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.

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HEGEL AND THE
CHALLENGE OF SPINOZA

A Study in German Idealism, 1801–1831

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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.

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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 Königliche Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: Reimer/de Gruyter, 1900–.


English Works

List of Abbreviations


