PART ONE

CENSORING THE ENLIGHTENMENT
SUPPRESS OR REFUTE?
REACTIONS TO SPINOZA IN GERMANY AROUND 1700

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Introductory remark

The issue of censorship, taken strictly, seems to be of little interest if applied to the works of Spinoza in Germany. The reason is that the first book of Spinoza that was published in Germany, i.e. the German translation of the *Ethics*, came out as late as 1744. There was thus no opportunity for censorship of Spinoza's works in Germany during the first ca. 75 years after the publication of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (hereafter TTP.)

If taken in a larger sense, i.e. comprising the reactions of the political authorities towards those books that were thought likely to spread the seeds of Spinozism in Germany, there is much more to say. One can, further, extend that study to the pre-censorship area, i.e. to the learned discourse on how to appropriately react to the flux of dangerous ideas (mainly those of Spinoza) coming into Germany from outside, especially from suspicious 'Belgium', i.e. the Netherlands. This is a kind of public discourse on what the state should do—and it opens up a still larger field of study.

I will therefore deal with three topics:

a) The debate in theology and philosophy on how to appropriately react to dangerous ideas from abroad, especially those of Spinoza, starting immediately after the publication of the TTP in 1670.

b) The State reactions to the publication of those books which were held to contain Spinozism or at least Spinozistic ideas. I will consider as examples the two authors who, for a long time in the German history of ideas, were held to be the first 'German Spinozists', i.e. Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch and Theodor Ludwig Lau.

c) The circumstances and the publishing strategy of the first book of Spinoza published in Germany, the German translation of the *Ethics* by Johann Lorenz Schmidt in 1744. This will be dealt with in the last section.