ethics*.

References to Spinoza's original Latin and Dutch texts rely on the pagination of *Spinoza Opera* (ed. Carl Gebhardt, 1925) and follow this format: volume number/ page number/ line number. Hence "II/200/12" stands for volume 2, page 200, line 12.

Passages from Adam and Tannery (eds.), *Oeuvres de Descartes*, are cited by volume and page number. Thus "AT VII 23" stands for page 23 of volume 7 of this edition.

Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a substantial surge of interest in Spinoza's philosophy, first in France and in Europe more generally, and then, toward the end of the century, in North America as well. At present, Spinoza's philosophical legacy seems remarkably full of promise in comparison with other major figures in the history of philosophy, and it is part of the aim of this *Companion* to exhibit the vitality, versatility, and vision of scholarly attention devoted to Spinoza in recent years.

As this volume is about to go to press, we read about the just street protest targeting statues of Enlightenment philosophers such as Hume and Kant due to their disturbing racial prejudices. Spinoza, too, was not wholly immune to such prejudice, whether as expressed in his lazy inference that since women are subjugated everywhere, this must be due to their nature (TP 11| III/360/14) – a claim one could expect from many philosophers, but not from one who relishes challenging commonly-accepted-yet-poorly-justified 'truisms' – or his occasional rehashing of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim stereotypes. Still, I believe, it would be fair to say that in comparison with his contemporaries, Spinoza's views on politics and human equality are far more decent and far less naïve. Indeed, in many ways, his progressive realism is more morally and politically respectable than prevailing attitudes of our time.

The past three centuries have exhibited a wide plurality of different Spinozisms. While Spinoza has been celebrated as a paragon or precursor of a great variety of political stances, none (so far) has been of the monstrous kind. Is it a mere coincidence that the Nazi Kantianism fostered during the Third Reich, has no Spinozist twin? I would like to be able to answer the last question with a solid "no," but such an answer might be premature, and the question better be left hanging in the air.

The invitation to edit this volume came almost five years ago. At the time, I asked the Blackwell editors to postpone this project by a few years, in order to create a healthy distance between this volume and the *Oxford Handbook of Spinoza* which came out in 2017. During this long period – about as long as three elephant pregnancies – I have worked with several Blackwell editors: Charlie Hamlyn, Marissa Koors, Rachel Greenberg, Manish Luthra, and Mohan Jayachandran, and I would like to thank each and every one of them for their trust, care, and support.

There are several substantial editorial decisions I wish to explain here briefly. To facilitate diversity (of gender, geography, philosophical tradition, and stage of career development), I have decided to commission a larger number of chapters. This decision has also allowed the *Companion* to cover topics which are rarely addressed in similar publications. Yet, insofar as the length of the entire *Companion* had to be restricted within certain reasonable limits, most of the chapters had to be concise. Moreover, in order to recruit top

scholars – who are frequently not tempted to write mere summaries and textbook entries – I invited contributors to use their chapters to develop new ideas and cutting-edge research, rather than merely summarize existing scholarship. Thus, the contributors were placed – by me – in an uneasy and challenging situation: they were asked to provide a brief overview of their subject matter while presenting serious, original scholarship, all in a rather short space. While I do not wish to break the Talmudic rule that a "baker may not attest to the quality of his own loaf," my personal feeling is that this challenge has been met even better than I could have hoped, and I would like to thank my collaborators in this volume for their immense investment, talent, and intellectual generosity.

In January 2020, the Maimonides Center at Hamburg University hosted a workshop in which a small group of the papers in this volume were presented, and I would like to thank the center and its co-director, my friend, Stephan Schmid for this generous initiative. Finally, I wish to thank Jonathan Arking, Rosemary Morlin, and Shyamala Venkateswaran, for their outstanding assistance in the copyediting and production of this Companion.

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Part I

Life and Background

1

Spinoza's Life

PIET STEENBAKKERS

Apart from his works Spinoza did not leave many traces. Though certainly not a recluse, he led an inconspicuous life. Some periods in it are hardly documented, so that any biography of the philosopher must to some extent be lacunary. The following account of his life is as coherent as the historical material and the format of this *Companion* permit. This chapter is an extract from a substantially longer, footnoted version that will appear in Garrett (2021), to which I refer for corroboration of the details presented here. My work on Spinoza's biography has profited greatly from a standing collaboration with Jeroen van de Ven, who is preparing a detailed chronicle of the philosopher's life.

1. Family

Spinoza was born in Amsterdam in 1632. He died in The Hague in 1677. As far as we know he never left the Dutch Republic. His mother was born in Amsterdam, but his father and his grandparents on both sides were from Portugal. From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, many Sephardic Jews came to Amsterdam to escape from the persecution they suffered in Spain and Portugal. Medieval Iberia (*Sepharad* in Hebrew) had been ruled by Muslims for a very long time, and though it was not free from oppression, it had allowed Jews to profess their religion. After nearly nine centuries, however, the situation changed dramatically: in 1492 Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile (known as *los Reyes Católicos*) conquered Spain, and immediately expelled the Jews. Most of them went to Portugal, but in 1497 the Portuguese king Manuel I married the daughter of the Spanish 'Catholic Monarchs.' On their insistence, he forced all Jews to convert to Christianity. Those who continued to practice Judaism were, however, not actively persecuted until half a century later. Then many *conversos* (or 'New Christians'), who were indiscriminately suspected of Judaizing in secret, fled Portugal to escape the Portuguese Inquisition. In 1580 Spain and Portugal were politically united under Philip II of Spain, and in the decades that followed many Jews sought refuge abroad, often in seaports – so as to stay in touch with their network of overseas merchants. Thus they came to French harbor towns (Bordeaux, Nantes, Rouen) and to Antwerp and Amsterdam in the Low

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Countries. Many Sephardi immigrants settled on Vlooienburg, an embankment in the river Amstel created in 1593 as part of the urban expansion of Amsterdam.

Michael de Spinoza, the philosopher's father, was born in 1587 or 1588 in Vidigueira, Portugal. In 1605 his parents, Pedro Rodrigues Espinosa and Mor Alvares, fled to Nantes with their three children. Michael moved to Amsterdam in the early 1620s. Around 1623 he married Rachel de Spinoza, a first cousin. They had two children, both stillborn. Rachel died in 1627. Michael then married Hana Deborah Senior, with whom he had five children: Miriam, Isaac, Bento (or Baruch), Gabriel, and Rebecca. Michael and Hana Deborah named their third child Baruch, after his maternal grandfather (who officially received that name only when he was circumcised after his death in 1647). As a child he was called Bento, the Portuguese translation of Baruch ('blessed'). The philosopher himself seems not to have used the Hebrew version of his name: he signed legal documents as 'Bento,' letters as 'Benedictus,' or just the initial 'B.' Just before Bento turned six, on 5 November 1638, his mother died. Michael's third and last marriage, with Hester de Spinoza, remained childless.

Spinoza's family lived on the edge of Vlooienburgh. The house in which Bento was born and raised, a handsome merchant's residence on the north quay of the Houtgracht, close to the old Amsterdam synagogue, was pulled down in the nineteenth century. On its premises the *Mozes en Aäronkerk* was built. The former island of Vlooienburgh has become a square, the *Waterlooplein*. Michael de Spinoza and his family stayed in the same house for decades, so Bento lived there from his birth on 24 November 1632 up to at least 1656, when he was expelled from the Portuguese-Jewish community of Amsterdam.

2. The Amsterdam Years (1632–ca. 1660)

As a child Spinoza attended 'Ets Haim', a nearby *cheder* (elementary school). He received a solid Jewish education, though he did not attend the school's highest forms. He was never trained to become a rabbi, but joined his father's trading firm in his early teens. Michael de Spinoza was a respected and active member of the Jewish community in Amsterdam. He imported and exported commodities such as raisins, almonds, wine, and olive oil. Bento's stepmother Hester died in 1652, and his father Michael in 1654. Isaac had died in 1649, Miriam in 1651, and Rebecca moved out in 1650, so after 1654 the two brothers Gabriel and Bento were the only remaining family members still living in the parental home on the Houtgracht. They took over their father's firm, but it soon became clear that it was weighed down with debts as a result of severe losses in the years 1651–1653, owing to piracy and war. In order to escape bankruptcy, Bento, then 23 years of age, had himself declared a minor under Dutch law and placed under tutelage on 16 March 1656. By this maneuver he was released from the insolvent estate. Apparently Gabriel managed to continue the company on his own until October 1664: he then granted power of attorney to the merchant brothers Moses and David Juda Lion, and set off to Barbados.

On 27 July 1656, just a few months after Spinoza's spectacular legal escape from the family business, he was ritually expelled from the Amsterdam Jewish community, with a formal ban (*herem*) pronounced in the synagogue of the Talmud Tora congregation. The exact reasons for the ban are not specified in the archival record we have of it – presumably a summary (in Portuguese) of a lost official text in Hebrew. It states that the synagogue's board of governors (the *Mahamad*) expelled 'Baruch espinoza' because of his evil opinions and activities, and of the horrible heresies he had practiced and taught, as well as the

monstrous acts he had committed. As far as we know, Spinoza had not yet published anything at the time when the *herem* was promulgated. Yet the wording of its record indicates that teaching heretical ideas was among the abominations he was accused of. To all appearances, Spinoza's philosophy was already gestating in the middle of the 1650s, in some form or another. As the earliest letters show, he had acquired a reputation as a redoubtable philosopher by 1661. He obviously flourished in the heterodox circles in which he moved in the latter half of the 1650s. Unfortunately, this formative period in Spinoza's life is very poorly documented. That his philosophical views had something to do with the heresies imputed to him is also asserted in testimonies of two Spanish travelers who had associated with Spinoza in Amsterdam in 1658–1659. Tomás Solano, an Augustinian monk from Tunja (in Colombia, then part of the Spanish empire) and Captain Miguel Pérez de Maltranilla were part of a group that frequently gathered in the residence of Joseph Guerra, a nobleman from the Canary Islands, who was in Amsterdam to be cured of leprosy. Spinoza and another excommunicated Jew, Juan de Prado, often attended these gatherings. In August 1659, Solano and Pérez de Maltranilla were interrogated by the Spanish Inquisition in Madrid, primarily about a Spanish actor who had converted to Judaism in Amsterdam. They also told the Inquisition about their meetings with Spinoza and Prado; according to them these men had been expelled from the Jewish community because of their rejection of Jewish law. Solano in addition mentioned their views that the soul is mortal and that God exists only philosophically.

It would have been possible for Spinoza to be readmitted to the community, if he had made amends. That was a price he did not want to pay. Spinoza accepted the *herem* as a fact: for him, the break with Judaism was definitive. He never joined another religious denomination either. There are some indications that he reacted to the ban with a written statement, a vindication of his dissent from Judaism. If that is true, it is tempting to assume that part of it may have found its way into his works, particularly the *Theological-Political Treatise*.

The five years after Spinoza's excommunication from the synagogue are shrouded in haze. All contacts with relatives (including his brother and business partner Gabriel) and Jewish acquaintances were severed. It is unlikely that he could have continued to live in the parental home on the Houtgracht with Gabriel. Just what he did in Amsterdam after 1656 and where he lived is a mystery. We know that he associated with freethinking Christians and apostate Jews. He had already befriended Jarig Jelles, Pieter Balling, and Simon Joosten de Vries – Mennonite merchants he had met while still in business. He became acquainted with his future publisher Jan Rieuwertsz, and with Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker, the professional translator who was to translate most of Spinoza's works. At the age of 25, in 1657–1658, Spinoza attended the private Latin school run by the former Jesuit Franciscus van den Enden. The story that he fell in love with the teacher's daughter Clara Maria (then 15 years old) has been eagerly exploited in biographical accounts and (more appropriately) in works of art and fiction about the philosopher, but it has an air of romanticized hearsay about it.

In the period between 1656 and 1661, Spinoza was setting out on a new course. One gets the impression that he left Vlooienburgh after the *herem* and found temporary accommodation with various friends. Thus, he may have lived as a boarder in Van den Enden's school. His talents burgeoned. By the time he moved to Rijnsburg, Spinoza had gained renown as a philosopher, had mastered the art of grinding lenses, and was proficient in Latin, the international language of scholarly and scientific communication. The genesis of his early works, the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect* and the *Short Treatise*

of God, Man and his Well-Being, can be dated from the years before 1662. If the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect* is indeed, as present-day scholarship is inclined to assume, the earliest of his extant works, it is likely to have been written during his last years in Amsterdam. Throughout his life, he entertained thoughts of revising and finishing it, but eventually he never updated the manuscript. When his friends decided to publish it as part of his posthumous works in 1677, they revised and polished the unsophisticated or perhaps even awkward Latin in which this early text was written.

In the remaining years in or around Amsterdam, Spinoza moved in various circles, with the common denominator that they were heterodox and tolerant. Quite a few of the people he associated with in the latter half of the 1650s stayed in touch with him and remained loyal friends. When Simon de Vries died in 1667, he remembered Spinoza in his will, leaving him a yearly pension of 250 guilders. Many of his old friends were actively involved in getting Spinoza's works published: Lodewijk Meyer oversaw the publication of his *Principia philosophiae & Cogitata metaphysica* in 1663, Pieter Balling supplied a Dutch translation in 1664, and Johannes Bouwmeester and Hendrick van Bronckhorst contributed dedicatory poems. Jan Rieuwertsz published all of Spinoza's works, both in Latin and in Dutch. Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker translated the remainder of the Latin texts. In 1677 Jarig Jelles, Bouwmeester, Meyer, and Rieuwertsz took care of Spinoza's philosophical legacy.

Colerus reports that Spinoza did not move directly from Amsterdam to Rijnsburg, but that he first learned how to grind lenses and then moved in with someone who lived outside town, on the road to Ouderkerk. Another early source, Monnikhoff, adds that Spinoza moved to Rijnsburg together with that same person. There is no further evidence to support this information. A persistent legend, relayed by the anonymous (and entirely unreliable) pamphlet *La Vie et l'esprit de Monsieur Benoit de Spinosa*, has it that Spinoza was banished from the city of Amsterdam by its magistrates, at the instigation of the spiteful rabbi Saul Levi Morteira. That story is certainly fictitious. Spinoza had nothing to fear from the city magistrates. Indeed, he returned there several times without any trouble. Another possible reason why Spinoza left Amsterdam is given by Pierre Bayle: allegedly Spinoza was attacked by someone with a knife. If, when, and why this attack took place remains in the dark. Spinoza's friend Jarig Jelles does not refer to it when mentioning his move in the preface to *De nagelate schriften*: "To get rid of all the worldly worries and troubles that commonly hinder the search for truth, and in order to be the less disturbed by all his friends, he left the city where he was born, Amsterdam, and took up residence first in Rijnsburg."

3. Spinoza in Rijnsburg (ca. 1660/61–April 1663)

Why Spinoza chose Rijnsburg, then the center of the Collegiant movement, is a matter of speculation. There are no indications that he himself was actively involved in the meetings ('colleges') of that informal latitudinarian current in Dutch Protestantism, which attracted Arminians, Mennonites, and Socinians. But several of his friends were Collegiants, so that may have played a part. An asset of the village was also that it was within walking distance of the university town of Leiden. Spinoza was in touch with students and professors of the university and he may well have attended lectures there, though concrete evidence that he did so is lacking.

When exactly Spinoza left Amsterdam and settled in Rijnsburg is unknown. One traveler's report of 17 May 1661 mentions atheists in Amsterdam, among them "an impudent Jew"; quite likely a reference to Spinoza. At any rate he had moved to Rijnsburg by July

1661, for in the first extant letter to Spinoza (Ep. 1, 26 August 1661) Henry Oldenburg refers to the visit he had paid him there. Travelers who came to Rijnsburg in September 1661 also mention him as a local celebrity. Spinoza rented a room in a cottage that had been built between 1656 and 1660 by his landlord, the surgeon Herman Homan.

Though he lived in Rijnsburg for just two years, this was a very productive period for Spinoza, in which he laid a firm foundation for his philosophical system. The first exposition of it was the *Short Treatise of God, Man and his Well-Being*. He wrote the *Short Treatise* in Latin, but the work has survived in a contemporary Dutch translation, which was only discovered in the 1850s. From its contents we can infer that the *Short Treatise* was initially intended as an outline of his thought for a small circle of friends. He never finished it. While Spinoza was in the process of revising it, in 1661–1662, he decided to start anew, this time rearranging the material in 'geometrical order': as a tight framework of definitions, axioms, propositions, demonstrations, and scholia. Because the argument is gradually put together, as it proceeds from elementary definitions to a highly complex concatenation of proofs, this type of presentation was traditionally called 'synthesis.' The model was Euclid's *Elements*, the classic geometry textbook. In the Rijnsburg years, Spinoza was experimenting with the synthetic form as a philosophical tool: he employed it in three texts, the (lost) enclosure to letter 6 (April 1662), the first appendix to the *Short Treatise*, and, more audaciously, his didactic précis of *Descartes's Principles of Philosophy, Parts I and II* (written in the winter of 1662–1663). Between May 1662 and January 1663 Spinoza embarked on what was to become the pinnacle of the genre: the *Ethics*. It took him 12 years to complete this unparalleled project. In February 1663, Simon Joosten de Vries wrote Spinoza a letter in which he describes the regular meetings of a group (*collegium*) of friends in Amsterdam to discuss a work by Spinoza. The references and quotations both in De Vries's letter and in Spinoza's reply leave no doubt as to what the friends had at their disposal: an early installment of the *Ethics*, consisting of definitions, axioms, at least 19 propositions, and several scholia.

Another lodger in Homan's house in Rijnsburg, at least for a while, was Johannes Casearius, a student of divinity. Spinoza gave him a private course on part II of Descartes's *Principia philosophiae*, writing a synthetic ('geometric') rundown of the text for the occasion.

4. Spinoza in Voorburg (April 1663–Winter 1669/70)

In April 1663 Spinoza moved to Voorburg, a village near The Hague. He rented rooms in the house of a painter, Daniel Tydeman, in the Kerklaan (now called Kerkstraat). During a visit to Amsterdam he showed his friends the partial adaptation of Descartes's *Principles* he had written for Casearius, with an additional set of remarks on metaphysics (*Metaphysical Thoughts*). They implored him to expand this material for publication. He did so, drawing on the *Principia* and on several other Cartesian texts. The result was edited by Lodewijk Meyer, who touched up Spinoza's Latin and supplied a preface. At the philosopher's own request, Meyer emphasized that the book presented Descartes's views, not Spinoza's. The book came out in Amsterdam in 1663, a Dutch translation (by Pieter Balling) followed in 1664.

Spinoza was well aware that his philosophical project would meet with formidable opposition from zealots. In fact, he had already acquired some notoriety in Voorburg. When his landlord Tydeman became involved in a quarrel in the local Reformed Church, the alleged atheism of his lodger was held against him. The public church was a political factor to reckon

with, and its power was supported by what Spinoza saw as an idolatrous interpretation of the Bible. Thus the authority of God's Word became a pivotal political issue. Rumor had it that Spinoza was the author of a notorious book that came out in 1666, *Philosophy the Interpreter of Scripture* (*Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres*), but it is certain that he did not write it. It did, however, originate in the circle of Spinoza's friends: early on, Meyer had been identified as its author, and it is possible that Johannes Bouwmeester had a hand in it, too. Yet Spinoza's own view of the relationship between philosophy and Scripture, as developed in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, is markedly different from the argument set forth in the *Interpres*.

Spinoza lived in Voorburg for six years. Initially he continued working on the *Ethics*, but between the summer of 1665 and the end of 1669 he was immersed in the composition of his second masterpiece, the *Theological-Political Treatise*. It seems that work on the *Ethics* was temporarily suspended. There was much at stake. In the deteriorating political climate in the Netherlands, it would be difficult for Spinoza to publish his *Ethics*. Writing the *Theological-Political Treatise* became a priority: with this passionate plea for the freedom to philosophize, he took a stand in contemporary debates on religion, philosophy, and politics. He summarized his motives for doing so in a letter to Oldenburg: (1) exposing and repudiating the prejudices of the theologians, (2) rebutting the accusation of atheism, and (3) defending the freedom to philosophize and to say what we think, against the aggression of the preachers (Ep. 30, around 1 October 1665).

The letters Spinoza wrote when he lived in Voorburg testify to the broad range of his interests and activities. Several are related to his work on the *Ethics*. Thus letter 28 (June 1665, to a close friend, possibly Bouwmeester) reveals that by then he had advanced 'up to proposition 80 of part III.' This means that he must have split up the third part later, for in its final shape it has no more than 59 propositions. His exchange with the Amsterdam burgomaster Johannes Hudde (Ep. 34–36) is about God as substance, echoing propositions 8–14 of *Ethics*, I. With other correspondents Spinoza discusses philosophical issues in connection with his book on Descartes's *Principles* and its metaphysical appendix. A peculiar exchange that started from there was with Willem van Blijenbergh, a grain broker from Dordrecht (Ep. 18–24 and 27). The two men discussed a wide range of philosophical topics, without getting any closer to each other: free will, freedom, and necessity, determinism, the origin of evil, moral responsibility, the authority of Holy Writ, and reason and revelation. Letters with other correspondents deal also with scientific and alchemic experiments (Ep. 13, 40, 41), with dioptrics and lens-grinding (Ep. 36, 39–40) and with the calculation of probabilities (Ep. 38). By the way: two anonymous Dutch treatises on the calculation of chances and on the rainbow, published in The Hague in 1687, have been attributed to Spinoza, but erroneously so. It is now certain that their author was a certain Salomon Dierquens. Spinoza did indeed write about the rainbow (as Jelles asserts in the preface to *De nagelate schriften*), but that work is lost.

A dramatic episode took place in 1668–1669. Two brothers, Adriaan and Johannes Koerbagh, who had moved in the circle of Spinoza's Amsterdam acquaintances in the early 1660s, had developed radical views of their own, under his influence. They had met Spinoza several times, though there are no indications that they were very close. In 1668 Adraan was arrested for having attempted to publish a sacrilegious book, *A Light Shining in Dark Places*. When interrogated, he admitted to have visited Spinoza, but denied that he had spoken to him about this book. Adriaan Koerbagh was sentenced to ten years prison, subsequent banishment, and a huge fine. He died of exhaustion in October 1669. We do not know how Spinoza took the news. Neither in his works nor in his letters, as far as they are extant, did he ever refer to Koerbagh's fate.