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Hudde was born into a leading Amsterdam family, which co-founded the Dutch East India Company. During his study at Leiden he encountered the mathematician Frans van Schooten who produced a translation of Descartes's *La Géométrie* with commentaries by his students, including Hudde, Christiaan Huygens, Johan de Witt, and Hendrik van Heuraet. Hudde's work contributed to the development of calculus and later he did important, more applied work on the mathematics of annuities. He also wrote on optics and was interested in developing lenses for microscopes and telescopes. He was much involved in what we would now call civil engineering and water management projects in Amsterdam and Holland, and sponsored Huygens's work on clocks to find longitude at sea. During the last decades of his life he was a leading director of the Dutch East India Company, a mayor of Amsterdam, and key ally of William III (of William and Mary fame) in Dutch political life.

Hudde is the recipient of three letters from Spinoza in 1666, published in the OP. These reveal the existence of four letters to Spinoza from Hudde, presumed lost now. While the addressee is identified only with an 'H' in the OP, Hudde's identity as the recipient was known to Leibniz and Locke amongst others. The third letter reveals that Spinoza is familiar with Hudde's work in optics.

Most of the three letters center on Hudde's request for "a demonstration of the Unity of God from the fact that his Nature involves necessary existence" (Ep34). The letters reveal that "unity" implies ruling out polytheism. It is likely that this question was prompted by CM2.2, which work appeared under Spinoza's name (1663). There is no evidence that Hudde was familiar with early drafts of Spinoza's *Ethics*. We can infer from the second and third of Spinoza's letters that Hudde was unsatisfied with Spinoza's responses to his request.

Spinoza's three letters are important because when confronted with cogent, proto-Leibnizian objections, they offer a glimpse of the development of Spinoza's views. I highlight two developments. First, while there are plenty of causal principles in Spinoza's early writings, Ep34 offers the first articulation of a robust version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in which not just an existence must be explained but also a cause must be assigned for an accompanying absence. This is familiar from E1p11d: "For each thing there must be assigned a cause, or reason, both for its existence and for its nonexistence." In Ep34, Spinoza writes, "if twenty men exist in nature . . . it will not be sufficient, to give a reason why the twenty exist, to investigate the cause of human nature in general. What must also be investigated is the reason why neither more nor fewer than twenty men exist."

Second, we learn something about the nature of God or substance: "since the nature of God does not consist in a definite kind of being, but in a Being which is absolutely unlimited, his nature also requires everything which expresses being perfectly, since otherwise his nature would be limited and deficient" (Ep36). That is, a Spinozistic God is not the kind of entity that can figure in a question like, 'Is there one or more?' Spinoza's God is, grammatical appearances to the contrary, arguably not a count-noun, but more like a mass noun. (This idea is central to Bennett's interpretation of the *Ethics*; see 1984, 104.)

We do not know what Hudde thought of Spinoza's third response. But we do know that the question about the relationship between God's necessary existence and his unicity gripped him to the end of his life because, between 1696 and 1699, Hudde repeatedly tried engaging Locke on this very issue after reading Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the *Reasonabless of Christianity*.

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KEY PASSAGES

E1p11d. CM2.2. Ep34; Ep36.

RECOMMENDED READING

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RELATED TERMS

Cause; God; Leibniz; Mathematics; Principle of Sufficient Reason; Substance; De Witt