

## HEGEL AND THE CHALLENGE OF SPINOZA

*Hegel and the Challenge of Spinoza* explores the powerful continuing influence of Spinoza's metaphysical thinking in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German philosophy. George di Giovanni examines the ways in which Hegel's own metaphysics sought to meet the challenges posed by Spinoza's monism, not by disproving monism, but by rendering it moot. In this, di Giovanni argues, Hegel was much closer in spirit to Kant and Fichte than to Schelling. This book will be of interest to students and researchers interested in post-Kantian Idealism, Romanticism, and metaphysics.

GEORGE DI GIOVANNI is Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at McGill University. He is author of *Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), editor of many essay collections, including *Karl Leonhard Reinhold and the Enlightenment* (2010), and editor and translator of numerous texts by Kant, Hegel, and Jacobi.

# HEGEL AND THE CHALLENGE OF SPINOZA

*A Study in German Idealism, 1801–1831*

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-108-82040-0 — Hegel and the Challenge of Spinoza  
George di Giovanni  
Frontmatter  
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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
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477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108820400](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108820400)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108906999

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First published 2021  
First paperback edition 2023

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-108-84224-2 Hardback  
ISBN 978-1-108-82040-0 Paperback

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*For Felix and Oliver  
who brought so much joy.*

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## *Preface*

In an earlier study, *Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors: The Vocation of Humankind, 1774–1800* (2005), I documented the discussion regarding the nature of humankind that preoccupied the German intelligentsia in the second half of the eighteenth century. Jacobi intervened in the discussion bringing Spinoza to the scene, with results that affected the reception of Kant's Critique of Reason. In the present study I pursue the same theme but in the completely different conceptual and social context of early Romanticism. Humankind's vocation assumes rather the form of God's vocation. I explore this change with reference to the three canonical post-Kantians, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, with Jacobi occasionally interloping, all in their post-1800 phase, taking the date of Hegel's death (1831) as my occasionally moving end post. How to save subjectivity in the face of Spinoza's monism was still the challenge. I argue that Hegel met this challenge not by disproving monism, which was also the assumption behind classical metaphysics, but by simply rendering it moot. In this, Hegel was much closer in spirit to Kant and Fichte than to Schelling. I should also mention that I portray Spinoza exclusively through the eyes of the Idealists. I beg the Spinoza specialists for indulgence.

I owe many debts of gratitude for the production of this book. I should first mention Anna Ezekiel, Hadi Fakhoury, and Matthew Nini. Anna finely edited my typescript. Hadi assisted me with the footnotes and with issues of formatting. Matthew did the Index. James Devin, of Toronto, a sometime assistant of H. S. Harris, was an invaluable source of information. Working with all of them was a pleasure and, for me, a learning experience.

I am also indebted to my graduate students at McGill, both in the Department of Philosophy and in the School of Religious Studies – notably, Jeanne Allard, Jason Blakeburn, Joseph Carew, Hadi Fakhoury, Paolo Livieri, and Matthew Nini. Their interest in my work and their feedback in seminars and personal conversations have been a source of

motivation and instruction. Above all, however, my gratitude goes to Garth Green, the director of the School of Religious Studies and a close colleague. Without our long conversations at different stages of the book's production, his constructive criticisms, and his constant encouragement, this book might never have seen the light of day.

Of a different nature is the gratitude I owe to Sheila, my wife, and my extended family. I thank them for their patience and their care. This book is dedicated to my grandchildren.

Parts of Chapters 3 and 5 were previously included, respectively, in "The Transcendental Spinozism of Fichte's 1804 *Wissenschaftslehre*," *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Fichte*, ed. Marina Bykova (New York: The Bloomsbury Academic, 2020) 197–215; and "¿Como de necesaria es la fenomenología para la lógica de Hegel?," *La Lógica de Hegel*, ed. Edgar Maragat. Colección de filosofía (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2017) 19–35. I thank the publishers for their kind permission to reproduce them.



## Abbreviations

### German Works

Editions of collected works are cited by series number in Roman numerals, volume number, pagination, and, when possible and appropriate, line number.

AA= *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Königl. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: Reimer/de Gruyter, 1900–.

DWA= *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling: Werke 13 = Nachlaßband, Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter. Munich: Beck, 1946.

GA= *J. G. Fichte – Gesamtausgabe der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. R. Lauth and H. Gliwitsky. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962–2005.

GW= *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westphalischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hamburg: Meiner, 1968–.

KrV= *Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. English edition: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

SSW= *F. W. J. Schelling: Sämtliche Werke*. 14 vols, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–1861.

W= *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Sämtliche Werke*. 11 vols, ed. I. H. Fichte. Berlin: Veit, 1845–1846.

### English Works

EHF= *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.

- EPW= *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- GPP= *The Grounding of the Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- HCI= *Schelling: Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- HMP= *Schelling: On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andre Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Logic= *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- MPW= *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- PhRe= *Philosophy and Religion*, trans. Klaus Ottmann. Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2010.
- PR= *J.G. Fichte and F.W.J. Schelling: The Philosophical Rupture Between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)*, ed. and trans. Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012.
- PS= *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- SK= *J.G. Fichte: The Science of Knowing: J.G. Fichte's 1804 Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans. Walter E. Wright. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- SSW= *F.W.J. Schelling: Sämtliche Werke*. 14 vols, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling. Stuttgart: Cotta.
- WA= *F.W.J. Schelling: Ages of the World*, trans. Judith Norman. In Schelling and Slavoj Žižek, *The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World*, pp. 105–182. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.