Anyone who has ever taken a college philosophy class should remember the Enlightenment distinction between the empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) and the rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz). To the empiricists, all knowledge is \textit{a posteriori}; to the rationalists, \textit{a priori}. To the empiricists, we are born a blank slate and all knowledge results from sensory impressions; to the rationalists, true knowledge exists in the mind and sensory impressions only serve to lead us to error.

While this seems an easy way to draw a distinction between some thinkers, it remains incomplete. It remains content to blur distinctions between certain thinkers, distinctions that, in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, were the most important distinctions, distinctions that meant a thinker could publicly produce books and treatises or had to remain anonymous, clandestinely distributing texts and manuscripts in order to elude the ever-watchful eye of the hegemonic church. Such was the plight of the radicals, and Spinoza stands as the engine of such radical thinking. Any and all books that influenced or endorsed Spinoza’s philosophy or sought to spread its influence were hunted and the writers (most often anonymous) punished if found.

In 2001 Jonathan Israel published \textit{Radical Enlightenment} (Oxford University Press). In it, he navigates the treacherous world of the radical thinkers, those who refused to moderate their beliefs to appease the threats of the church anxious to maintain power and flex its political muscles. It is that book that I used as my primary reference in gathering together books that stood firm against (or within) those ecclesiastical forces of superstition. Of course, given the nature of rare books, this collection is mostly incomplete, but as a whole embodies much of the spirit of the late 17\textsuperscript{th} and early 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

-jeff@eternalreturnbookshop.com
“The most ubiquitous and influential of the clandestine philosophical manuscripts”

1. [ANON] M. LeComte de Boulainviller. *L’Esprit de B. Spinoza* par M. LeComte de Boulainviller (The Spirit of Spinoza, a.k.a. *Traité des trois imposteurs*), [no publisher or date, most likely 1730]. TP + 3 - 265 + 267 – 269 = Table + 1 blank leaf. 4to. **Original Manuscript Copy.**

SOLD

The publication history of this book has become something of a cottage industry for Enlightenment bibliographers. The authorship has been variously attributed to Lucas, Faint-Glain, Boulainvilliers, Levier, Vroesen, Aymon and even to Baron d’Holbach. Because of its heretical and blasphemous content (Israel in *Radical Enlightenment* says on p. 695 that it “surpasses infinitely in atheistical profanity even those works of Spinoza which are regarded as the most pernicious”), this text was long an underground affair, never officially published, showing up in slightly different hand-written versions and frequently seen incorporated with other texts. Its history is still confused by the fact that everyone involved with this work was so secretive – an understandable position to take given the harsh penalties, including death, that could result from being associated with this text in any way.

The treatise was supposed to present religion as a political instrument of enslavement of the people and is thus a direct assault on the three great monotheistic religions, challenging the integrity of their founding figures: Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The treatise draws on the work of Spinoza and other materialists of the radical enlightenment, claiming that these religions lack any substance whatsoever and owe...
their success in the world to the fear that underlies all of their basic assumptions and pronouncements. In contradistinction to these three frauds, the text claims Nature as the only god that is acting within the world.

**CONDITION:** Very good or better. 18th century full-leather binding decorated and lettered in gilt along spine. Hinges and edges worn with spotting to boards. All handwritten in beautiful script. Last 2 blanks with scattered notes. A lovely copy of this extraordinarily important text of the Radical Enlightenment.

### Witchcraft Attacked, Spirits Refuted & the Devil Denied with the rare 1691 Portrait of the Author and All Four of His Certifying Signatures

2. **BEKKER, Balthasar**, *De betoverde Weereld, zynde een grondig ondersoek van ’t gemeen gevoelen aangaande de GEESTEN, derselver Aart en Vermogen, Bewind en Bedryf: als ook ’t gene de Menschen door derselver kracht en gemeenschap doen. vier Boeken ondernomen.* (The Bewitched World, or, an Examination of the Errors in the Common or Vulgar Opinions Concerning SPIRITS: Their Nature, Power, Administration and Operations. and also the Effects Men are able to produce by their Communication with Good or Evil Spirits.). Daniel van den Dalen, Amsterdam, 1691-1693. Four books in one volume: 2 blank leaves + 1 leaf with engraved portrait of Bekker on verso + [i] = *Verklaaringe van’t Sinnebeeld* + TP to Book 1 [1691] + half title with *Bericht* on verso [signed by Bekker] + [i]-[xii] = *Voorrede* + 1-136 + TP to Book 2 [1691] with *Bericht* on verso [signed by Bekker] + [i]-[vi] = *Voorrede* + 1-246 + [247]-[248] = *Nader Bericht* + TP to Book 3 [1693] + [i]-[vi] = *Aan den bescheidenen Leser* (To the Modest Reader) (signed by Bekker on page [vi]) + 1-32 = *Naakte Uitbeeldinge* (Naked Portrayal of the Complete Content of the Four Books, the Intention of the Author, and his Policy therein) +1-188+[189]-[190]=*Register der Hoofdstukken* + TP to Book 4 [1693] + [i]-[iv] = *Aan den Leser* (signed by Bekker on page [iv]) + 1-224 + (217)-(224) + (217)-(224) + 225-277 + [278]-[279] = *Register der Hooft-stukken* + [280] = *Register* [Publisher’s list] + 2 blank leaves; Quarto. **First Edition.** (Van der Linde, 16, 17, 19, 20; Coumont, B40.2)

$3,500
With the rare, engraved 1691 portrait of Balthasar Bekker created by Johannes Hilarides (1648-1725) entitled "Monothe-ist."

*De betoverde Weereld* is one of the most important texts of what Jonathan Israel terms the ‘Radical’ Enlightenment. It caused a furor when it was first published in Holland and the firestorm quickly spread to Germany, France, and England – where the book was translated and published within three years of its original appearance in Dutch.
Bekker was a Reformed pastor who had caught the infectious disease of ‘philosophizing’ after the manner of Descartes and Spinoza – which, more than anything else, meant the freedom to reconsider received doctrine in the light of reason. Bekker previously had encountered difficulties with two of this earlier published works – an unconventional adult catechism [1670] and a book confounding the prevailing superstitions about comets [1683] – (there had been three spectacular sightings between 1680 and 1682).

But nothing Bekker had previously written prepared the local clergy – or northern Europe – for the book that he published in 1691. Picking up on suggestions originally made by Descartes and Spinoza, *The Bewitched World* argued lucidly and effectively against the popular belief in spirits and the power of the devil over human beings claiming such beliefs are insupportable either by reason or by a careful reading of the Bible.

*The Bewitched World* appeared as four Books – the first two published in 1691 and the final two in 1693. However, the publication of the first two of these books was preempted by a pirate edition in a single-volume octavo edition which Bekker vigorously objected to. He categorically disowned that printing of his book, claiming that the only authorized edition was being published in quarto-sized volumes by Daniel van den Dalen of Amsterdam. In defense of this position, each copy of the books printed by van den Dalen carried an explicit disclaimer page (the *Beright*) which Bekker personally signed to attest to the fact that this individual copy was authorized and approved by him. (NOTE: One bibliographer claims that by the end of 1693, 8,000 copies of *De betoverde Weereld* had been printed by van den Dalen, each containing Four Books with these disclaimers. Bekker, it seems, signed all 32,000 of them!)

**CONDITION:** Very Good in contemporary darkened and speckled vellum binding with a lovely handwritten title on spine. The page opposite the portrait has two chips taken out of the front edge – not affecting type. As noted above, all four books have been hand-signed by Bekker in ink. A lovely authentic and unsophisticated first edition copy of one of the major works of the Radical Enlightenment.

Rare copy of a critique of Holbach. While Buzonierre found much in Holbach’s *Système de la Nature*, he sought to expose what he saw as false reasoning in it.

**CONDITION**: Very Good+ in original floral wrappers. Handwritten title to front wrapper. Lightly chipped with some loss to upper corner of front wrap and top of spine. Pages clean and bright. Important commentary on Holbach’s “Bible of Materialism.”

**Famous Spinozistic novels**

First (only) edition of the two famous Spinozistic *Philopater*-novels. The first volume describes the fight of the protagonist Philopater (very much similar to the author) against the orthodox Calvinism of Voetius and Coccejus, with some references to Spinoza and his followers. Since both the orthodox and the more liberal party in the Dutch Republic were attacked it did not arouse too much protest from the authorities.

In the second volume Spinoza’s ideas are clearly expressed in a more popular way. ‘We find in this book, without any doubt, a rather pure tradition from Spinoza’s most intimate circle of friends on the true meaning of difficult points in his teaching’ (Dunin-Borkowski quoted by Bamberger).

The book was severely prosecuted and in 1698 forbidden by the Court of Holland and the States of Friesland. It brought its publisher - and perhaps co-author - 8 years imprisonment, a fine of 3000 guilders, and 25 years of banishment. *Van der Linde 72 & 73. Wolf 643. Bamberger 85. Knuttel, Verboden boeken 417.*

**CONDITION:** Very good or better in contemporary vellum. Bookplate on front paste-down, annotations on front free endpaper, a few marginal annotations and scattered underlining in red ink on about 20 pages. Beautiful copy of a rare first edition from the Radical Enlightenment.


$1,100

A critical evaluation of biblical prophesies and miracles. “Fontenelle held that the divining and healing of the ancient sanctuaries was wrought, not by sorcery and demonic power, but by the cunning artifice of priests intent on promoting their own authority and that of the rich and powerful, their omens and soothsaying being entirely fraudulent” (Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 360).

**CONDITION:** Very Good in full leather, Spine in gilt. Small chip in upper hinge. Small ex-libris plate to bottom corner of front paste down.
An Important Document for Understanding 18th Century French Censorship and Printing Practices and the Philosophical-Political Climate in 1758


$3,500

"The history of Helvétius’s *De l’esprit*, his first major work, is eventful, complicated and paradoxical. No book during the eighteenth century, except perhaps Rousseau’s *Émile*, evoked such an outcry from the religious and civil authorities or such universal public interest. Condemned as atheistic, materialistic, sacrilegious, immoral and subversive, it enjoyed a remarkable success de scandale. The work lost its privilege within a fortnight of its publication."

The publication history is no less eventful and complicated. There are three distinct “first” editions of the book: called the “A”, “B” and “C” tirages. After carefully orchestrating efforts to mislead and bully the censor into a hasty approval of the text, the “A” tirage, “the first impressions of the original edition, which had begun to leave the presses by the end of June, were kept by Helvétius for his personal friends. But, before the work could be put on sale to the general public, Malesherbes, directeur de la librarie, ordered that publication of the work be suspended indefinitely.” The subversiveness of the book had been discovered and a new censor was introduced into the controversy and changes were made to the text.

At this point, the “cunning” of Helvétius’s publisher, Durand came into play. He “set up a completely new type, modeling it upon the original edition. This type – it can easily be recognized by its different type-setting and by its several new printing errors – was adapted to suit the second censor’s requirements and was used to produce the second edition [the “B” tirage]... Thus, when *De l’esprit* was officially published in Paris on July 27th, 1758, nobody suspected that it was, in fact, a completely new edition.” However, Durand had secretly saved and hidden the original typeset forms.

Everyone, including Helvétius, hoped that the submission to a second censor with the resulting changes and the granting of the new privilege would assure the book a safe
passage but it was not to be. "Within ten days the Queen and the Dauphin complained about the book to the Chancelier... while the Paris Parlement informed Malesherbes of its intention to examine the work...[leading him to order] Durand to suspend the sale of De l'esprit immediately. He confiscated Durand's typeset, doubtless thinking it unique, whereas Durand had, it seems, hidden away the original typeset for just such an eventuality... At least fourteen surreptitious editions appeared in 1758-59, some published semi-clandestinely by Durand, some elsewhere in France, some in Holland possibly by publishers under contract to Durand."

“One of Durand’s surreptitious editions [the "C" tirage] should strictly be called a re-issue of the original edition. Using the typeset which Malesherbes did not know he possessed, and setting up new type to replace the pages which Malesherbes had impounded in the first place, Durand secretly published a re-issue, the text of which was identical with the second edition. Helvétius may well have been a party to this edition since he sent at least one copy of it to a personal friend. Durand seems to have been successful in passing off his clandestine re-issue as the second edition, for there is no record of police measures against him." (quotations from Smith’s article)

Smith lists almost four pages of differences between the text of the “A” tirage and the “B” triage all of which conform to this copy.

Smith supplied an “Appendix II” with a key for collation of “first” editions that cited eleven easily identified places in the three texts (“A”, “B” & “C” tirages) that differ as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section Begins</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>First line</td>
<td>dans</td>
<td>de</td>
<td>mon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Fifth line</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>des</td>
<td>choix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Last line</td>
<td>nécessité de sots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Fourth line up</td>
<td>sans lation &amp; de</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>First line</td>
<td>scrupuleux pé</td>
<td>cupé</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>First line</td>
<td>reux veuglement</td>
<td>bonze</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Fourth line up</td>
<td>assurer ne</td>
<td>prétends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td>Fourteenth line</td>
<td>pourquoi quoi</td>
<td>l'on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>Fourth line</td>
<td>De nir</td>
<td>venir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550</td>
<td>First line of column of note</td>
<td>leure Je</td>
<td>mémoires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>605</td>
<td>Ninth line</td>
<td>la de</td>
<td>leurs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The publication in 1758 of his principal work, De l'esprit was noisily condemned by the authorities, both ecclesiastical and ministerial, for its dangerously heretical and subversive opinions. Suppression of the book signaled a grave – but fortunately temporary – setback for the party of philosophes and Encyclopedists. Despite the recantations that Helvètius was forced to make regarding De l'esprit, he reaffirmed his ideas even more strongly in De L'Homme, de ses facultes intellectuelles, et se son education, published posthumously in 1772.” (EP, Vol. 3, p. 472) Helvètius continued the work of Condillac by reducing all human understanding to sensation or sense-
perception. He then took this reductionist psychology and erected a utilitarian theory of morality based upon it – making him “one of the chief pioneers and promoters of utilitarian moral theory” (Copelston, VI, 1, p. 51). Helvètius was a strong defender of the benefits of education and also extremely political – attacking all forms of despotism and, in particular, French despotism.

CONDITION: Very good or better in a contemporary full calf binding with boards that are just a bit scuffed. The spine with five raised bands and beautiful gilt lettering and devices. Bookplate to front paste down. Stamp to upper corner of title page. Seemingly rehung, but expertly done. With lovely marbled endpapers. Overall, a very beautiful copy of this book.

“The Bible of Materialism”


This is the true first edition with the correct pagination and the comma after “Londres”. Also included here is the rarely seen 4-page “Errata” at the end of volume 1 – which was added during the printing process when the mistakes were first discovered.

In the *Système* Holbach rejected the Cartesian mind-body dualism and attempted to explain all phenomena, physical and mental, in terms of matter in motion. Holbach rejected religion because he saw it as a wholly harmful influence, and he tried to supply a desirable alternative.

Holbach was “the foremost exponent of atheistic materialism, and the most intransigent polemicist against religion in the Enlightenment.” (EP, Vol. 4, p. 49) “He could not publish safely under his own name, but had the ingenious idea of using the names of
recently dead French authors. Thus, in 1770, his most famous book, ‘The System of Nature’, appeared under the name of Jean-Baptiste Mirabaud” (PMM, p. 130) “The third and properly philosophical stage of Holbach’s output began in 1770 with [this work]. This first – and only – example in the Enlightenment of a comprehensive, unmitigated defense of atheistic materialism was the culmination of a whole trend of ideas already expressed in varying degrees by La Mettrie, Helvetius, Diderot, and others. It caused much consternation in France, not only among spokesmen for the official faith but among the deistic philosophes as well. It was suppressed by judicial decree, and among the flood of refutations it provoked were those of Voltaire.. and Frederick the Great.” (EP, Vol. 4, p. 50)

CONDITION: Very good. Contemporary quarter calf marbled boards. Gilt lettering to spine with title and volume numbers on fields of red. Spines of both volumes with a bit of sun-fading. Pages bright and clean. Tightly bound. A lovely, clean and crisp copy of Holbach’s most important work.


$800

An important early text by one of the most important theologians influenced by Spinoza. “While Leenhof projected himself publicly as a [moderate Cartesian], privately, as a few intimates probably already suspected, he was becoming increasingly immersed in Spinozism” (Jonathan Israel, Radical Enlightenment, 407). Leenhof went on to become a strong advocate for what Israel identifies as a “Universal Philosophical Religion.”

CONDITION: Very good or better in contemporary vellum. Hand-scripted spine. Tight binding. Pages bright and clean.
The Important Precursor to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*
Written by Spinoza’s Friend, Lodewijk Meijer

9. [MEIJER, aka MEYER], [Lodewijk, aka Ludwig or Louis]. *Philosophia S. Scripturae interpres; exercitatio paradoxa*. No printer or publisher [Jan Rieuwertsz], Eleutheropoli [Amsterdam], 1666. 3 leaves + TP + 5 leaves = Prologus & Errata + 1 – 105 + 5 leaves = Epilogus + 2 leaves. 4to. *First Edition.*

$7,000

In his own time, Lodewijk Meyer (1629-1681) achieved fame as the author of the first dictionary of the Dutch language, the director of the Amsterdam Theatre, and one of the co-founders of the literary society, *Nil Volentibus arduum* (Nothing is difficult for the willing).

But most important, Meijer was a personal friend of Baruch Spinoza, so much so that he edited the latter's first book, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* (for which he also provided an extensive introduction), and he was one of the small group of friends who arranged for the publication of the philosopher's *Opera Posthuma* (containing the famous, *Ethics*) following his death in 1677.

The first edition of *Philosophy as the Interpreter of Holy Scripture* was published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1666 with a false imprint, and it created an immediate furor and series of condemnations by the ecclesiastical courts – not least because it was immediately attributed to Spinoza. (This confusion continued when *Philosophia* was twice reprinted as an appendix to Spinoza's *Tractatus* and, in those editions, actually attributed to Spinoza.)
Philosophia is an important hermeneutical treatise, arguing that the Bible should be interpreted through Cartesian rationality. Most famously, it called for a response from Spinoza, which resulted in the 1670 publication of his Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.

An anonymous Dutch edition of Philosophia appeared in 1667, and new Latin editions in 1673 and 1674. Evidence for the staying power of the work and the controversies which surrounded it is found in the fact that it underwent a fourth edition long after Meyer’s death in 1776.


$3,000
Rare Quarto edition which preceded the 12mo of the same year.

La Peyrere is considered to be the father of Biblical criticism. He asserted in *Praeadamitae* that there were human beings before Adam. His approach to Biblical scholarship argued that the Bible was just the story of the Jewish people, not all of humanity. His book and heretical views were quickly banned. La Peyrere was eventually arrested but offered a half-hearted renunciation of his views to escape punishment. La Peyrere went on to engage in polemics with Richard Simon, famous defender of the Bible. A rare and important book in the Radical Enlightenment identified as one of the "wicked" books of the late 17th century. "...the wicked sedition which commenced with La Peyrere's *Prae-Adamitae*, gained impetus with the 'utterly licentious, dissipated dictionary of Koerbagh', that 'shameless' book the *Philosophai S. Scripturae*, and Hobbes' *Leviathan*, and culminated in the *Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus* and *Ethics* of Spinoza" (Israel, 367).


$1,750
Richard Simon, “father of modern exegesis,” sought to moderate the radical thinking of the Enlightenment. His *History of the text of the New Testament* brought a critical-historical eye to those long-held, and rarely questioned, religious truths. He defended the faith against those heretical voices of ecclesiastical opposition while trying to carve space for historical critical Biblical exegesis. Simon found himself “embroiled in a grueling two-front war, battling Spinoza, on one side, and the immense corpus of inherited interpretation on the other” (Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 450).

**CONDITION:** Very good+ in original vellum. Tightly bound. Light spotting to covers. Name in ink to title page, dated 1711. Small stamp on TP. Minor pencil markings to very few pages. A beautiful copy of an important text of the Enlightenment.

**First Edition of Spinoza’s Masterwork – Ethica, Ordine Geometrico demonstrata**

12. **SPINOZA, Baruch. *Opera Postuma, Quorum series post Praefationem exhibetur.* [Jan Rieuwertsz], [Amsterdam], 1677. TP + 18 leaves = Præfatio + half title + [1]-614 + 16 leaves = Index Rerum + half title + 1-112 + 4 leaves = Indiculus & Errata. 4to. **First Edition.**

$17,500
Published in the year of Spinoza’s death, this posthumous collection was edited by his close friend, Jarig Jelles, whose preface, originally written in Dutch, was translated into Latin by L. Meyer.

Spinoza had contemplated publishing his *Ethica* two years earlier but the furor over his supposed atheism forced him to postpone the book’s release. The day before his death, Spinoza arranged for these works to be published by sending them to Jan Rieuwertsz who had previously published his *Principia* on Descartes and the *Tractatus-theologico-politicus*.

In the *Ethica*, Spinoza sought to apply the “geometric method” and mathematical reasoning to metaphysics resulting in what is considered to be the first systematic exposition of pantheism wherein God is identified with the entire universe. This is the work upon which Spinoza’s reputation as a philosopher, a rationalist and an atheist chiefly rests. In addition, the book contains the *Politica*, *De emendatione intellectus*, *Epistolae*, & *ad eas responiones*, and the *Compendium grammaticus linguae Hebraeae* (with separate half-title and pagination).

“The *Ethics* is an ambitious and multifaceted work. It is also bold to the point of audacity, as one would expect of a systematic and unforgiving critique of the traditional philosophical conceptions of God, the human being, and the universe, and above all, of the religions and the theological and moral beliefs grounded thereon. Despite a dearth of explicit references to past thinkers, the book exhibits enormous erudition. Spinoza’s knowledge of classical, medieval, Renaissance, and modern authors – pagan, Christian, and Jewish – is evident throughout. Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Maimonides, Bacon, Descartes, and Hobbes (among others) all belong to the intellectual background of the work. At the same time, it is one of the most radically original treatises in the history of philosophy.” (Nadler, *Spinoza, A Life*, p. 226)

The book was prepared in great secrecy and issued a few months after Spinoza’s death, with the author identified only by the initials. The place of publication and the publisher were not specified. The year after its publication, it was proscribed by the states of Holland and West Friesland for being atheistic and blasphemous. The following year, 1679, it was placed on the *Index* by the Vatican.

**CONDITION:** Original vellum with hand-scripted title to spine. Former owner’s name to title page in contemporary hand. Some edge wear to vellum and some soiling to the covers. Tightly bound, bright pages throughout. Very good.

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