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Edited by Brady Bowman and Allen Speight

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[More information](#)*Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Works, Volume III*

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Works, Volume 3, Leipzig: Gerhard
Fischer, 1816. 568pp. + xxvi

The reviewer is pleased that a new volume of Jacobi's collected works has appeared so soon after the last, and wishes both that noble elder and his readers all the best for the uninterrupted continuation of their publication. This third volume contains four writings which, in the words of the preface, "to a certain extent originated simultaneously and are but divergent parts of a single whole that recapitulates itself differently in each of them." They are: (1) Jacobi's *Letter to Fichte*, first published in 1799; (2) an essay which first appeared in Reinhold's *Contributions* (no. 31, 1801), with the title *On Critical Philosophy's Attempt to Bring Reason to Understanding and to Transform Philosophy as Such*;¹ (3) *On a Prophecy by Lichtenberg*,² first printed in 1801; and (4) the text *On Divine Things and their Revelation*,³ with a foreword written for this new edition. An interesting appendix of twenty-three letters to Johann Müller, Georg Forster, Herder, Kant (among them one from Kant to Jacobi), Privy Councillor Schlosser, J. G. Jacobi, and several unnamed recipients concludes the volume.⁴ 7

¹ *Über das Unternehmen des Kriticismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Ansicht zu geben*. Jacobi's lengthy essay appeared in the periodical *Beyträge zur Leichterem Übersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie bey den Anfänge des 19. Jahrhunderts* [*Contributions to a Simpler Overview of the Situation of Philosophy at the Beginning of the 19th Century*], edited by the philosopher Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1757–1823). Jacobi's title contains a play on the words *Vernunft* (reason) and *Verstand* (understanding). "To bring someone to understanding" (*zum Verstand bringen*) means to bring him to his senses.

² *Über eine Weissagung Lichtenbergs*. ³ *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung*.

⁴ Johann Friedrich Müller (1749–1825) was a painter and poet. Jacobi and Goethe had made his acquaintance together in 1775. Georg Forster (1754–94) was a natural historian, ethnologist, and essayist who accompanied James Cook on his circumnavigation of the globe between 1772 and 1775. He was a founding member of the short-lived Mainz Republic (1792), and his revolutionary sympathies took him to Paris in 1793, where he died of pneumonia in 1794. Johann Georg Schlosser (1739–99) was a prominent intellectual, long-standing member of Jacobi's circle, and Goethe's brother-in-law. He was well known both for his numerous translations of classical Greek works of

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One might have wished that in the order of publication of these collected works Jacobi's earlier *Letters on the Doctrine of Spinoza*⁵ had preceded the treatises contained in the present volume, for these *Letters* respond to an historical interest that is older and prior to the forms of philosophy dealt with by these treatises, namely the metaphysics of Leibniz and Wolff, which at the time of the *Letters* was at its last breath. That metaphysics was a common point of departure for both Jacobi's philosophy and the philosophy of Kant which Jacobi was later to oppose. The *Letters* also offer a more extensive and reasoned presentation of Jacobi's views on the vacuity of claims to scientific knowledge of the divine. These views are also at the fore of the present writings, not only as limited to the philosophical systems dealt with there, but in their full generality. Yet despite the spiritedness⁶ and warmth that attend them, they still leave much to be desired by those who, when it comes to truth, are in the habit of demanding reasons. The prior publication of the *Letters* might have been viewed as a sign of more respect for this habit than was the publication of the dialogue *David Hume on Faith*⁷ in the second volume in the series. – How Jacobi confronts the philosophies dealt with in the present volume, an attitude which this review must convey, will gain in clarity and perspicuity if we first remember how Jacobi immersed his mind in the study of Spinozism and how he had thereby established the position at which, already fully matured, he encountered Kant's philosophy upon its original publication. In order to clarify that, however, we must first recall a few things about the state of philosophy in those days.

The great spirit of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* had consisted in knowing that thought⁸ is the ground of being and in comprehending the various

literature and philosophy and for his outspoken criticism of the Enlightenment. His work *Plato's Briefe* [*Plato's Letters*] (1793) provoked Kant's critical response in the essay *On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy* (1796). Johann Georg Jacobi (1740–1814) was Friedrich Heinrich's older brother, a prominent poet in the anaerontic style popular in eighteenth-century Germany, and professor of beaux-arts in Freiburg.

⁵ Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau: Gottl. Löwe, 1785), with an important second edition in 1789. An English version of the 1785 edition with excerpts from the 1789 edition can be found in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel "Allwill,"* trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). In the following, this text is cited as *Jacobi: Main Philosophical Writings*.

⁶ *Geist*.

⁷ *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (Breslau: Gottl. Löwe, 1787).

⁸ The English word "thought" is used to translate two different words in German. On the one hand, it renders the gerund *das Denken* ("thinking"). In the present context, on the other hand, the same

forms of being only in and through that ground. But French philosophy had given up that spirit and embarked instead on the opposite pathway of Lockeanism, seeking to derive thought from the immediate givens of the *world of appearance*. To the extent that the need still remained for a universal ground in this world of appearance, its fundamental essence was declared to be a conceptless universality, namely an indeterminate *nature* or rather a nature onto which a few barren determinations of reflection such as totality, forces, composition, and similar forms of externality and mechanism were superficially tacked. German culture had essentially taken the same direction. In every quarter, the Enlightenment had eroded the traditions of venerable doctrine and mores, the passively *received* and immediately *given* content of a world charged through with the divine; it abandoned and rejected these so-called *posits* on the grounds that self-consciousness was not to be found in them or (what comes to the same) because self-consciousness could not find them within itself.⁹ What remained was the *caput mortuum*¹⁰ of an abstract, empty entity that *cannot be comprehended*, i.e., an entity in which thinking¹¹ is not present to itself. That which is being in and for itself had thus been reduced to nothingness, for what self-consciousness found in itself were *finite purposes* and the things related to such purposes by *utility*.¹² There were some for whom their religious feeling was sufficient to counteract this contagion; they attributed the theoretical results to mistakes in cognition¹³ and sought to support and save the truth, as it were, by correcting and improving the cognition of it.¹⁴ Jacobi, on the contrary, did not counter with just the certitude of his soul. Rather than

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term renders the German word *Gedanke*. Hegel uses the term *Gedanke* both in the usual sense and in a special sense closely related to his technical use of the term *Begriff* ("concept").

⁹ Hegel's term *das Positive* most frequently refers to what has been *merely* posited, i.e., posited from a source external to the consciousness of those who accept it as binding and valid. Hegel offers a critical analysis of the Enlightenment's struggle against the merely positive in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (trans. Terry Pinkard [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming], §§537–583).

¹⁰ *Todtenkopf* ("skull") is the literal German translation of the alchemical term of art *caput mortuum*, which designated the chemical residue that remained after a distillation or sublimation in the process of which everything of value had been removed from the substance that was left over. Hegel himself generally uses the Latin term; in fact, this use of a German equivalent is the only instance in all his published writings. Cf. §44 of the *Encyclopedia*, where in a similar vein he characterizes Kant's thing-in-itself as a *caput mortuum*.

¹¹ *Das Denken*.

¹² Hegel presents his views on the historical conflict between the Enlightenment and the religious tradition and the ascendance of the category of utility in more detail in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§562–563 and 575.

¹³ Here and throughout the text, the English expression "cognition" serves to render the German terms *Erkennen* and *Erkenntnis*.

¹⁴ Hegel may be referring to a stream of thought represented by Christian August Crusius (1715–75, professor of philosophy and theology in Leipzig) in the middle of the eighteenth century. In his *Entwurf der notwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten* (1745: *An Outline of Necessary Truths of Reason*) and

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lingering with the barren remains in which metaphysics was eking out its wan existence and nourishing its stale hopes, his deeply thorough mind conceived philosophy in its relation to the sources of knowledge and delved down to their undiluted purity. Philosophical endeavors may slave away at the analysis, distinction, and recombination of metaphysical topics, inventing new logical possibilities and refuting others. Yet if their foundation does not lie in the infinite intuition¹⁵ and cognition of the one substantial being that is Spinozism and in whose possession we find Jacobi – if that Spinozism is not the standard by which they measure every further determination – then the only relation linking the determinations of cognition to truth will be missing. Spinoza expresses that relation when he says that all things must be contemplated *sub specie aeternitatis*. Because the purity of this intuition was present in Jacobi, he made his appearance in the time of the metaphysics of the older school¹⁶ with such exceptional superiority, while others still took the interest of knowledge to lie in a few barren, conceptless determinations of understanding such as existence, possibility, concept, and so on. It makes no difference that God was supposed to be the object and goal of such determinations, for it is those determinations themselves which form the *content* of cognition when we seek to understand God by their means. *Outside and apart from* such finite content, the idea of God itself remains nothing more than a mere representation¹⁷ or sentiment, the infinite character of which remains external to the cognition. The finitude

Weg zur Gewißheit und Zuverlässigkeit der menschlichen Erkenntnis (1747: *The Path to Certainty and Reliability of Human Knowledge*), Crusius took issue with the logic, metaphysics, and philosophical theology of Leibniz and Wolff. Hegel could also be thinking here of the Jewish rationalist thinker Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), who was intimately involved in the original controversy on Lessing's alleged Spinozism. It is noteworthy that Mendelssohn criticized Jacobi for his fideist conception of intuition (cf. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. I, I, ed. Klaus Hammacher and Irmgard-Maria Piske [Hamburg: Meiner, 1998], p. 115). Hegel briefly discusses Crusius and Mendelssohn in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (*Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970], vol. XX, pp. 263 ff.).

¹⁵ "Intuition" renders *Anschauung*. In the few passages which seem to call for a rendering of *Anschauung* different from "intuition," the German word will be indicated in a footnote. In the passage at hand, Hegel may be referring to Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva* and the contemplation of things *sub specie aeternitatis* (cf. Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethica*, part 2, prop. 40–47, esp. 44, corollary 2).

¹⁶ When Hegel speaks of the "metaphysics of the older school" (*vormalige Metaphysik*) he is invariably referring to the methods, concerns, and doctrines of the Leibniz–Wolff school of philosophy that dominated German thought well into the latter years of the eighteenth century. Cf. *Encyclopedia*, §27.

¹⁷ Kant gave the German word *Vorstellung* a technical meaning equivalent to the Latin term *repraesentatio* (cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, *ibid.*, pp. 398 f. = B 376). Although in Hegel's philosophical psychology the term takes on a highly specific meaning somewhat different from its meaning in Kant (cf. *Encyclopedia*, §§451–454), he most frequently uses it with pejorative connotations in contradistinction to the properly speculative conception of a category or determination of thought, speaking of "mere representations" (*bloße Vorstellungen*).

of such content, however, and thus also of the subjective grappling it occasions, is consumed in the one absolute. Spirit only achieves the absolute and becomes consciousness of reason,¹⁸ however, by recognizing its limitations as *illusory*, as mere forms of *appearance*, and thus consigning them to the abyss. – Jacobi had achieved this highest intuition not only in the form of feeling and mere representation, the form at which mere religiosity halts; he achieved it on the higher path of *thought* and recognized with Spinoza that this vision¹⁹ is the ultimate and true result of all thinking, and that every consistent system of philosophy must in the end lead to Spinozism.²⁰

A substantial difference enters in at this point, however, in that the one absolute substance must be considered merely an *initial* form of the necessary result and that it is necessary to go beyond this form. The unshakeable feeling was manifest in Jacobi that in this initial immediacy the truth could not suffice for spirit, which is not something immediate, and hence that the truth had not yet been grasped as *absolute spirit*. The object as taken by *sensuous* consciousness is the believed being²¹ of finite things. As consciousness progresses toward Reason, however, it comes to reject the truth of immediate *sensuous belief*. Being, raised to infinity, is the *pure abstraction of thinking*, and this thinking of pure being is not sensuous intuition but rather *intellectual intuition* or the intuition of reason.²² Since, however, in its immediacy infinite being is only something abstract, unmoving, and non-spiritual, we find that what is *free*, i.e., self-determining, is missing in that abyss into which all determinateness has been cast and destroyed.

¹⁸ Hegel distinguishes between subjective and objective reason (cf. *Encyclopedia*, §§441, 467 and the introduction to the *Science of Logic*, *GW*, vol. XXI, p. 30). In the present passage, the phrase “consciousness of reason” is therefore importantly ambiguous and can be read as referring both to (subjective) consciousness of (objective) reason and to objective reason’s own realized consciousness as speculative philosophy.

¹⁹ *Anschauung*.

²⁰ “Lessing: . . . There is no other philosophy than the philosophy of Spinoza. I: That might be true. For the determinist, if he wants to be consistent, must become a fatalist: the rest then follows by itself” (“Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn,” in *Jacobi: Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 187).

²¹ *Geglaubtes Seyn*.

²² *Vernunftanschauung*. Jacobi had introduced this term to characterize his own rational intuitionism in the preface to the dialogue *David Hume on Belief* in the second volume of his collected writings, a preface he describes as an introduction to his complete writings (Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. Friedrich Roth and Friedrich Köppen [Fleischer: Leipzig, 1815], vol. II, pp. 3–123). There (p. 59) Jacobi writes, “This above all must be borne in mind: Just as there is sensible intuition, intuition by means of the senses, there is also such a thing as rational intuition by means of reason. Both stand over against each other as proper sources of knowledge and neither one can be derived from the other . . . For the same reason, no demonstration can be valid against rational intuition or the intuition of reason, a faculty which enables us to know supersensible objects [*jenseitige Gegenstände*], i.e., a faculty which renders certain their existence and truth.” [Our translation.] In the rest of the text, we translate *Vernunftanschauung* as “rational intuition.”

Immediately and for itself, freedom is *personality* as the infinite point of *determination in and for itself*. The one unalloyed substance, however, or pure intuition (which is the same as *abstract thinking*) represents only *one* side of freedom, namely the side on which it has only just arrived at the simple element of universality and left the two finitudes of being and consciousness behind it, without, however, positing self-determination and personality within that element. For it is to no avail that in absolute substance *Thought*, the ground of freedom and personality, is just as much an attribute as *Being* or extension; since substance is the undifferentiated and undifferentiable unity of both, their *fundamental determination* remains *immediacy* or *being*. Such being, however, contains no transition from itself to an understanding or to anything singular. An even more obvious requirement would be to demonstrate some transition from the absolute unity to the divine attributes, for it has merely been *assumed* that there are such attributes, just as the existence of a finite *understanding* or *imagination* and of particular, finite things was assumed.²³ Their being is constantly being revoked as something untrue and immersed in the infinity of substance, yet despite this recognition of their negativity they retain the status of a *given point of departure*. Conversely, absolute substance is not understood as the point of departure for distinctions, particularization, individuation, or whatever form distinctions may take, be it as attributes and modes, as being and thought, understanding, imagination or what have you. And hence everything is merely submerged and perishes in a substance which remains motionless within itself and out of which nothing ever resurfaces.

Upon reflection, however, it is not hard to discover the internal principle of separation in substance itself, for we need only reflect upon that which is so to speak *in fact* contained within substance. For since substance has been defined as the truth of the particular things that are sublated and extinguished in it, *absolute negativity* has effectively already been posited as its determination, and absolute negativity is itself the source of freedom.²⁴ – Everything depends here on a correct understanding of the status and significance of negativity. If it is taken only to be the determinateness of

²³ Cf. *Ethics*, part 1, def. 4 & 6 and prop. 10, schol., part 2, prop. 1, 2, and 7, schol.; cf. also Letter 64 to G. H. Schuller from July 29, 1675. Spinoza's assumption of a finite understanding is evident in the wording of part 1, def. 4: "By *attribute*, I mean that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance" (*Benedict de Spinoza: On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes [New York: Dover, 1955], p. 45).

²⁴ Cf. Hegel's exposition of the concept of spirit (*Begriff des Geistes*) in the *Encyclopedia*, §382, where the connection between freedom and absolute negativity is spelled out in greater detail.

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finite things (*omnis determinatio est negatio*),²⁵ then we are already thinking of it outside of absolute substance and have allowed finite things to fall outside of it; our imagination *maintains* them *outside of* absolute substance. Conceived of this way, however, negation fails to be seen as *internal to the infinite* or *internal to substance*, which is supposed rather to be the sublated being of finite things. – Yet the manner in which negation is internal to substance has in fact *thus already been said*, and systematic progress in philosophical reflection really consists in nothing other than knowing what one has already said oneself. Substance, namely, is supposed to be the sublation of the finite, and that is just to say that it is the *negation of negation*, since it is precisely negation which we took to be definitive of the finite. And as the negation of negation, substance is absolute *affirmation*, and just as immediately it is *freedom* and *self-determination*. – Thus the difference between determining the absolute as substance and determining it as spirit boils down to the question whether thinking, having annihilated its finitudes and mediations, negated its negations, and thus comprehended the one absolute, is conscious of what it has actually achieved in its cognition of absolute substance, or whether it lacks such consciousness.

II

In his innermost, Jacobi had made just this transition from absolute substance to absolute spirit and had proclaimed with an irresistible *feeling of certainty*, “*God is spirit, the absolute is free and has the nature of a person.*” – In terms of philosophical insight, it was of the utmost significance that Jacobi brought out the moment of immediacy in our knowledge of God so distinctly and emphatically. God is not a dead god, but a *living* one; indeed, he is more than merely a living God, he is *spirit* and *eternal love*, and this only because his being is not abstract being, but an internal movement of self-differentiation, and because he is cognition of himself in the person differentiated from himself. His essence is the immediate, i.e., determinately existing unity,²⁶ only insofar as the eternal mediation eternally returns to unity, and this returning is itself that unity, the unity of life, feeling of self, personhood, and self-knowledge. – Thus Jacobi claimed that reason, as that which is *supernatural* and *divine* in man and which is aware of God, is *intuition*, and hence that, since as life and spirit reason is

²⁵ Although Hegel attributes this principle to Spinoza, it does not occur literally in the cited form in his writings. (Cf. Spinoza’s letter to Jarig Jellis of June 2, 1674, in *Benedict de Spinoza*, p. 370.) Hegel presumably models his formulation on Jacobi’s use of the principle in the *Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1789 edition), p. 182: “XII. *Determinatio est negatio, seu determinatio ad rem juxta suum esse non pertinet.* Therefore particular things, to the extent that they exist only in a certain determined manner, are *non-entia*; and that undetermined, infinite being [*Wesen*] is the only true *ens reale, hoc est, est omne esse, & praeter quod nullum datur esse.*” [Our translation.]

²⁶ *Seiende Einheit.*

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essentially mediation, it could only be immediate knowledge by sublating that mediation. Only an inert, sensuous thing has its immediacy otherwise than by mediating itself with itself.

12 However, in Jacobi's thought the transition from mediation to immediacy has more the character of an external rejection and dismissal of mediation. To this extent, it is reflective consciousness itself which, isolated from the intuition of reason, isolates the mediating movement of cognition from that intuition. Indeed, he goes so far as to declare the movement of cognition to be an obstacle to such intuition and ruinous of it. Here we must distinguish between two acts. First there is finite cognition itself, which is concerned exclusively with objects and forms which do not exist in and for themselves, but are conditioned and grounded by something other than themselves. The very character of such cognition thus consists in mediation. The second type of cognition is the reflection just referred to, which recognizes both the first, subjective mode of cognition itself and its objects as not absolute. Thus on the one hand this second mode of cognition is itself mediated, for it essentially refers to the first mode of cognition, having it as its presupposition and object. On the other hand, though, it is the sublation of that first mode of cognition. Therefore, as was stated above, it is a mediation which is itself the sublation of mediation, or in other words it is a sublation of mediation only to the extent that it is itself mediation. As the sublation of mediation, cognition is *immediate* cognition. If cognition does not understand its immediacy in this way, it fails to grasp that this is the only sense in which it is the immediacy of *reason*, and not that of a rock. For natural consciousness, knowledge of God may well appear as merely immediate knowledge, and natural consciousness may see no difference between the immediacy with which it is aware of spirit and the immediacy of its perception of a rock. But the business of philosophical knowledge is to recognize in what the activity of natural consciousness truly consists, to recognize that its immediacy is a living, spiritual immediacy that only arises within a self-sublating process of mediation. This insight is precisely what natural consciousness lacks, just as, being an animate, organic entity, it digests without possessing the least knowledge of physiology.

Apparently it was cognition of God in the form once known as the proofs of God's existence which led Jacobi to believe that the idea behind them was that consciousness could not count as knowledge of God without first having *formally* worked through the chain of inferences, concepts, and implications contained in those proofs – which is like telling a man that he could not digest, walk, see, or hear without first having studied anatomy

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and physiology.²⁷ A closely related misunderstanding is that the mediating process of cognition makes *knowledge of God* and *God's being* itself into something dependent, something whose ground lies in something other than itself.²⁸ This apparent disproportion vanishes, however, as soon as we examine the matter itself. For since *God* is the result, the mediation in question immediately reveals itself to be a mediation which sublates itself in that result. What is *last* is seen to be that which is *first*; the *end* is the *purpose*; and when we discover it to be that purpose, indeed the absolute purpose, we recognize the product as the immediate first mover.²⁹ This progression toward a result is thus at the same time a returning into itself, a repelling that is in itself its own self-repelling.³⁰ It is what was described above as the true nature of spirit, i.e., of the active final purpose that creates itself. If spirit were immediate being without effective activity, it would not be spirit, indeed it would not even be life.³¹ And if it were not purpose and purposive activity, then spirit would not discover in its product that its activity consists wholly in its own merging with itself, a mediation that mediates its own determination in immediacy.

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²⁷ Jacobi denies the possibility of proving God's existence and insists that the very attempt leads to fatalism and moreover involves the absurdity of making God, the unconditioned, into a conditional entity (cf. *Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza*, p. 122 and the seventh supplement [Beilage VII], pp. 423–434; *Jacobi: Main Philosophical Writings*, pp. 375–378). Hegel's disagreement with Jacobi over this question ran deep. In the summer of 1829 and again in the fall of 1831, Hegel was busy preparing a manuscript on the proofs of the existence of God. As Jaeschke notes, the reflections in Hegel's manuscript revolve around a detailed critique of Jacobi's position on the idea of a rational demonstration of God's existence, while Kant – prominently associated with the philosophical demise of such attempts – is not even mentioned by name (cf. Walter Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung* [Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2003], p. 499). Hegel's analogical reference to physiology and digestion is paralleled in the preface to the first edition of the *Science of Logic* (*GW*, vol. XI, p. 6) and in §19 of the *Encyclopedia*.

²⁸ Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. I, I, p. 288.

²⁹ This is a compact re-statement of the idea Hegel articulated in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that “the true is the whole” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, §20).

³⁰ Hegel's highly emphatic metaphor of a *Gegenstoß gegen sich* is nearly impossible to translate, nor can any literal interpretation be given for it without entering into the complexities of Hegel's concept of absolute negativity, the paradoxical nature of which the metaphor forcefully conveys. The metaphor is prominent in central passages of Hegel's *Science of Logic*; cf. esp. “Das Wesen als Reflexion in sich,” the initial chapter of the *Doctrine of Essence* (*GW*, vol. XI, pp. 252, 291; cf. also p. 328).

³¹ The *Science of Logic* culminates in Hegel's exposition of what he refers to as the idea (*die Idee*), which Hegel associates with the Aristotelian conception of the divine as *noēsis noēseōs* (cf. *Encyclopedia*, §577). The idea itself develops through three stages, the first of which Hegel refers to as *life*. (The other two are knowledge and the absolute idea, respectively.) Life Hegel characterizes as “the concept insofar as it at once distinguishes itself simply in itself from its objectivity and pervades that objectivity and, being an end in itself, finds and posits in that objectivity its own means, all the while remaining immanent within that means as the self-identical purpose realized in it” (*GW*, vol. XII, p. 177). [Our translation.] The gist of this description is that living beings use their own bodies as a means to continuing their physical existence, so that in the case of life means and ends coincide. As Hegel will go on to suggest in the main text, the ultimate significance of scientific and philosophical inquiry is a conscious form of this same structure.