

# 12 KANT'S CRITIQUE OF SPINOZA

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The sudden emergence of the philosophy of Spinoza as a major force in the spiritual life of Germany in the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century is a fascinating and frequently discussed episode in intellectual history. The catalyst for this emergence was the "*Pantheismusstreit*," inaugurated by Jacobi and Mendelssohn in 1785, and joined in 1787 by Herder as a defender of Spinoza. Whereas formerly Spinoza had been treated, to use Lessing's words, as "a dead dog,"<sup>1</sup> that is, as an atheist hardly worthy of serious philosophical consideration, he was now regarded in many circles as a profound, and at times even genuinely religious thinker, who articulated the true conception of the divinity and of man's relationship thereto.<sup>2</sup>

As is well known, the philosophy of Spinoza, so conceived, exerted a considerable influence on the development of post-Kantian German idealism. To be sure, Fichte first thought of himself as establishing

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\* I should like to express my gratitude to my assistant, Mr. John Hasenjäger, for his help in collating the numerous references to Spinoza and to Spinozism in the various versions of Kant's lectures.

<sup>1</sup> F.H. Jacobi, *Werke*, Leipzig, 1819, reprinted by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1968, Vol. IV, I, 68.

<sup>2</sup> Admittedly this is somewhat of an exaggeration. There was a tradition of Spinozism in Germany throughout the 18th century which included figures such as Dippel and Edelmann. It was, however, only in the 1780's that Spinoza's philosophy became a topic of central concern. For a discussion of the earlier reception of Spinoza in Germany see Moses Krakauer, *Zur Geschichte des Spinozismus in Deutschland während der ersten Hälfte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Breslau, 1881, Leo Bäck, *Spinozas erste Einwirkungen auf Deutschland*, (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1895), Max Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*, (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1897), and Walter Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann, From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment*, (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1976).

Kant's philosophy on a new and more solid foundation, free of all of the inconsistencies and obscurities with which Kant himself presented, it, e.g., the doctrine of the thing in itself. Spinoza, for Fichte at this stage of his development, was simply the greatest of the dogmatists. His claim was that dogmatism and criticism constitute the basic philosophical options, and that victory must ultimately be awarded to criticism (as conceived by Fichte), albeit on practical rather than theoretical grounds.<sup>3</sup> In the "objective" or "absolute" idealisms of Schelling and Hegel, the onesidedness of the "subjective idealism" of Kant and Fichte is a constant refrain. Consequently, the philosophy of Spinoza is seen not as a simple antithesis, but as a necessary complement to this subjectivism. The claim is that philosophy must transcend this finitistic, subjectivistic standpoint and, following the path indicated by Spinoza, arrive at the standpoint of the absolute. Thus, despite his frequent and sharp criticisms of Spinoza, it is entirely appropriate for Hegel to claim: "Thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of philosophy."<sup>4</sup>

These considerations, taken in conjunction with the fact that this emergence of interest in Spinoza took place precisely at the time in which Kant was engaged in the completion of the "critical synthesis," lend considerable interest to the question of Kant's own views on Spinoza and Spinozism. At first glance, however, this does not seem to be a particularly promising line of enquiry. Kant's actual references to Spinoza in his published writings are relatively few and far between. The first references from the critical period occur in the essay: "What is Orientation in Thinking?" (1786), which was Kant's own response to the "*Pantheismusstreit*". There is a brief discussion of "Spinozism" as the logical consequence of the denial of the ideality of space and time in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, but the only thing resembling a systematic critique is to be found in the *Critique of Judgment*. To make matters even worse, the references that we do find hardly suggest any intimate acquaintance with the thought of Spinoza. The situation is reminiscent of Kant's scattered criticisms of the "good Bishop" Berkeley. Certainly, there is nothing like the ongoing concern that Kant exhibited with the thought of Leibniz and Hume.

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<sup>3</sup> For the question of the development of Fichte's views on Spinoza see Grunwald, op. cit., 153-159.

<sup>4</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Eng. trans. by E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955) Vol. III, 257.

In fact, if we are to trust Hamann in the matter, Kant himself confessed never to have really studied Spinoza and never to have been able to understand him.<sup>5</sup>

If, however, one turns to the various versions of Kant's lectures on metaphysics and rational theology, his *Reflexionen*, and the latest portions of the *Opus Postumum*, a somewhat different picture emerges. The references to Spinoza and Spinozism found in these places suggest that Kant did have a firm, if not particularly well-informed conception of Spinoza's philosophy. These references cannot be given priority over Kant's published remarks, but they do constitute an invaluable and hitherto neglected supplement to these remarks. It is as such that I propose to use them in the present study. The goal is to show that, when Kant's published criticisms of Spinoza are viewed in the light of some of these unpublished discussions, they not only become considerably more intelligible than they initially appear, but they can even be seen as providing the outlines of a genuine *Auseinandersetzung* with Spinoza. The significance of this *Auseinandersetzung* will be shown to lie in its metaphilosophical nature. In striking anticipation of his idealistic successors and critics, Kant seems to have become aware that the real opposition between his philosophy and that of Spinoza is one of "standpoint." An examination of this conflict of standpoints will not only help us to gain a deeper understanding of the critical philosophy, but also of why the dissatisfaction with this philosophy quite naturally expressed itself in the form of a return to Spinoza.

## I

As already noted, "What is Orientation in Thinking?" constitutes Kant's official contribution to the "*Pantheismusstreit*". His concern was not with the question of Lessing's alleged Spinozism, which initially set off the controversy, and only marginally with the interpretation of Spinoza, which soon became the central issue. Rather, it was with the underlying philosophical issues that really divided Jacobi and Mendelssohn. Jacobi presented Spinoza's thought as atheistic and deterministic on the one hand and as the most consistent expression of human reason on the other. The moral which he drew from this was the necessity of a leap of faith in order to affirm the existence of a

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Hamann's letters to Jacobi of Sept. 28, 1785 and Nov. 28, 1785, Jacobi's *Werke*, Vol. IV, III, 8f. and 114.

personal, providential God and of freedom of the will. Mendelssohn, for his part, maintained the possibility of a demonstration of the theistic position and of a purely philosophical refutation of Spinoza. For Kant then, the dispute was between the advocacy of an irrational faith and of a dogmatic use of reason, both of which were completely opposed to his own critical standpoint, with its emphasis upon the limitation of reason and its notion of a rational, i.e., moral faith.

Despite this opposition, Kant was ardently wooed by both sides. From Jacobi's side the wooing was undertaken largely by their mutual friend Hamann, who functioned as a middle man between Kant and Jacobi.<sup>6</sup> Mendelssohn approached Kant directly, sending him a copy of *Morgenstunden*, and complaining in rather pathetic fashion about Jacobi's anti-rationalism, as well as about his treatment of "our Lessing" and of himself.<sup>7</sup> Kant left Mendelssohn's appeal unanswered, never even acknowledging the receipt of the book; and in January 1786 Mendelssohn died. In a letter to Kant written shortly thereafter, Marcus Herz complained about the behaviour of Jacobi and his followers and implored Kant to "take the opportunity to say something on behalf of your deceased friend against the contemporary and I suppose future irrational Jacobites."<sup>8</sup> Kant responded by dismissing "*die Jacobische Grille*" as nothing more than the efforts of inspired fanatics to make a name for themselves; but suggesting that he might publish something to expose their fraud.<sup>9</sup>

This something turned out to be the essay: "What is Orientation in Thinking?". Instead, however, of defending the memory of his deceased friend (as Herz had requested), Kant responded to the challenge which both Mendelssohn's dogmatism and Jacobi's fideism posed to the critical philosophy. Thus, Kant praised Mendelssohn for affirming the necessity of orienting oneself with the help of "authentic and pure human reason," but criticized him for granting too much to speculation. His point is the familiar one: "A pure rational

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<sup>6</sup> The definitive treatment of this whole topic is provided in Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: a Biographical Study* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1973) especially 698-712.

<sup>7</sup> Mendelssohn's letter to Kant, October 16, 1785, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Königlich Preussischen Akademic der Wissenschaften (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co.), 1901-, Vol. X, 413-414.

<sup>8</sup> Marcus Herz's letter to Kant, February 27, 1786, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. X, 431-433.

<sup>9</sup> Kants letter to Marcus Herz, April 7, 1786, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. X, 442-443.

belief is the signpost or compass by which the speculative thinker can orient himself in his rational excursions in the field of supersensuous objects".<sup>10</sup> Jacobi, as one might suspect, received harsher treatment. His recognition of the ungrounded nature of the pretensions of dogmatic reason is acknowledged, but he is castigated for substituting for such reason a blind, irrational faith. Significantly, Kant cited as evidence of Jacobi's intent the fact that "He (Jacobi) sees the Spinozist concept of God set up as the only one conformable to the principles of reason, even though it is a worthless concept."<sup>11</sup> To make matters even worse, Jacobi had actually suggested connections or parallels between particular doctrines of Spinoza and certain tenets of the *Critique*.<sup>12</sup> This made it necessary for Kant to publically disassociate himself from the views of Spinoza, and it is within this context that he presents his critique of Spinoza's philosophy. This actual critique occurs in a footnote, which I here quote in full:

It is hard to conceive how supposed scholars could find support for Spinozism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. That work clips the wings of dogmatism with respect to knowledge of supersensuous objects, and here Spinozism is so dogmatic that it even competes with the mathematician in rigor of proof. The *Critique* proves that the table of the pure concepts of the understanding contains all the materials of pure thinking; Spinozism speaks of

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<sup>10</sup> *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII, p. 142, Eng. trans. by Lewis White Beck in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and other Writings in Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950) 301 (subsequently referred to as "Beck").

<sup>11</sup> *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII, 143–144, Beck, 303–304.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobi in fact refers a number of times to Kant in order to illustrate Spinozistic doctrines. Most notably, he appeals to Kant's doctrine of space and time as infinite given magnitudes in which the whole is prior to the parts in order to explicate Spinoza's conception of the relation between substance and the infinite series of finite modes (*Werke*, Vol. IV, I, 176) and to Kant's doctrine of the transcendental unity of apperception in connection with Spinoza's conception of absolute thought (192). Jacobi himself, however, explicitly denied that Kant was a Spinozist. Kant's view of the matter was probably colored by a letter from Christian Gottfried Schütz (*Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. X, 430) informing him that Jacobi describes Kant's ideas on space and time as "entirely in the spirit of Spinoza," and in an anonymous review of Jacobi's book which appeared in the *Jenaer Literaturzeitung*, February 11, 1786, no. 36. For a discussion of this review see H. Scholz, *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn*, (Berlin: Reuter Reichard, 1916), LXXVIII.

thoughts which think themselves and thus of an accident that exists for itself as subject—a concept that is not in human understanding and cannot be brought into it. The *Critique* shows that it by no means suffices to the assertion of the possibility of a thing thought through itself to prove that there is nothing contradictory in its concepts (although merely to assume its possibility must then, if necessary, be allowed). Spinozism, however, pretends to understand the impossibility of a being, the idea of which consists merely of pure concepts of the understanding, from which only all conditions of sensibility have been abstracted, in which, therefore, a contradiction can never be found. It is, however, utterly unable to support this unlimited presumption. Precisely for that reason Spinozism leads to fanaticism. On the other hand, there is no sure means of uprooting fanaticism except to determine the limits of the pure faculty of reason.<sup>13</sup>

This passage contains four distinct criticisms. I propose to discuss each in turn, referring, when necessary, to remarks about Spinoza found elsewhere in the Kantian corpus.

1) *Spinozism is dogmatism*. This is an obvious objection for Kant to raise, and, given his critical principles, a perfectly just one. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant had characterized “dogmatism in metaphysics” as the procedure whereby philosophy “confidently sets itself to the task (metaphysics) without any previous examination of the capacity or incapacity of reason for so great an undertaking” (B7). Such a broad brush covers all pre-critical metaphysics, including that of Spinoza. As the passage indicates, however, the charge is levied against Spinoza specifically because of his use of the *more geometrico*. The distinction between the mathematical and the philosophical method was a major concern of Kant’s, long before he wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, any philosophy which attempted to demonstrate its theses in geometrical fashion would immediately be suspect. Moreover, in his lectures, Kant went beyond this general charge and attempted to argue that Spinoza’s erroneous conception of substance is the direct consequence of his manner of proceeding geometrically, that is, of beginning with arbitrary defini-

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<sup>13</sup> *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII, Beck, 302. I have substantially modified Beck’s translation of this passage.

<sup>14</sup> Cf., Kant’s *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral* (1764).

tions and deriving propositions from them. Such a procedure, Kant held, is perfectly appropriate for the mathematician, whose object is constructed in pure intuition, but it is totally inappropriate for the philosopher, who must begin with marks (*Merkmale*) and can only then proceed to formulate definitions.<sup>15</sup> In developing this line of objection, Kant was in all probability simply following Wolff, who criticized Spinoza, together with Descartes, for a failure to justify the reality of his definitions.<sup>16</sup>

2) "*Spinozism speaks of thoughts which think themselves and thus of an accident that exists for itself as subject.*" Taken by itself, this remark is unintelligible and hardly recognizable as an expression of Spinoza's views. Nevertheless, when construed in light of Kant's overall critique of Spinoza, it can be seen as a cryptic expression of his basic line of objection to Spinoza's metaphysics. Like the criticism noted above, this line of objection owes a good deal to Wolff. Moreover, it is to be found in various forms and with various degrees of development in Kant's lectures. Rather than going through these texts noting the minor differences, I propose to simply present a composite sketch of the Kantian critique.<sup>17</sup>

The target of Kant's attack is naturally enough Spinoza's conception of substance. According to Kant's Latin rendering of Spinoza's definition: *substantia . . . est cujus existentia non indiget existentia alterius*.<sup>18</sup> Given this definition, which Kant (following Wolff) claims to have been taken over by Spinoza from Descartes, it follows that there is only one substance (independent being or *ens a se*) in the universe. Moreover, since there is only one such being, it also follows that all particular things (Spinoza's finite modes) must be conceived of as accidents inhering in it. The result is thus the "*systema inhaerentia*", wherein the dependence of all things upon God is identified with their inherence in God. Finally, as Kant notes in one place, it also follows

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<sup>15</sup> *Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz, Kants gesammelte Schriften* Vol. XXVIII, 2.2, 1041–1042.

<sup>16</sup> Christian Wolff, *Theologia Naturalis*, section 679; H. Scholz, op. cit., pp. XLVII–XLIX.

<sup>17</sup> The main sources for this sketch are *Metaphysik Volckmann, Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. XXVIII, 2.1, 429, 457–458, *Metaphysik Schön*, 510, *Metaphysik L 2*, 563, 600–601, *Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz*, op. cit., 1040–1042.

<sup>18</sup> *Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz*, op. cit., p. 1041. See also *Metaphysik Schön*, op. cit., 510.

from this definition that the world is a phenomenon of God and that we intuit all things in God.<sup>19</sup>

One of Kant's most frequently expressed objections to this conception, which will be further considered in connection with the discussion of Spinoza in the *Critique of Judgment*, is that it involves the conflation of the relation of dependence, which holds between an effect and its ground or cause, with that of inherence, which holds between substance and accident. The pitfalls of Spinozism, according to Kant, can be avoided simply by keeping these two relations distinct. Kant's main tactic, however, at least in his lectures, is to dismiss as arbitrary the definition from which the consequences listed above presumably follow. In its place he substitutes, admittedly without very much further argument, his own, essentially Aristotelian definitions of substance, as that which can exist only as subject, and of accident, as that which can exist only as predicate or determination of a thing. Substance, so construed, is the "something in general," which functions as the subject of predication, and which is only known through the accidents predicated of it. Its characteristic mark is being *per se* or in itself, which is contrasted with the being in another or inherence of accidents, but which must also be sharply distinguished from the being *a se* or ontological independence, which characterizes Spinoza's substance and the God of the theistic tradition. By treating substance in this manner, Kant, in effect, equated it with the concept of a thing.<sup>20</sup> This, Kant argued, removed all the difficulty in talking about a plurality of distinct substances (things), and made it perfectly reasonable to view these substances as causally dependent upon (not inhering in) an extramundane God, who alone is *ens a se*.

In addition, Kant endeavored to construct a *reductio* of the Spinozistic conception itself. To this end he introduced the notion of the ego as a thinking substance. The basic idea is that in order to be conscious of myself as thinking, I must be able to predicate all of my thoughts of an abiding thinking subject (in the *Critique* this "subject" is described as the "logical subject of thought"). In this sense self-conscious thought can be said to presuppose the reality of a substance (*ens per se*) that thinks. Despite appearances, this does not really contradict the argument of the Paralogisms; for Kant does not make any synthetic *a priori* claims about thinking substances. Quite the contrary, the notion of a thinking substance is introduced merely in order to

<sup>19</sup> *Metaphysik L 2*, op. cit., 601.

<sup>20</sup> Cf., *Metaphysik Schön*, op. cit., 511.

conflating  
inherence  
with  
causation



show that one cannot coherently consider the ego as the predicate of another substance. Given this, Kant thought that the Spinozist, with his conception of a single substance in which everything inheres, is confronted with an unavoidable dilemma, both horns of which lead to absurdity: either the ego must consider itself as God, which contradicts its alleged dependence, or it must view itself as an accident, which contradicts the very concept of an ego as logical subject of thought.<sup>21</sup> At times Kant seems to have attributed the former absurdity to Spinoza, thus characterizing Spinozism as "egoism."<sup>22</sup> At other times he attributed the latter view. This is the case in the passage presently before us wherein Spinoza is accused of speaking of "thoughts which think themselves and thus of an accident that exists for itself as subject." Although virtually unintelligible as it stands in the text, this claim can be seen as the consequence of a consistent line of argument that Kant has sketched in his lectures.

3) "*Spinozism . . . pretends to understand the impossibility of a being, the idea of which consists merely of pure concepts of the understanding . . . in which, therefore, no contradiction can be found.*" The being that Kant has in mind here is obviously God as traditionally understood, the transcendent *ens realissimum*. Spinoza is thus being viewed with Jacobi (and, of course, with Bayle) as a dogmatic atheist who is offering a rational proof of the non-existence of God, a kind of reverse version of the ontological argument. Kant's objection to this procedure rests upon the supposition that the concept of God is a product of pure reason, composed entirely of pure concepts, and that, as such, it cannot contain a contradiction. Granted this supposition, it follows that there is no way to demonstrate the impossibility of such a being.<sup>23</sup>

4) *Spinozism leads to fanaticism (Schwärmerei)*. Four considerations are necessary in order to understand this claim. The first is Kant's general and familiar charge that the dogmatic use of speculative reason can lead to fanaticism since it involves a venture into the supersensible that is unchecked by any appeal to experience.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, a dogmatic use of speculative reason which leads to atheistic conclusions (presum-

<sup>21</sup> *Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz*, op. cit., 1052–1153.

<sup>22</sup> Cf., *Metaphysik L.* op. cit., 207.

<sup>23</sup> In support of this interpretation it should be noted that Kant made essentially the same point in a more explicit manner in his prefatory remarks to Ludwig Heinrich Jakobs' *Prüfung der Mendelssohn'schen Morgenstunden*, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII, 151.

<sup>24</sup> Kant argues in this manner with specific reference to Spinozism in *Das Ende aller Dinge*, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII, 335.

(presumably Kant's reading of Spinoza) can lead indirectly to fanaticism because it seems to leave no alternative except an irrational leap of faith to the defender of traditional religious belief, e.g., Jacobi.<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, both Jacobi and Mendelssohn provide a basis for the linkage of Spinoza's thought to fanaticism, for both connect it to the Cabbala. Thus Jacobi affirms straight out: "The Cabbalistic philosophy is, as philosophy, nothing other than undeveloped, or newly confused Spinozism."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Mendelssohn maintains that Spinoza's philosophy has its roots in "Cabbalistic fanaticism," and he says of the pantheistic principle: "*one in all and all in one*", which he equates with Spinozism, that "fanatics and atheists have united in accepting it because it seems to combine their opposed errors."<sup>27</sup>

Finally, and most significantly, Kant had independent reasons for linking Spinoza's thought, as he understood it, with fanaticism. These stem from Kant's conception of the place of this thought in the history of Western philosophy. As is evidenced by certain *Reflexionen*, Kant viewed Platonism, neo-Platonism and Spinozism as three connected stages in the history of "philosophical fanaticism."<sup>28</sup> This history begins with the Platonic doctrine of recollection, which Kant considered to be a philosophically respectable attempt to explain the origin of *a priori* knowledge, especially in mathematics, by means of an appeal to the intuitions of archetypes in the divine mind. In neo-Platonism, with its doctrine of grades of being and theory of emanation, this conception began to lose philosophical respectability. This led finally to Spinozism, which Kant characterizes as "the true culmination (*Schluss*) of dogmatizing metaphysics"<sup>29</sup> and as "a theosophy through intuition."<sup>30</sup> As the context makes clear, Kant locates the fanaticism in the fact that Spinoza's doctrine requires us to conceive of all things, including ourselves, in God, which implies that genuine knowledge requires insight into the divine mind. Such formulations suggest the possibility of a confusion on Kant's part of the views of

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<sup>25</sup> *Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölit*, op. cit., 1052 and *Danziger Rational theologie*, p. 1269.

<sup>26</sup> F.H. Jacobi, *Werke*, Vol. IV, 217-220.

<sup>27</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden*, XIII, *Schriften zur Philosophie, Aesthetik und Apologetik*, edited by Moritz Brasch (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), Vol. I, 393.

<sup>28</sup> *Reflexionen* 6050, 6051, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. XVIII, 434-438.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 435.

Spinoza with those of Malebranche, which he also characterizes in a similar manner. This seems to be especially true when one considers the numerous references in the *Opus Postumum* to Spinoza as affirming the intuition of all things in God.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it is not necessary to attribute any such confusion to Kant. Rather, as we shall see in more detail later, the formulations reflect Kant's own understanding of the Spinozistic standpoint, with its well known requirement that we conceive things *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is this standpoint which Kant characterizes both as "fanaticism" and as the "culmination of dogmatizing metaphysics" and to which he opposes his own.

## II

The period between the outbreak of the "*Pantheismusstreit*" and the publication of the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) was marked by the appearance of Herder's *Gott, einige Gespräche* (1787). In this extremely influential work Herder defended Spinoza against Jacobi's charge of atheism and attempted to argue that Spinoza's philosophy is compatible with the concept of divine providence. As his spokesman poetically puts the matter, "The highest Power must necessarily also be the wisest, that is to say an infinite goodness ordered according to inherent, eternal laws. . .".<sup>32</sup> Jacobi had responded to this in the Second Edition of his "Letters" (1789) with a refutation of Herder's position. He also sent a copy of this new edition to Kant, who responded:

For the newest edition of your handsome book on Spinoza's theory my warmest thanks. You have earned distinction, first of all for having clearly presented the difficulties of the teleological road to theology, difficulties which presumably may have led Spinoza to his system.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This is maintained by Erich Adickes, (*Kants Opus postumum*) (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1920) 730. Adickes limits this charge of confusion to the references in the *Opus Postumum*, thus using it as evidence of Kant's senility. He totally fails, however, to recognize that Kant already referred to Spinoza's doctrine in just these terms in his lectures and *Reflexionen* stemming from the 1780's.

<sup>32</sup> J.G. Herder, *God: Some Conversations*, Eng. trans. by F.H. Burkhardt (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1949), 123.

<sup>33</sup> Kant's letter to Jacobi, August 30, 1789, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. XI, 75-76, Eng. trans. by Arnulf Zweig, *Kant, Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 158. I have substantially modified Zweig's translation of this and the succeeding passage.

After gently chiding Jacobi for juxtaposing his brand of faith to Spinoza's dogmatism, ignoring thereby "the compass of pure reason," Kant continued:

You have thoroughly refuted the syncretism of Spinozism and of deism in Herder's God. All syncretistic talk is commonly based on insincerity, a property of mind that is especially characteristic of this great artist in delusions (which, like magic lanterns, make marvelous images appear for a moment but which soon vanish forever, though they leave behind in the minds of the uninformed a conviction that something unusual must be behind it all, something, however, that they cannot catch hold of).<sup>34</sup>

The significance of the first passage lies in its anticipation of the concern with teleology which is the focal point of Kant's refutation of Spinoza in the *Critique of Judgment*. Jacobi had sharply criticized Herder's attempt to reconcile Spinoza's doctrine with the acceptance of final causes, or, as Herder puts it, "a wise necessity." In fact, already in the First Edition, before the appearance of Herder's work, Jacobi had denied the possibility of any reconciliation between Spinoza and theism. This is reasserted in the *Beilagen* dealing with Herder in the Second Edition. Theism is here explicitly linked with "the system of final causes." This linkage is based upon the presumed connection between this system and the conception of God as a being possessed of intelligence and will. Spinoza's rejection of final causes is seen, accurately enough, as a consequence of his denial of these attributes to the divinity. For the same reason he is also called an atheist. Given this, Jacobi felt entitled to deny:

. . . that there can be between the system of final causes and the system of merely efficient causes, a mediating system (conceivable to us men). Understanding and will, if they are not the first and highest, if they are not one and all, are only subordinate powers, and belong to created, not creative nature.<sup>35</sup>

In the *Dialectic of Teleological Judgment* Kant presents this conflict between the two "systems" in the form of an antinomy. His solution to this antinomy can be seen as his answer to Jacobi, although it also deals with an issue that is central to Kant's philosophy. It is within

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>35</sup> Jacobi, *Werke*, Vol. IV, II, 92.

the context of this solution that he develops his critique of Spinoza. Before turning, however, to these matters, it will be necessary to review some of the central conceptions of the *Critique of Judgment*. First and foremost is that of reflective judgment (*reflectierende Urteilskraft*) which Kant contrasts with determinant judgment (*bestimmende Urteilskraft*). The latter is the function which Kant examined at the transcendental level in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is concerned with the subsumption of particulars under given concepts (pure concepts of the understanding). The former is concerned with finding empirical concepts and laws under which given particulars can be subsumed and with the systematic unification of these laws into a body of scientific knowledge. Kant recognized that the possibility of realizing these goals, and thus of developing an empirical science of nature, rests upon the conformity of nature in its particularization to our reflective activity. Unless particulars are in fact subsumable under concepts (fall into classes or natural kinds) no empirical knowledge of any kind would be possible. Similarly, unless particulars are likewise subsumable under empirical laws which are themselves systematically interconnected, empirical science would not be possible. But this conformity was not guaranteed by the *Transcendental Analytic*, which merely established the necessary conformity of nature to the transcendental laws imposed upon it by the human understanding. Consequently, Kant argued that this conformity, which he characterized as "logical" or "formal purposiveness" (*Zweckmässigkeit*), must be recognized as an additional *a priori* principle which pertains to judgment in its reflective capacity.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of purposiveness is the trunk from which the two branches of the *Critique of Judgment* spring. Our concern, however, is only with the second of these branches (teleological judgment). The problem is that the principle of "logical" or "formal purposiveness" does not of itself provide a ground for teleological judgments. It requires us to assume as an *a priori* principle of reflection that the manifold of appearances is unifiable under a set of empirical laws and that nature in this sense embodies a systematic unity (a unity constituted by the idea of the whole). But these laws could all very well be mechanical, thereby leaving no scope for any specifically teleological

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<sup>36</sup> *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (subsequently to be referred to as "K. d. U."), *Einführung*, IV, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. V, 179–181. Passages cited in the text are, with some modifications, taken from the English translation of the *Critique of Judgment* by J.C. Meredith (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928, reprinted 1957).

judgments. These, Kant claimed, require a "real" or "material purposiveness," which can be of two kinds, yielding two classes of teleological judgment. The two kinds of purposiveness are termed "relative" and "intrinsic" or "absolute." The former involves the conception of something functioning as a means for something else, e.g., grass for the sake of cows, cows for the sake of man, etc. The basic problem with this type of judgment is that it rests upon an assumption that can never be justified by the observation of nature; viz., that some natural being (man) is an end or purpose of nature (*Zweck der Natur*), for which everything else is intended to serve only as means.<sup>37</sup> The latter mode of purposiveness concerns the *manner in which* a given entity or class thereof must be thought of as being produced. An entity is deemed to be purposive in this sense, i.e., be a natural purpose, (*Naturzweck*) if the possibility of its production cannot be conceived of according to mechanical laws but requires an appeal to an intelligent cause. This occurs when the form of the entity exhibits systematic unity, that is, when the parts are so interconnected and related to the function of the whole, that this arrangement can only be understood by reference to the idea of the whole.

The central claim of the *Analytic of Teleological Judgment* is that organisms fall into this category, and hence that they must be judged or estimated (*beurteilt*) teleologically. This claim is based upon an analysis of the essential functions of organic beings; viz., the self-regulative, self-preservative and self-generative functions, each of which is held to defy mechanistic explanation. Kant first suggests this by offering a preliminary characterization of an organic being as one that is both cause and effect of itself. This is intended to reflect the ability of such a being to reproduce its own kind and to grow.<sup>38</sup> Then, taking a hint from Hume, he attempts to clarify this by drawing the contrast between an organism and a mechanism such as a watch. The latter is certainly an organized being, each part of which exists for the sake of the whole (fulfills a certain function). An organism shares this feature (organization) with a mechanism. It differs from a mechanism in that it is not merely organized but self-organized. Thus, whereas one part of a watch exists for the sake of another, it can hardly be said to exist by the agency of the other. Similarly, a watch can neither produce other watches nor repair its own causal disorders. But organisms pos-

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 370-372.

ness just these characteristics and fulfill these functions. Consequently, Kant argues, in order to conceive of the possibility of such a product of nature, it is necessary to abandon mechanistic explanation and appeal instead to a causality, which, in Hume's language, "bears a remote analogy" to our own causality according to purposes, that is, to a creative intelligence.<sup>39</sup> The point, of course, is not that we are entitled to assume the reality of such a causality, but merely that we are compelled to appeal to it as a model in our reflections upon these products of nature.

Having thus established a proper territory for teleological judgment, Kant turns in the *Dialectic* to the conflict between this result and the principle, presumably established in the *Transcendental Analytic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that all genuine explanation is mechanical. As already noted, this can be seen as Kant's reformulation of Jacobi's characterization of the conflict between the "systems" of final and efficient causation. The "critical" nature of Kant's reformulation of the conflict consists in the fact that it is seen to hold between competing maxims of reflection rather than between contradictory metaphysical claims. The first maxim or thesis asserts: "All production of material things and their forms must be estimated as possible on mere mechanical laws." The second maxim or antithesis asserts: "Some products of material nature cannot be estimated as possible on mere mechanical laws (that is, for estimating them a quite different law of causality is required, namely, that of final causes)."<sup>40</sup>

The actual structure of Kant's argument is quite complex. The resolution of the antinomy seems to rest both on the assertion of the merely regulative status of the maxims and on an appeal to the supersensible (noumenal) ground of phenomenal nature. The former move, which is frequently equated with Kant's complete solution,<sup>41</sup> occurs in a section (71) which Kant characterizes as a preparation (*Vorbereitung*) to the solution of the antinomy. Kant's point here is simply that by viewing the thesis and antithesis as regulative principles of reflective judgment rather than as constitutive principles of determinant judgment, one avoids the necessity of viewing them as genuine contradictories. Construed regulatively, the principle of mechanism tells us that "I *ought* at all times to reflect upon these things

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of this issue see J.D. McFarland, *Kant's Concept of Theology* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1970), 120-121.

according to the maxim of the simple mechanism of nature . . . because unless I make it the basis of my research there can be no knowledge of nature in the true sense of the term at all."<sup>42</sup> But this, Kant tells us, is perfectly compatible with the possibility that occasions may arise (as happens in the case of organisms) wherein this principle is inapplicable and it becomes necessary to adopt a radically different principle, that of final causes.<sup>43</sup> Since one is then not claiming that the phenomena in question are impossible on mechanistic principles, but merely that their possibility cannot be made intelligible, no contradiction occurs. This is to be contrasted with the constitutive interpretation of these same principles as "objective principles for the determinant judgment" which would yield the contradictory claims: "*Thesis*: All production of material things is possible on mere mechanical laws. *Antithesis*: Some production of such things is not possible on mere mechanical laws."<sup>44</sup>

The function of the second move (the appeal to the supersensible), which seems to constitute the actual solution, is to indicate the possibility of a reconciliation at the noumenal level of these two principles. Such a reconciliation is necessary because within experience these principles are mutually exclusive (the estimation or explanation of a given phenomenon may be *either* mechanistic or teleological but not *both*).<sup>45</sup> Both, however, are required for reflection upon experience, and thus for the development of empirical science. The possibility of such a reconciliation is based upon their possible derivation from a common, to us unknown, ground. This solution obviously shares certain features with the solution of the third antinomy in the First Critique (the conflict between determinism and transcendental freedom). In both cases we find that the appeal to the noumenal is intended to establish the possibility of both thesis and antithesis being true. The basic difference is that in the First Critique the possibility of the compatibility of thesis and antithesis was affirmed by assigning them to separate "worlds." In the present case they are both referred to the phenomenal world (as principles of reflection), while the possibility is left open that the phenomena which are reflected upon by these means may be derived from a common noumenal source.

The critique of Spinoza is largely contained between these two discussions and it helps to form the transition from the one to the other.

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<sup>42</sup> *K. D. U.*, 387.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 387-388.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 411-412.



It constitutes the centerpiece of a general argument that no form of dogmatism is able to deal adequately with the concept of purposiveness in nature. Kant's analysis begins with the somewhat strange assertion that "No one has ever yet questioned the correctness of the principle that when judging certain things in nature, namely organisms and their possibility, we must look to the conception of final causes."<sup>46</sup> This seems strange because one would have thought that not only Spinoza but many other thinkers, e.g., Descartes, had denied such a claim. Kant's actual point, however, is that even these thinkers must acknowledge a *prima facie* difference between organisms and other entities and that the difference compels us to think of the former in terms of final causes. The issue concerns the interpretation of this universally acknowledged difference. Some contend that the difference is "objective," i.e., grounded in the very nature of things; so that the existence of organisms provides evidence of a distinct kind of causality (final causes) and perhaps of an intelligent cause (God). Others contend that the difference is merely "subjective," i.e., grounded in the limits of human knowledge; so that organisms are conceived of as extremely complex mechanisms and everything is ultimately explicable in mechanistic terms (for God or perfected science). The former position is entitled the "realism" of final causes, natural purposes or purposiveness (Kant seems to use all of these expressions interchangeably). A defender of this position may be either a theist, who views purposiveness as the product of design, or a hylozoist, who views purposiveness or order as inherent in matter. The latter position is termed the "Idealism" of final causes, etc., on the grounds that it denies objective reality to the ideas of purposiveness and design.

The two versions of idealism are termed respectively the "accidentality" (*Casualität*) and "fatality" (*Fatalität*) of natural purposiveness. The former is represented by Epicurean atomism. Spinoza is described as the "accredited" author of the latter. By this means Kant gives expression to the view, suggested in his lectures, that the philosophy of the historical Spinoza is to be seen as a modern version of an ancient philosophical doctrine. Atomism is dismissed in summary fashion. The basic point is that its appeal to blind chance as the source of purposiveness is not an explanation but rather the abandonment of any attempt to provide one. Spinozism fares somewhat better. Although Kant dismisses its conception of the "original being" as un-

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 389.

intelligible, he does acknowledge that it at least attempts to provide an explanation. The essential feature of this explanation is the derivation of purposiveness from the necessity of the divine nature rather than from the divine intellect. This derivation entails that any purposiveness is undesigned and it is for this reason that the position is characterized as an idealism. By further describing Spinoza's doctrine as "fatalism," Kant is simply following Wolff, who called Spinoza a "*fatalista universalista*."<sup>47</sup>

Kant's critique of Spinoza on this point essentially amounts to the claim that his attempt to derive the phenomenon of purposiveness directly from the necessity of the divine nature is bound to fail because it cannot account for two of the three conditions that must be met by any successful treatment of purposiveness. The condition that Spinoza does meet can be termed the *unity condition*. Kant acknowledges that only if nature is considered as grounded in a single source can we think of it as unified or in any sense ordered. This would be true *a fortiori* of a teleological order. Spinoza's root conception of a single substance of which all things are modes obviously fulfills this condition admirably. Hence Kant writes with reference to the Spinozists:

Their object is to derive from this substance the unity of source which all purposiveness presupposes. And in fact thanks to their purely ontological conception of a simple substance, they do something to satisfy *one* condition of the problem - namely that of the unity implied in the reference to an end.<sup>48</sup>

The problem, however, is that mere unity of source is not enough; especially when, as the above passage indicates, this unity is conceived of in strictly ontological terms, that is, merely as a simple substance in which accidents inhere. First of all, this conception fails to account for what can be called the *causality condition*. Kant is here merely reaffirming in connection with the problem of purposiveness the general criticism of Spinoza's doctrine of substance which we previously noted. The point, it will be recalled, is that Spinoza's erroneous conception of substance led him to conflate the relations of causal dependence and of logical inherence. Since dependence and inherence are quite distinct notions, the conception of modes as inhering in a substance is

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<sup>47</sup> Wolff, *Theologia Naturalis*, Part II, section 709.

<sup>48</sup> *K. d. U.*, 421.

not adequate to account for their causal dependence on, or production by, that substance. It is this thought that underlies Kant's claim that Spinoza is able to deny that organic beings (*Zweck der Natur*) are products of design because he denies that they are products at all. As he characterizes Spinoza's position:

They are, rather, accidents inhering in an original being. This being, he says, is the substrate of natural things, and, as such, he does not ascribe to it causality in respect of them, but simply subsistence.<sup>49</sup>

Secondly, it fails to account for what can be called the *intelligence condition*. Not only must organic beings be conceived of as products of a cause rather than as accidents inhering in a substance, which holds of everything in nature - the organic and the inorganic alike - but this cause must be conceived of as an intelligence acting in accordance with the idea of an end. The necessity for such a cause, as well as that of the other conditions, is clearly expressed in a passage which can be seen as a summary statement of Kant's critique of Spinoza on the question of purposiveness:

It [purposive or organic unity (*Zweckseinheit*)] does not follow from the nexus of things in one subject, or the beings of the world in an original being. On the contrary, it implies emphatically (*durchaus — bei sich fuhrt*) relation to a cause possessed of intelligence. Even if all the things were to be united in one *simple* subject, yet such unity would never exhibit a final relation unless these things were understood to be, first, inner *effects* of the substance as a *cause*, and, secondly, effects of it as cause by *virtue of its intelligence*. Apart from these formal conditions all unity is mere necessity of nature, and, when it is ascribed nevertheless to things that we represent as outside one another, blind necessity.<sup>50</sup>

The necessity of conceiving of organic beings as products of an intelligent cause is based upon the contingency of such beings with respect to the laws of nature (mechanical laws). By claiming that they are contingent with respect to such laws Kant meant to indicate that they cannot be explained in terms of them. Underlying Kant's argument is the distinction between a whole that is a mere sum of its parts

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 393-394.

(an aggregate) and one that embodies a systematic unity. Mechanical laws are perfectly adequate to explain the generation of a whole or unity in the former sense. This is the point of the last sentence in the above passage, wherein Kant refers to the unity of things "that we represent as outside one another." Such things are, of course, spatial objects or objects of outer sense. Unity or wholeness is here understood essentially in terms of spatial proximity, and this can easily be seen as the result of the mechanism of nature, of "blind necessity." As the *Analytic* has shown, however, organic beings exhibit the latter mode of unity, which is characterized not merely by the spatial proximity but also by the functional interdependence of the parts. Here the unity can only be understood with reference to the idea of the whole. Consequently, Kant argues, we can only render intelligible to ourselves the possibility of the production of such unity by considering it as the effect of an intelligent cause, i.e., one that is determined by the idea of the whole, and therefore can be said to act designedly or in accordance with ends. Since this is just what Spinoza denied with his rejection of contingency and derivation of everything from the necessity of the divine nature, Kant can claim that Spinoza did not succeed in providing an adequate account of purposiveness.

### III

As we have just seen, the Spinoza critique of the *Critique of Judgment* has its roots in Kant's earlier criticisms of Spinoza but goes beyond them in its sharp focus on the question of purposiveness in nature. From the standpoint of the *Critique of Judgment* the most significant aspect of this new attack is that it enabled Kant to point to the denial of contingency as the basic flaw in the Spinozistic system. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the concept of contingency is central to the entire Third Critique. The very necessity of positing a reflective function for judgment, and with it an *a priori* principle, is based upon the claim that "T/he particular by its very nature contains something contingent with respect to the universal."<sup>51</sup> This, in turn entails the already discussed contingency of empirical laws, derived from the observation of particulars, with respect to the transcendental laws, imposed upon nature by the human understanding. Moreover, as Kant proceeds to argue, this latter contingency necessitates the interjection,

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.

for the sake of reflective judgment, of the idea of a supersensible or noumenal substrate of nature, which is used to provide additional support for the central critical doctrine of the transcendental ideality of appearances. All of this, and even the analysis of the beautiful in nature, which cannot be dealt with here, was called into question by the Spinozistic denial of contingency. Because of this the refutation of Spinoza is central, not peripheral, to the overall argument of the *Critique of Judgment*. Only if he can refute the claim that "In Nature there is nothing contingent, but all things are determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and act in a certain manner." (*Ethics* I, 29), can Kant succeed in establishing a critical function and an *a priori* principle for the faculty of judgment. And this, after all, is the basic goal of the Third Critique.

Although Kant's target is a metaphysical doctrine, his approach is thoroughly and predictably epistemological or "critical." The strategy is to argue that contingency (and with it purposiveness) cannot be excised from nature, considered as the object of human or, more generally, finite cognition. The defining characteristic of such cognition is its discursiveness. As the *Critique of Pure Reason* showed, this is a consequence of the separation of the functions of sensibility, through which objects are given insofar as they affect the mind, and understanding, through which given objects (sensible particulars) are thought. According to Kant, knowledge of the discursive type (the only type possible for man) essentially involves the subsumption of particulars (provided by sensibility) under universals (produced by the understanding). To know a given particular is to recognize it as an instance of a general kind. But the very fact that the particulars are not derived from the universal is enough to render their accord or subsumability, which is a necessary condition for the possibility of such knowledge, a contingent matter.<sup>52</sup>

The essential point here is the genuinely transcendental character of Kant's claim. This means that it can be construed neither in empirical (psychological) nor transcendent metaphysical terms. Its non-empirical character is reflected in the insistence that contingency is a necessary ingredient in the conceptual scheme of *any* finite intelligence. From this Kant concludes that the distinction between a mechanism and a technic of nature, and with it the appeal to final causes, cannot be construed as a function of the state of science, such that future advances will make possible the reduction of teleological to

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 406-407.

mechanistic explanation. On the contrary, Kant boldly proclaims: "It is utterly impossible for human reason, or for any finite reason qualitatively resembling ours, however much it may surpass it in degree, to hope to understand the generation even of a blade of grass from mechanical causes."<sup>53</sup> Correlatively, its non-metaphysical character is reflected in its limitation to a "finite reason qualitatively resembling ours." This serves to leave open the possibility that contingency (and with it purposiveness in nature) would have no place for a qualitatively different, infinite intellect, which would be acquainted with things as they are in themselves. Consequently, the concept of contingency cannot be applied to things as they are in themselves. We have already seen that this move plays a crucial role in Kant's resolution of the antinomy of teleological judgment.

As Kant himself acknowledges, the cogency of this approach, which involves the reference to certain peculiarities of "our" understanding, rests upon the coherence of this conception of an intuitive intellect with which the discursive manner of cognition is contrasted.<sup>54</sup> Only by reference to "an underlying idea of a possible understanding different from the human" can Kant drive the necessary critical wedge between transcendental claims about peculiarities or subjective conditions of human knowledge and metaphysical claims about things as they are in themselves, i.e., things as they would be for an understanding that is exempt from these (and all) subjective conditions. Of course, such an intellect is completely unknown to us and we are in no position even to establish its possibility. Nevertheless, Kant maintains that the mere fact that the concept of such an intellect does not contain any contradiction allows us to give it a problematic status. Such status is sufficient to justify a purely methodological use of this conception in order to provide a contrast to our "peculiarly human" way of knowing.

Kant had already made use of this mode of analysis in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially in the chapter: "The Ground of the Distinction of all Objects in General into Phenomena and Noumena." There the concern was to provide a "critical" interpretation of the distinction between phenomena and noumena, which would make it possible to attribute a role, as a limiting concept, to the noumenon in the face of the (presumably) demonstrated unknowability of noumena or things as they are in themselves. Consistent with the method

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 409-410.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 405.

of transcendental reflection, the notion of "object" is construed in epistemological terms as the correlate of a certain manner of cognition. This means that qualitatively different manners of cognition or "intellects" have as their correlates qualitatively distinct "objects." Within this context, the problematic concept of an intellect possessed of non-sensible and hence intellectual intuition is introduced in order to provide the notion of an intellect capable of having noumena as its object. The actuality of noumena (in this positive sense) depends upon the actuality of such an intellect, and this can never be established. Nevertheless, the concept of a noumenon, so construed, is able to fulfill its "critical" function by limiting the "pretensions of sensibility." It does this by underscoring the claim that space and time are merely forms of human sensibility, not properties or conditions of things as they are in themselves.<sup>55</sup>

In the *Critique of Judgment* this line of thought undergoes a significant development. The non-sensible intellect of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the knower of non-sensible objects or noumena, is now characterized more definitely (although still problematically) as an intuitive intellect. In contrast to "our" (discursive) intellect which moves from the "*analytic universal*" to the particular, that is, from concepts to empirical intuitions (whence the contingency of the fit between the two), the hypothetical intuitive intellect "moves from the *synthetic universal*, or intuition of a whole as a whole, to the particular—that is to say, from the whole to the parts." The claim is that such an intellect, which Kant contends qualifies as an "understanding" (*Verstand*) in the widest sense of the term, would not encounter the contingency of the fit between universal and particular which is a decisive mark of all discursive knowing. For that very reason it would have no use for the idea of purpose and no need to recognize the distinction between mechanism and teleology.<sup>56</sup>

This sketch of the Kantian defense of contingency and purposiveness in nature puts us in a better position to understand both the specific criticisms which Kant levied against Spinoza and why the conflict between them can be characterized as one of "standpoint." The essential feature of Kant's critical standpoint is its emphasis upon the conditions of human knowledge. The central teaching of the *Aesthetic*

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<sup>55</sup> The account offered here is admittedly extremely sketchy. For a detailed treatment of these issues the reader is referred to my "Things-in-themselves, Noumena and the Transcendental Object," *Dialectica*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1978, 41-76.

<sup>56</sup> *K. d. U.*, 406-407.

and *Analytic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is that human knowledge is subject to certain *a priori* conditions (both sensible and intellectual) which determine the form of the objects of human experience (as enduring spatio-temporal entities standing in causal relations with one another etc.), but which are only applicable to things *qua* objects of human experience. The "moral" of the First Critique is that the neglect of these conditions, or the failure to recognize that they are *only* conditions of objects of human experience (epistemic conditions), not conditions of things as they are in themselves (ontological conditions), is the direct source of skepticism, antinomy, or, more generally, transcendental illusion. The *Critique of Judgment* develops this line of thought by introducing conditions, not of experience, but of reflection upon experience, which likewise have an *a priori* function and hence transcendental status.

I have argued elsewhere that transcendental idealism consists in the claim that the objects of human experience, and only these objects, must be viewed as "in us" in the transcendental sense. This, in turn, amounts to the demand that these objects be considered as subject to the sensible and intellectual conditions noted above.<sup>57</sup> Correlatively, the label "transcendental realism" can be applied to all philosophies which either neglect or misinterpret these conditions. This would hold not only of Spinoza but of all "pre-critical" philosophies; for as Kant himself says: "*Alle Philosophien sind im Wesentlichen nicht unterschieden bis auf die Kritische.*"<sup>58</sup> But transcendental realism, as Kant construed it, involves more than simply the failure to achieve the critical standpoint. It also involves a model of knowledge or standpoint of its own. This standpoint can be broadly construed as theocentric. The defining feature of this theocentric standpoint, construed in the broad sense wherein it is applicable to thinkers for whom it is merely implicit, is the assumption that human knowledge must be analyzed and evaluated in terms of its conformity (or lack thereof) to some pre-given ideal or standard. This conception is obviously the heritage of Platonism, but it was shared by rationalism and empiricism alike. The conflict between philosophical schools, even between what Kant calls the dogmatists and the skeptics, is not over this ideal or standard of

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<sup>57</sup> "Kant's Refutation of Realism," *Dialectica*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1976, 224-253. I there develop a methodological interpretation of Kant's idealism.

<sup>58</sup> *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. XXX, 335.



knowledge, but over the extent to which the human mind is judged capable of conforming to it.<sup>59</sup>

Now no modern philosopher, with the exception of Malebranche, maintained the theocentric standard in as explicit a form as Spinoza. Not only did Spinoza affirm this standard, but he also affirmed the possibility of its attainment by the human mind. This is presumably attained in the second and third kinds of knowledge, whereby the human mind is said to view things *sub specie aeternitatis*. Indeed, the second part of the *Ethics* can be viewed as an extended argument, the goal of which is to demonstrate that the human mind can transcend the "common order of nature" (the finitistic perspective, governed by inadequate ideas) and conceive things according to the "order of the intellect," which is equivalent to conceiving them *sub specie aeternitatis*. This argument culminates in the most un-Kantian claim that "The human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God" (E II, P47). Similarly, the fifth part of the *Ethics* is devoted to the demonstration that the conception of things *sub specie aeternitatis* leads to the *amor intellectualis Dei*, which is not merely the means for the overcoming of the passions, but also the source of human blessedness.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, when seen from a Kantian perspective, Spinoza, who denies the transcendence of God, is none the less a philosopher of transcendence in a radical sense. The realization of this fact enables us to put the previously discussed criticisms of Spinoza in their proper perspective and to more fully grasp both their continuity and their philosophical significance. First of all, it enables us to see more concretely why Kant repeatedly dismissed Spinoza's doctrine as *Schwärmerei*, characterized it as Platonism carried to its logical extreme, and described it

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<sup>59</sup> This conception has been called by Gottfried Martin the "theological foundation of truth" and he sees Kant as having undermined it in the antinomies: *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science*, Eng. trans. by P.G. Lucas, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955), 60–61. The interpretation offered here differs from that of Martin and others who write in a similar vein largely in the fact that it sees a theocentric standard as operative implicitly in thinkers who would not acknowledge a "theological foundation." For example, Hume's skepticism concerning knowledge of matters of fact can be seen as an expression of this conception because it is based upon an assumption of what genuine knowledge would be like if it were attainable by the human mind. The conception must, therefore, be seen as a methodological assumption, often tacitly adhered to, rather than as a metaphysical doctrine.

<sup>60</sup> I develop this interpretation of Spinoza in my *Benedict de Spinoza* (Boston: Twayne, 1975) esp. 99–114, 147–161.

in terms highly reminiscent of Malebranche. Secondly, it helps to explain why, under the impetus of Jacobi, Kant found it necessary to define his position on purposiveness in nature *vis a vis* that of Spinoza, and to develop his critique in the manner in which he did in the *Critique of Judgment*. Finally, it can perhaps even enable us to understand one of the more enigmatic of the many references to Spinoza found in the *Opus Postumum*:

We cannot know any objects, neither in us nor as found outside of us, except in so far as we place in ourselves the act of knowing according to certain laws. The mind (*Geist*) of man is Spinoza's God (which concerns the formal element of all sensible objects). And transcendental idealism is realism in the absolute sense.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from its overall obscurity, the most notable feature of this passage is its equation of the human mind with Spinoza's God. One can never be very certain in dealing with passages such as this from the latest portion of the *Opus Postumum*, which are frequently dismissed as manifestations of advanced senility. Nevertheless, the overall context, the reference to the "act of knowing according to certain laws" (presumably the pure concepts of the understanding) and the formal element of sensible objects (space and time), suggest that Kant's point is that in his philosophy the human mind plays the same role that God, or, more properly, the infinite intellect does in Spinoza's. Just as for Spinoza objects are only "adequately" or "clearly and distinctly conceived" by being referred to God or the "order of the intellect," so for Kant objects are only determined or known in so far as they are considered in relation to the conditions of human knowing. The necessity of considering objects in this manner would also explain why transcendental idealism (which does so consider them) is "realism in the absolute sense." Despite the terminological differences, this can easily be seen as a restatement of the familiar critical doctrine that only transcendental idealism is consonant with an empirical realism. Since Spinoza does not recognize the necessity of considering objects in this way, but instead appeals to their intuition in God, it would follow that he cannot be considered a realist in the absolute, i.e., empirical sense. Consequently, it comes as no surprise to find the label "*Schwärmerei*" still applied to Spinoza's thought in the *Opus Postumum*.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. XXI, 99; Cf. 51.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 48.

Moreover, this puts us in a position to understand Kant's characterization of Spinoza as an idealist. This not only occurs in the *Critique of Judgment*, wherein Spinozism is described as an idealism of purposiveness or of final causes, but also in the *Opus Postumum*, wherein it is given a much more general sense. Indeed, in the latter work Kant speaks in several places of the transcendental idealism of Spinoza.<sup>63</sup> As Adickes suggests, this could be due partly to the influence of Lichtenberg, who both advocated a version of transcendental idealism and spoke glowingly of Spinoza, and partly to Kant's occasional tendency to reconstruct the views of his predecessors and opponents in such a way as to bring them into accord with his own position.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that even here Kant does assert that, taken literally, Spinoza's transcendental idealism is transcendent,<sup>65</sup> and that Spinoza's conception of substance can be construed as a regulative but not as a constitutive principle.<sup>66</sup> In light of these remarks, as well as the discussion in the *Critique of Judgment*, it seems reasonable to assume that Kant viewed Spinoza's "idealism" as analogous to the "empirical" or "dogmatic idealism" which he claimed to have refuted in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

As the name indicates, the defining characteristic of empirical idealism is its construal of ideality in an empirical or psychological rather than a transcendental sense. This sense is incompatible with the objective reality of that which is held to be ideal. In its full blown form, wherein it actually denies all objective, i.e., extra-mental reality, and reduces objects to mere representations in the mind of individuals, this idealism becomes dogmatic. This is precisely how Kant saw Berkeley. In the more moderate form, in which it is found in Descartes, it merely raises doubts concerning the possibility of demonstrating the reality of the "external world." Ideality in the transcendental sense, however, is not only seen by Kant as compatible with the objective, i.e., empirical reality of that which is deemed ideal, but also as necessary for the affirmation of its objective reality. Hence the claim in the passage cited above that transcendental idealism is "realism in the absolute sense."

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 13, 15, 22, 50, 56, 64, 87.

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of the influence of Lichtenberg on Kant and especially on his views about Spinoza see Adickes, *Kants Opus postumum*, 763 ff. and 840.

<sup>65</sup> *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. XXI, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 89.

The contrast between these two senses of ideality is nicely illustrated by the account in the *Critique of Judgment*. Both Kant and Spinoza reject what Kant calls the "realism of purposiveness" or of "final causes." Nevertheless, they do so for quite different reasons and this gives completely different flavors to their respective versions of idealism. Spinoza's position, at least as Kant construes it, is straightforwardly reductionistic. Final causes are "ideal" (an expression which Spinoza never uses) in the sense that the belief therein is a product of the human imagination, having no basis in *rerum natura*. Given Spinoza's theocentrically oriented epistemology, this means that the ideas of such causes and of a God that acts with an end in view are totally inadequate and cannot fulfill any positive epistemic function. Using the terminology of the First Critique, this would be a clear instance of a "dogmatic idealism of purposiveness." Now Kant, as we have already seen, likewise rejects any dogmatic claim to the effect that God actually acts with an end in view or that organic beings are in fact products of design. On the other hand, he does insist that the concept of purposiveness fulfills a positive epistemic function as a heuristic principle or maxim of reflective judgment. It is, therefore, "ideal" in the sense that it is imposed upon phenomena by the human mind; but it is transcendently ideal in virtue of its epistemic function.

Kant's critique of Spinoza on this point closely parallels his better known critique of the Leibnizian theory of space and time. In both cases the critique is directed against what Kant takes to be a mistaken, non-transcendental sense of ideality. Leibniz repeatedly termed space and time "ideal," meaning thereby merely that they are "confused representations," due to the limits of human cognition. Such a position is clearly reductionistic. It holds that the spatio-temporal relations between phenomena, and with them the whole sensible content of human knowledge, are reducible (for God) to the purely conceptual determinations pertaining to the monadological realm (noumena). Against this Kant maintained that space and time are *a priori* conditions of human experience which, as such, positively determine the form of this experience. This is why Kant claimed that Leibniz and his followers "falsified" the concept of sensibility and of appearance (A43/B60), that they "*intellectualized appearances*" (A271/B327), and even that they mistook appearances for things in themselves (A264/B320). All of these formulations reflect Kant's fundamental quarrel with the theocentric, transcendently realistic orientation of the Leibnizian philosophy, with its failure to recognize that human knowledge has its own *a priori* conditions which cannot be explained

away by means of an appeal to a transcendent standard of adequacy.<sup>67</sup>

In the last analysis, then, the Kantian critique of both Leibniz and Spinoza comes to much the same point. As he saw the matter, the basic fallacy of both "dogmatists" lies in their failure to recognize that human knowledge, whether it be with regard to sensibility as in Leibniz or judgment as in Spinoza, has its own *a priori* conditions. This can also be expressed, although Kant never quite puts it in this way, by claiming that they failed to recognize the autonomy of human knowledge. On the contrary, their reductionistic program, with its requirement or ideal of the replacement of the inadequate, sensibly conditioned features of human knowledge by the clear and distinct conceptions appropriate to an infinite intellect, can be seen as a species of heteronomy. As such, it shares, for Kant at least, the endemic fate of heteronomy in all of its forms; viz., it explains away precisely that which is presupposed as the fundamental datum to be explained. In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant makes this quite clear with respect to Spinoza's treatment of purposiveness. As I have tried to show, however, this must be seen as merely a reflection of a more fundamental philosophical opposition of which Kant was very much aware.

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<sup>67</sup> I discuss Kant's critique of Leibniz in more detail in my *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) and in "Kant's Refutation of Realism," *op. cit.*