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 Excerpt  
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## *Introduction*

German Idealism is sometimes characterized as a synthesis of the fundamental ideas of Spinoza and Kant. Though such a statement is too simplistic, there can be little doubt that without Spinoza, German Idealism would have been just as impossible as it would have been without Kant. Indeed, each of the German Idealists emphasized the importance of Spinoza for his own endeavor – in terms of both agreement and disagreement – just as each of them did with Kant.

Yet the precise nature of Spinoza's influence on the German Idealists has hardly been studied in detail. While a few older monographs address individual aspects of this relationship, there is in English no comprehensive examination of the profound impact that Spinoza's philosophy had on the German Idealists. Most importantly, there is no work that represents the current state of scholarship in these fields and reflects the enormous advances achieved by the research of the last few decades.

The present volume fills this lacuna. Moreover, the volume also sheds light on how the appropriation of Spinoza through Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel was prepared by the reception of Spinoza's philosophy by, among others, Lessing, Mendelssohn, Jacobi, Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Maimon, and, of course, Kant. The main aim is not merely to trace a part of the reception history of Spinoza's philosophy, however, but to initiate a genuine philosophical dialogue between the ideas of Spinoza and the German Idealists. We believe that the issues at stake – the value of humanity, the possibility and importance of self-negation, the nature and value of reason and imagination, the possibility of a philosophical system, human freedom, teleology, intuitive knowledge, the nature of God – are of the highest philosophical importance even today.

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This collection is especially timely in light of the trends in recent scholarship. Over the last few decades, there has been within the anglophone philosophical community a remarkable revival of interest in German Idealism. In its first phase, this revival gave particular emphasis to the relationship between German Idealism and Kantianism, playing down the metaphysical or speculative side while stressing the social and pragmatic dimensions of the idealist systems. More recently, however, this interest has also taken a more metaphysical direction, coupled with a concern with how the German Idealists conceived of the proper task and nature of philosophy itself.

This new direction of inquiry has been paralleled, interestingly, by the re-emergence of metaphysics as a central area in analytic philosophy. As is well known, the analytic tradition began with a pronounced rejection of the Hegelian and Spinozist philosophies of the British Idealists, and it seems hardly a coincidence that the re-emergence of metaphysics as a central philosophical discipline toward the end of the twentieth century occurred simultaneously with an increase of interest in and engagement with Spinoza's philosophy, including a re-evaluation of his central role in the development of modern philosophy. In point of fact, the fate of Spinozism has always been – and presumably will continue to be – strongly tied to the fate of metaphysics, for Spinoza is the metaphysician par excellence of western philosophy.

The present volume grew out of a conference on Spinoza and German Idealism, held at Johns Hopkins University in May, 2010. The conference's goal was to bring together scholars working in these areas and to make available for general discussion some of the results of these promising recent developments.

In the opening chapter, "Rationalism, idealism, monism, and beyond," Michael Della Rocca examines Spinoza's philosophical position from a number of different angles. He articulates, first, the particular kind of rationalism Spinoza endorses. He then explains what kind of idealism Spinoza's rationalism commits him to – namely a version of idealism compatible with Spinoza's explanatory separation between thought and extension. He then turns to the nature of the monism embedded in Spinoza's rationalism – namely a monism in which the multiplicity of finite things enjoys only some degree of existence. In the end, however, Della Rocca argues, this line of thought pushes us beyond both monism and Spinoza to a view according to which, perhaps, no thing exists fully.

The presence of Spinoza in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is examined by Omri Boehm in his chapter, "Kant's idea of the unconditioned and

Spinoza's: the fourth Antinomy and the Ideal of Pure Reason." Taking his cue from Kant's claim, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that if transcendental idealism is denied, "nothing remains but Spinozism," Boehm argues that this claim in fact reaffirms an argument Kant had already advanced in the fourth Antinomy. In light of this Antinomy's analysis of the unconditioned being's relation to the world, it becomes clear that already in the first *Critique* Kant had viewed Spinozism as a necessary outcome of transcendental realism.

The relation between Kant and Spinoza is examined further in a chapter by Karl Ameriks, entitled "The question is whether a purely apparent person is possible." As Ameriks argues, given both Kant's transcendental idealism and his critique of rational psychology, it is not easy to understand how – or even whether – Kant can vindicate any substantial claims about our personal identity. Spinoza's philosophy presents a significant challenge to such claims, and Schleiermacher's notes on Spinoza and Jacobi provide one of the very few early discussions as to how Kant's philosophy might relate to that of Spinoza. By considering a wide range of Kantian texts, Ameriks discusses how Kant might have reacted to Schleiermacher on this topic.

In 1785, four years after the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, F. H. Jacobi published his conversations with Lessing, *On the Doctrine of Spinoza, in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn*. With this Jacobi ignited the notorious *Spinozastreit*, or Pantheism Controversy, which shook the German intellectual world at the end of the eighteenth century. Jacobi himself was negatively disposed toward Spinozism (as was the addressee of his letters, Mendelssohn) and strove to offer an alternative to it. Thus, Michael Forster argues in "Herder and Spinoza," he can hardly be credited with initiating the "massive wave of positive appropriations of Spinoza" that followed in the wake of his publication. Instead we must turn to those who, at the time, were enthusiasts for Spinoza's philosophy: Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and among these Herder most of all. In 1787 Herder published a work, entitled *God: Some Conversations*, which defended a revised form of Spinoza's metaphysical monism and determinism. As Forster shows, however, Spinoza's positive influence on Herder began as early as 1768/1769, and Herder gradually came to incorporate increasingly fundamental aspects of Spinoza's thought from both the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Ethics*.

At the bottom of Goethe's disagreement with Jacobi's interpretation of Spinoza lies his conviction that, in identifying the "spirit of Spinozism" with the principle *a nihilo nihil fit*, Jacobi commits Spinoza to a causal

explanatory principle, and thus to a second kind of knowledge. For Goethe, however, Spinoza's "most subtle ideas" concern the *third* kind of knowledge. In "Goethe's Spinozism," Eckart Förster traces the steps that Goethe undertook to develop Spinoza's programmatic reflections on the third kind of knowledge into a methodology of *scientia intuitiva* applicable to natural objects.

Fichte, in his early *Wissenschaftslehre*, criticizes Spinoza's account of consciousness for both finite and infinite beings. In "Fichte on the consciousness of Spinoza's God," Johannes Haag reconstructs this criticism against the background of Fichte's own conception of consciousness, in particular the specific understanding of the *Thathandlung*, i.e., the original positing of the I as an I, and the allied concept of an intellectual intuition. As Haag argues, while Spinoza's subjects of empirical consciousness are incapable of an intellectual intuition, his God is similarly incapable of proceeding from the original *Thathandlung* to the second, equally essential step of self-positing, namely that of counter-positing. As a consequence, God too is incapable of an intellectual intuition, since the latter presupposes the second step. As a result, *neither* empirical subjects *nor* God can fulfill the conditions Fichte places on an explanation of consciousness.

In "Fichte on freedom: the Spinozistic background," Allen Wood explores Fichte's conception of freedom and his arguments for it, emphasizing the powerful influence Spinoza always had on Fichte. When the latter was "converted" to Kantianism in 1790, he had yet to publish anything, but he was already twenty-eight years old, and a fully formed philosopher; he even thought of himself as having a philosophical "system." All the evidence suggests that this system was a form of Spinozism. Throughout Fichte's life, Spinoza continued to be at least as powerful an influence as Kant ever was. This is true even with respect to that issue wherein Fichte saw himself aligned with Kant and in opposition to Spinoza: namely, freedom of the will. We have here a paradigm example of what we may call 'negative influence' in philosophy: the influencing philosopher determines the way the influenced philosopher poses and resolves the issue about which they disagree.

In "Spinoza in Schelling's early conception of intellectual intuition," Dalia Nassar examines Schelling's earliest philosophical writings and argues that, until 1796, Schelling was much more influenced by Spinoza than by Fichte. In particular, she contends, Schelling's conception of intellectual intuition, which he first developed in *Vom Ich als Prinzip der*

*Philosophie* (1795), mirrors Spinoza's third kind of knowledge. In spite of his clear affinity with Spinoza, however, Schelling maintains a critical attitude toward him. Nassar considers the reasons for Schelling's distance from Spinoza and concludes that, for Schelling, Spinoza's immanentism was not immanent enough.

Michael Vater ("Schelling's philosophy of identity and Spinoza's *Ethica more geometrico*") closely examines the extent of Spinoza's presence in Schelling's first document of his Philosophy of Identity, the 1801 essay *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*. Of those who sought to incorporate into their own systems as much as they dared from the *Ethica more geometrico*, no one, Vater argues, was more forthright than Schelling. His *Presentation* utilized three key concepts of Spinoza: the definition of *substance* as self-existing and *attribute* as what is conceivable only through itself; the infinite nature of the apparently finite; and *conatus*, or the endeavor of a finite entity to preserve its being.

In the German Idealists' appropriation of Spinoza, few thoughts were considered as important and central as the principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, which Hegel and his contemporaries attributed directly to Spinoza. In his chapter, "Omnis determinatio est negatio: determination, negation, and self-negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel," Yitzhak Melamed argues that this famous dictum was in fact interpreted in three quite different senses, which might be called the acosmic, the dialectical, and the Kantian sense, respectively. He examines each interpretation in detail and compares it with Spinoza's own position. Ultimately, he concludes that, in spite of Kant's expressed hostility toward Spinoza's philosophy, his latent use of the formula turns out to be much closer to Spinoza's meaning than Hegel's enthusiastic adoption of the principle.

Dean Moyar examines Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza in order to address the ongoing dispute about Hegel and metaphysics. This debate is consistently framed in terms that refer to Spinoza as a philosopher with a robust metaphysical view. The assumption is that if Hegel is shown to be closer to Spinoza than to Kant, his view should be considered metaphysical. By examining Hegel's criticism of Spinoza, focusing especially on the relation between thought and substance, Moyar clarifies some of the central issues in the debate over Hegel's metaphysics and situates his position on metaphysics in relation to both Spinoza and Kant.

Gunnar Hindrichs interprets Spinoza's and Hegel's philosophies as two models of metaphysical inferentialism. Both combine the inferential texture of thinking with revisionary metaphysics. They differ, Hindrichs

argues, in the fact that Spinoza's model rests on definitions of basic concepts and amounts to an intuitive knowledge of the whole, whereas Hegel's model dismisses these moments as violating the inferential structure of thought. For Hegel, the only fixation that can be justified under inferentialist premises is the closed system at the end of reasoning. Thus, Hegel transforms Spinoza's *prima philosophia* into a *philosophia ultima*.

Frederick Beiser, in "Trendelenburg and Spinoza," maintains it is necessary to consider the nineteenth-century philosopher Trendelenburg if one wants to do full justice to the theme of Spinoza and German Idealism. For the same criteria by which we describe Schelling and Hegel as idealists apply perfectly well to Trendelenburg. Tracing the latter's complex and developing appropriation of Spinoza, Beiser shows that Trendelenburg regarded Spinoza's system as new and original in that he provided the only alternative to materialism and teleology as the principles for the explanation of reality – a position for which Spinoza himself, however, provided insufficient justification.

What would Spinoza have made of the idealists' appropriations and criticisms of his thought, as presented by the authors in this volume? This collection opens with an examination of Spinoza's philosophical position and concludes with Don Garrett's "Reply on Spinoza's behalf."

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## CHAPTER I

*Rationalism, idealism, monism, and beyond**Michael Della Rocca*

This chapter is appearing in a volume on Spinoza and German Idealism. Unfortunately, as you may know, I don't view myself as equipped to speak in any substantial fashion on German Idealism. My only option, then, seems to be to focus – arbitrarily and unfairly from the perspective of the volume's theme – on Spinoza. But, of course, given the Principle of Sufficient Reason (the PSR), it's better to discuss nothing than to discuss one particular thing arbitrarily. And so that is what I propose to do: I will talk about nothing. Indeed, I will ultimately argue – guided here as always by the PSR – that nothing exists or at least that nothing exists fully. To reach this conclusion, I will chart some of the connections between rationalism – construed as a commitment to the PSR – and idealism and monism. Throughout, in addition to addressing these heady philosophical topics, I will also attend to the ways in which this rationalist voyage should color our understanding of Spinoza and of Hegel's engagement with Spinoza.

## WHAT KIND OF RATIONALISM?

The term “rationalism” can mean a lot of different things, and I don't want to fight about the term. So let me just present my preferred characterization of rationalism, one that I will use throughout the chapter and that also, I believe, illuminates Spinoza's philosophical system. Thus, I characterize rationalism as the commitment to the PSR, to the view that for each thing that exists there is an explanation of its existence (and, for each thing that does not exist, there is an explanation of its non-existence).

I would like to thank the audiences at Johns Hopkins, Notre Dame, and Munich who generously helped this chapter attain greater – though no doubt still very imperfect – degrees of existence and intelligibility. Discussions and written comments from Omri Boehm, Anthony Bruno, Yitzhak Melamed, Sam Newlands, Mike Stange, Peter van Inwagen, and others were also very much appreciated.

Or, in other words, each thing is intelligible. Or, there is a *reason* for the existence of each thing that exists (and for the non-existence of each thing that does not exist). It is this version of rationalism that I find (and others find) in Spinoza, who embraces a particularly strong form of the PSR, for example, in E1p1d2: “For each thing, there must be assigned a cause or reason both for its existence and for its nonexistence.”<sup>1</sup> Also E1a2 is relevant here: “What cannot be conceived through another must be conceived through itself.” Spinoza here presupposes that each thing is conceived (either through itself or another), i.e., each thing can in some way be understood or made intelligible.<sup>2</sup>

What is required for the explanation of thing? I believe – though I will not argue for this view here – that to explain a thing is to explain the thing *as such-and-such*, to explain it in terms of some of its features. To explain a thing, one must, as it were, get in between the thing and its properties and come to see the thing in terms of those properties, which may, in the end, include relational properties or relations to other things. On this view of explanation, one does not and cannot explain a thing *brutely*, one must explain it *as such-and-such*. To explain a thing brutally, i.e. to explain *x* simply as *x*, is really no explanation at all, and thus such an “explanation” would run counter to the spirit of rationalism and the PSR.<sup>3</sup>

That explanation involves revealing some kind of relation between a thing and its properties, and also, in some cases, between a thing and other things, is evident if we look at some of the terms often used to express the rationalist commitment to explanation. To explain a thing can be seen as rendering it intelligible. But what is it to render a thing intelligible? Literally, it is “reading between” – *inter legere*. This fits in with the idea just articulated according to which in explaining a thing one is getting between a thing and its properties in order to enable the property to shed light on the thing. Similarly, when we explain a thing, we provide reasons for it, but what is a reason other than (if we return to the Latin again) a *ratio*, a ratio between one thing and, perhaps, another. Again, we see the inherently relational nature of explanation. Similarly,

<sup>1</sup> All references to passages in Spinoza are to the *Ethics* (E).

<sup>2</sup> See M. Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 4–5.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, I believe that the PSR dictates that there is no brute or direct reference to objects. But that is a topic for another occasion. For more on explaining as explaining-as in Spinoza, see M. Della Rocca, “Explaining Explanation and the Multiplicity of Attributes,” in M. Hampe and R. Schnepf (eds.), *Baruch de Spinoza: Ethik in geometrischer Ordnung dargestellt* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), pp. 17–35.



explanation is often seen as explication. But what is explication? Literally it is to fold a thing out (*explicare*), to reveal the relations within a thing. To explain, then, is to place a thing in some kind of network of relations and thus relationality is present in the very nature of explaining as explaining-as. I'll return to the inherent relationality of explanation near the end of the chapter.

If rationalism is tied so directly to the PSR, then why should we take rationalism seriously? After all, hasn't the PSR been thoroughly discredited? Maybe so, but I should note that I have a defense of a full-blooded version of the PSR that I am ready to whip out at a moment's notice.<sup>4</sup> However, instead of arguing more or less directly for the PSR, I want to focus on some of the implications of the PSR. This demonstration of some of what follows from the PSR will help to bring out the power of rationalism and will help us to characterize the significance of Spinoza's system and of Hegel's response to it.

Perhaps the most important implication of the PSR can be summed up in my slogan: to be is to be intelligible. That is, for a thing to exist is just for it to be intelligible that it exists.

To demonstrate this implication of the PSR, let me begin as I have done elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> by showing that the PSR entails the biconditional:  $x$  exists if and only if it is intelligible that  $x$  exists. Let's focus first on the left-to-right half of this biconditional, i.e., on "if  $x$  exists, then it is intelligible that  $x$  exists." This is really just a statement of the PSR itself, which insists on the intelligibility of each thing that exists.

The right-to-left half of the biconditional is a little less straightforward: if it is intelligible that  $x$  exists, then  $x$  exists. To see why, given the PSR, this conditional is true, consider what would be the case if the conditional is false, i.e., what would be the case if it is intelligible that  $x$  exists, and yet  $x$  does not exist. If this is the case, then it must also be the case that it is intelligible that  $x$  does not exist. If it is intelligible that  $x$  does exist and *not* intelligible that  $x$  does not exist, then  $x$  must exist. So to preserve the assumption that our conditional is false and that  $x$ 's existence is intelligible and yet  $x$  does not exist, we must assume that  $x$ 's non-existence is also intelligible. But now if  $x$ 's existence and  $x$ 's non-existence are each intelligible, then which of these incompatible states of affairs obtains? Let's say that  $x$  exists, but given that  $x$ 's non-existence is equally

<sup>4</sup> See M. Della Rocca, "PSR," *Philosophers' Imprint* 10 (2010), <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/phimp/3521354.0010.007?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., in M. Della Rocca, "A Rationalist Manifesto: Spinoza and the Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Philosophical Topics* 31 (2003), 75–93 (pp. 85–86).

intelligible, it would seem that the fact that  $x$  exists would be a brute fact. Similarly,  $x$ 's non-existence would – given the equal intelligibility of  $x$ 's existence – be a brute fact, a violation of the PSR. (Recall that, as specified in the initial formulation of the PSR, both existence and non-existence must be explained.) Thus, given the PSR, it cannot be the case that both  $x$ 's existence and the non-existence of  $x$  are intelligible. It follows that if  $x$ 's existence is the intelligible state of affairs, then  $x$ 's non-existence must be not intelligible and so  $x$  must exist after all. So, given the PSR, we have the result that if it is intelligible that  $x$  exists, then  $x$  exists and, as we saw, if  $x$  exists then it is intelligible that  $x$  exists. We have here the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility.

Given this coextensiveness, can we take the next step and conclude that existence and intelligibility are identical? Yes, I think that the PSR would cheer us on as we make this last step. If existence and intelligibility were not identical despite being coextensive, then what is it in virtue of which they would be non-identical? There must be something in virtue of which existence and intelligibility are not identical, if indeed they are not identical. But if existence and intelligibility are coextensive, nothing can ground their non-identity, as far as I can see. So, given the PSR – which ties existence to intelligibility – there would be a brute fact if existence itself were anything over and above intelligibility. Given the PSR, existence is explained in terms of – and is identical to – intelligibility itself. But then what explains the identity? If non-identity must be explained, as I have been claiming, then it must equally be the case that identity must be explained. So, in this case, if existence and intelligibility are identical, what explains this identity? The answer is ready-to-hand: given the lack of any explanation for their non-identity, the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility is sufficient to explain their identity. At work here is an instance of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles: indiscernibility – in this case the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility – explains identity. As I have argued elsewhere, there is evidence that Spinoza accepts the identification of existence and intelligibility in his claim that God's essence is identical to God's existence (E1p20),<sup>6</sup> and there is evidence that Spinoza accepts the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> E.g., in *ibid.*, pp. 82–84.

<sup>7</sup> See the way in which E1p4 is employed in E1p5, and see my discussion in Della Rocca, "Explaining Explanation."