

KANT & THE PANTHEISM DISPUTE

PHIL 4/880

Colin McLear
mclear@unl.edu

September 7, 2021

1 *Timeline*

- Spinoza (1632-1677)
- Kant (1724-1804)
- Lessing (1729-1781)
- Mendelssohn (1729-1786)
- Jacobi (1743-1819)
- Pantheism Dispute
 - Initial Jacobi/Mendelssohn exchange (1783)
 - Publication of Jacobi's *Letters* (1785)

2 *Spinozism*

- Explanatory rationalism
- Substance monism
- Atheism/pantheism (Deus sive Natura)
- Hard determinism

3 *Kant's Criticisms of Spinoza*

- Spinoza's philosophy is "dogmatic"¹
- Kant's limited endorsement of PSR
- Monism is false
 - Spinoza's confusion about grounding
 - Spinoza's dogmatism
 - * *more geometrico*
 - Incoherence of Spinoza's monism
 - Attestation of consciousness in action
- Distinction between God and nature
- Human beings are free & responsible

¹ These unavoidable problems of pure reason itself are **God, freedom and immortality**. But the science whose final aim in all its preparations is directed properly only to the solution of these problems is called **metaphysics**, whose procedure is in the beginning **dogmatic**, i.e., it confidently takes on the execution of this task without an antecedent examination of the capacity or incapacity of reason for such a great undertaking (B7)

4 *Agreeing with Spinoza*

- Transcendental realism entails Spinozism²
- Modal irrationalism³
- God as the ultimate basis of unity and systematicity in nature

² If I take space as an entity in itself, then Spinozism is irrefutable, i.e. the parts of the world are parts of the Godhead. Space is the Godhead, it is unitary [einig], omnipresent, nothing can be thought outside of it, everything is in it (*Metaphysik L₂* (1790/91?), 28:567).

³ if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except what is actual. ... the distinction of possible from actual things is one that is merely subjectively valid for the human understanding (CPJ 5:402)

References & Further Reading

- Ameriks, Karl. 2000. *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 1987. *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Förster, Eckart. 2012. *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Förster, Eckart, and Yitzhak Y. Melamed, eds. 2012. *Spinoza and German Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Franks, Paul W. 2005. *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich. 1994. *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*. McGill-Queen's Press.
- Pinkard, Terry. 2002. *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.